

THE LIVING WORD OF THE BUDDHA

The Buddha's Teachings in the Oldest Texts

Sutta Discovery Vol 60.2

Theme: Mindfulness in practice

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For conventions (textual and technical) and bibliography, see **SD Guide**.

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Mindfulness is seeing here, awareness is knowing now

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60.2 Mindfulness and lovingkindness

Versatility and harmony in early Buddhist mental cultivation
A brief study by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2021, 2023

1 Introduction

1.1 WHY TWIN PRACTICES?

1.1.1 Body and mind

1.1.1.1 In this essay, I will discuss how **lovingkindness** (*mettā*) or the Buddhist conception of whole-some love fits into the scheme of meditation and mindfulness in early Buddhism. This study comprises the following 5 sections with a conclusion:

- 1 calm and insight (*samatha, vipassanā*) in relation to the conscious body;
- 2 lovingkindness as *vipassana*;
- 3 is lovingkindness or any other divine abode a path?
- 4 the original lovingkindness cultivation in the suttas;
- 5 the divine abodes and the cultivation of moral concern;
- 6 conclusion.

An important aspect of lovingkindness which we will not discuss here is that of its role in limiting karma (*pamāna, katta kamma*). This has been discussed in the translation of **the Karaja, kāya Brahma, -vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208).¹

1.1.1.2 While both the breath meditation and **the cultivation of lovingkindness** (*mettā bhāvanā*) are often recommended in the suttas, lovingkindness is often taught to non-Buddhists or new converts, especially those who have previous theistic beliefs. Although lovingkindness is often mentioned by itself, it is the first of the well known tetrad known as the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), that is, lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), gladness (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).²

This tetrad of practices and emotions are called “divine abodes” (*brahma, vihāra*) because instead of worshipping God or a supreme deity, it is better to cultivate those qualities that characterize such a deity, that is, to live in Godliness or godliness by cultivating these divine abodes for oneself and towards others. The divine abodes are a beautiful invitation to God-believers, god-believers and the faith-inclined to *work for what they pray for*, that is, to show these good qualities in their daily lives.

The 4 divine abodes are also called **immeasurables** (*appamāṇa* or *appamañña*) because we should cultivate them for the benefit of everyone, even everything. It is an inclusive embrace of full acceptance of others as extensions of ourselves: we *are* the world.³ They are also “immeasurable” or “boundless” in the sense that they are embodied as spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa mittatā*) which pervades the whole of Buddhist training.⁴

¹ See SD 2.10 (1 f); also SD 3.9 (7.2.3).

² See **Brahma, vihāra**, SD 58.5.

³ On extended minds, see SD 60.1f (4.4.8.2).

⁴ On spiritual friendship as the *whole* of the spiritual life (*brahma, cariya*), ie, Dharma-spirited life (monastic or lay), see **Kalyāṇa, mitta Appamāda S** (S 3.18, 10/1:88), SD 34.2; **Upaḍḍha S** (S 45.2/5:3), SD 34.9; (**Kalyāṇa, mittatā**) **Sariputta S** (S 45.3/5:3), SD 34.10; SD 34.1 (3.2.1.1).

That spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life means that all the 3 trainings—moral training, concentration training and wisdom training—are rooted in and characterized by the divine abodes. This means that the divine abodes are the basis for the moral life, that is, being habitually wholesome and wise: this is the theme of the present study (SD 60.2).

Secondly, it means that the divine abodes, especially lovingkindness, are a catalyst and support whenever we face distraction or difficulties in our meditation.

And thirdly, it means that wisdom always entails compassion, which is the second of the divine abodes; but in practice wisdom, especially awakened wisdom (of the Buddha and the arhats), is the effective embodiment or living activity of the 4 divine abodes, the twin wonders of wisdom and compassion in action.

1.1.2 The 2 wings of a flying bird

1.1.2.1 The suttas do not see *samatha* and *vipassanā* as 2 kinds of meditation, as taught and practised by ethnic Buddhist groups and those who follow or study these groups. In early Buddhism, *samatha* refers to the process and result of calming the mind, clearing it of distractions, especially the 5 mental hindrances: *attachment to sensual pleasures, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt*. When the hindrances are overcome, dhyana (*jhāna*) is attained.

What really happens when the hindrances are overcome? Psychologically it means that the mind is free from having to process any sense-data from the 5 physical senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body). In other words, the mind is completely free from being held back by the body and being caught up with processing sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches. The mind is simply by itself: it is free and happy, and it is naturally radiant (in a psychological sense), free from being clouded up by sense-activities and the accompanying thoughts.

In such a free state, the mind, with proper guidance, goes on to minimize thinking to just being aware of itself, like in a lucid dream. It is only aware of what is going on, which is wholesomely calming: this is called **the 1st dhyana**. Then, even these rudimentary thoughts settle down, and there is only zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*) due to full concentration: this is **the 2nd dhyana**. In due course, the exuberant zest settles down, and there is great equanimity, inner peace: this is **the 3rd dhyana**; finally, even the joy is resolved into a radiant peace, an inner equanimity that can be described as being “more joyful” than joy itself (this is a bit of meditation lingo): this is **the 4th dhyana**.

1.1.2.2 Once we have mastered the dhyana practice just mentioned [1.1.2.1], we are ready for the next stage. This is when, upon emerging from dhyana (even just the 1st dhyana), we direct the calm and clear mind to Dharma practice. Usually this would be to reflect on **impermanence**, such as how the beautiful mental states have all passed away. This direct experience of true reality can only be explained poetically or metaphorically here.

It is like we have climbed a hill or a mountain for the first time, and upon reaching the peak, we can finally see the whole panorama of the valley, trees and landscape before us right to the horizon. Or we have been looking at some amazing painting like the Mona Lisa or some favourite painting of ours in books or social media. Then one day we visit the Louvre or the National Gallery preserving the original work. We can only totally lose ourselves gazing speechless and timeless into the painting.

We may get some poetic idea of dhyana when we read William Wordsworth’s *Daffodils* (“I wandered lonely as a cloud ...”) (1804). For the laity, especially a sensual or family person, who has not attained the path or done deep meditation, the closest they could probably imagine of dhyanic bliss is sexual **ecstasy**—but imagine ecstasy without the body (that is, the body is fully absorbed into the mind)—the mind, as it were is freed from all the physical senses; it is a purely *mental* experience. Dhyanic bliss, on

the other hand, has been called “**enstasy**”—a totally blissful state, neither within nor without—hence far more profound than any worldly ecstasy.⁵

1.1.2.3 On the other hand, we may have an intellectual person (like a scholar) who may have a deep theoretical understanding of Buddhism, even of dhyana, but lacks any experience or deep feeling for Buddhism or for meditation. One may then *think* one understands Buddhism or such a dhyana experience very well, even in an “exegetically responsible” manner—as Mills puts it [7.2.4.2]—even quoting the suttas with technical accuracy.

Yet, when one finally gets into dhyana, one happily realizes it to be a profound experience so very different from and very much more than all that one has *known or thought* about it: now one feels it for the first time. In simple terms, this is when we have cultivated *samatha* with which we attained *samāhi*, even dhyana. Then, emerging with a profoundly calm and clear mind, we go on to see directly (*vipassati*) into true reality, such as the impermanence of the breath or of the mind, and have a direct experience (*vipassanā*) of what we have learned in *theory*: now we experience it in practice, in real life.⁶

1.1.2.4 Alternatively, we may have become a scholarly expert in our academic field of Buddhism. We have made disciplined and dignified arguments about profound Buddhist teachings and experiences, only to be refuted by other scholars. Suddenly, or slowly, we realize that Buddhism is not our cup of tea or crock of gold at the rainbow’s end. We then renounce Buddhism for greener pastures of a wealthier religion. For, man, it seems, cannot live by faith alone.

When an academic scholar is deeply committed to Buddhism as personal faith and practice, and his scholarship is responsible, critical and experiential, we often learn new and helpful perspectives of seeing even practising Buddhism. After all, we would profoundly benefit and enjoy music, for example, from a great musician, who is a composer, a performer as well as a teacher and lover of music.

In other words, the academic scholar’s profession is not Buddhism but scholarship. His work is likely to reflect his study of Buddhism as “literature” or “religion” within academic rules and convention. Even the best of such works does not measure up to the sutta of Dharma teaching for those who practise the Dharma. Even during meditation, more so as we delve deeper into Dharma, we learn to renounce the Dharma as theory and teaching for a higher realization—as we are reminded by the parable of the raft in the Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22)⁷—what more so as a secular and private truth of academic learning.

1.1.2.5 One important way to understand how *samatha* and *vipassana* work *together* is that they are the “**twin ways**” (rather than “two paths”) of our meditative progress: we experience both the body (sights, sounds, smells, taste and touches) and the mind (feelings, thoughts and emotions). “**The body**” is such a flood and flurry of physical experiences that there are always sense-objects demanding our attention.

In other words, the moment we “know” a **bodily experience**—a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste or a touch—it is already over in the sense that the body (*rūpa*) is first “conscious” of it (that is, we “sense” it)

⁵ On ecstasy and enstasy, see SD 60.1f (4.2.3). On mental correlates of dhyana, see M R Hagerty, J Isaacs, L Brasington, L Shupe, E E Fetz & S C Cramer, “Case study of ecstatic meditation: fMRI and EEG evidence of self-stimulating a reward system,” *Neural Plasticity* art ID 653572 2013 pp13. [Hindawi]. Brief survey: N Webb, “The neurobiology of bliss—sacred and profane,” *Scientific American* 12 July 2011. See also Piya Tan, “Orgasm, ecstasy, enstasy and renunciation,” R645 *Revisioning Buddhism* 251, 2020: <http://dharmafarer.org>. L B Smith, “The distinctive relationship between sexual ecstasy and spiritual ecstasy for heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered clergy of the Church of England: integrating transpersonal awareness with an interpretative phenomenological analysis,” PhD thesis Liverpool John Moores Univ, 2018. All ext links 7 Oct 2023.

⁶ For a discussion, see ***Samatha & Vipassanā***, SD 41.1.

⁷ For the parable of the raft, see ***Alagaddûpama S*** (M 22,12-14/1:134,30-135,26), SD 3.13.

(*vijānāti*), and then we feel it (*vedayati*) in the mind. When we follow it further, we perceive it (*sañjānāti*); that is, we relate it to a memory (*sati*) of a past experience: we perceive it as being *pleasant, unpleasant or neutral*.

At this point, when we are mindful, our **samatha** training will habituate us to take the feeling just as it is, “letting it come, letting it go.” In other words, we stop the cognitive process here: we do not go on to project (*abhisankharoti*) formations of liking, disliking or ignoring our experience: this “stopping” is what samatha does. Then our mind becomes *calm and clear*; or, if we are meditating, we direct our attention to the meditation-object. When we habitually do this, we learn to be more mentally focused, and in due course attain samadhi (concentration), even dhyana (*jhāna*) when we are fully free from the sense-activities.

For most non-meditators or distracted meditators, we tend to be curious about the feelings that are *pleasant* or that are *unpleasant*. We react to them as we have done in the past: we show *greed* or *lust* to the thought of the pleasant, or show *hatred* or *anger* to the thought of the unpleasant. Notice the word “the thought.” We are reacting to the thought of it; the feeling is already gone but we keep holding on to it in our memory. This is delusion; we have fallen for something that is not there. This process is karmically potent: we form karma as a result; hence, it is called “formations” (*saṅkhārā*).

1.1.2.6 Often we unmindfully follow our thoughts and get caught up with running after the pleasant, hating the unpleasant, and ignoring what seems neither. The first habituates us to be lustful, the second makes us hateful, and the third feeds our ignorance. All this works unconsciously: we have become puppets and robots at the command of our **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*) of lust, aversion and ignorance.

In fact, if we are still unawakened (which is where we are right now), it is still not too late to correct the situation. We **review** our thoughts behind our habitual actions in the manner we have done under the samatha practice [1.1.2.4]. We begin to understand how we are tricked by our delusion and ignorance. By telling ourself about *the true nature* of the sense-objects—the pleasant, the unpleasant and the neutral—we understand how they trick us. This is our **insight knowledge**, which is still rudimentary but will become a great mental tool and source of happiness as we become more skilled in mind-mastering.

We can now see how **samatha** works at “stopping” our reactive habits towards unwholesome sense-objects, and how **vipassanā** works at “seeing” through the tricks of our perception of the past (memory) and the future (desire and hope). We stay in the present and notice how events just move on before us, and live joyfully with this understanding. Now we can see how samatha and vipassana work together to keep our mind calm and clear.

1.2 IT’S ALL IN THE MIND

1.2.1 Sensing and minding

So far we have examined the working of samatha-vipassanā on the sense-objects, but these are the workings of the 5 physical senses. We will now examine what “works” these senses: it is **the mind**. In other words, it is the mind (our intentions and thoughts) that is behind the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching (feeling); it is the mind that is behind the memory and the intentions of desiring, hating or ignoring the sense-experiences.

Hence, the “sense-experiences” do not happen by themselves; they are regarded as different “sense” experiences due to their “door” or sense-faculty for convenience. The real action occurs in “the

mind—a network of mental factors with which we cognize things through *feeling, perception, volition (intention), sense-contact* and *attention*.⁸

1.2.2 The conscious body

Thus the body and the mind function intimately together: they are called “the conscious body” (*sa-viññāṇaka, kāya*).⁹ Through *samatha*, we work with the body (the sense-experiences) and through *vipassanā* we see how the mind works on these senses and as thoughts. We need both *samatha* and *vipassanā* to train and tame our mind-body existence.

Hence, sometimes poetically *samatha* is said to be “meditation” (*jhāna*) and *vipassana* “wisdom” (*paññā*), as in this famous Dhammapada verse:

There is no (true) meditation without wisdom; there is no (true) wisdom without meditation.
In whom there are both meditation and wisdom, he is indeed in nirvana’s presence.

(Dh 372)

The essence of this Dhammapada verse can be visualized as the 2 wings of a flying bird: both wings need to flap in harmony for the bird to fly properly.¹⁰

In the next section, we will see how even *samatha*—as in lovingkindness (*mettā*) meditation—can be used to cultivate insight (*vipassanā*).

2 Lovingkindness as *vipassanā*

2.1 AJAHN SUMEDHO

2.1.1 Forest tradition teaching style

2.1.1.1 I first met **Ajahn Sumedho**¹¹ in the early 1970s when he visited Wat Srales, Bangkok, where I was undergoing monastic training. I recall him inviting me to sit before him in a quiet corner of the Abbot’s residence, and gave me a 2-hour personal talk on the Vinaya. Although I do not recall the exact words of his teaching, I still feel the peace of that moment as I sat before him. Looking back, I feel as if those 2 hours were but a moment in my mind like a window into this garden of profound peace even now.

2.1.1.2 As a rule, the monks of **the Thai forest tradition** have a very similar teaching style reflective of their simple and austere reclusive lifestyle. Their meditation practice is simple and gentle, very different from the more structured modern *Vipassanā* of the Burmese tradition or the technically elegant treatises of the scholars and scholar monks.

The forest meditation includes the *buddho* mantra (a kind of *buddhānussati*, “Buddha recollection”), breath meditation, walking meditation, clear awareness (*sampajañña*), “listening” to thoughts and an

⁸ These are respectively *vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phassa, manasikāra* (S 12.2,12/2:3; cf M 9,26/1:50).

⁹ On the conscious body see SD 60.1d (2).

¹⁰ This famous imagery actually describes the life of a true renunciant: D 2,66/1:71 = M 51,15/1:346 = 112,14/-3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f. See also SD 60.1b (7.4).

¹¹ On Ajahn Sumedho: SD 60.1b (5.12.2).

inner vigilance (*jāgara*). Essentially, we should be mindful, don't hang on to anything; let it come, let it go; and surrender to the way things are—this is inner renunciation in practice.

All these methods are explained in simple yet practical language by Sumedho compiled into a book entitled, *The Path to the Deathless* (1985), which was revised as *Mindfulness: the path to the deathless* (1994). In what follows, I will present Sumedho's teachings on **lovingkindness** from the chapter entitled "Kindness (*mettā*)," from the latest revised edition (2014:53-57).¹²

2.1.2 Comments on Sumedho's teachings

In what follows, I will outline or paraphrase 15 points of Sumedho's teachings, followed by my own commentaries and reflections on Sumedho's teachings in connection with the theme of SD 60.2, "mindfulness and lovingkindness." If you are only interested in his teachings on meditation as practice, you only need to read sections (1)-(12), that is, those with the numbers in the round brackets.

The "**Comments**" section serves as my "commentary" on Sumedho's teachings, considered not as a scholarly treatise or essay, but as a personal experience which he is sharing with us. These experiences are teaching us how to cultivate lovingkindness by personal example. In other words, Sumedho himself practises what he teaches.

2.2 LOVINGKINDNESS IN PRACTICE

2.2.1 "Love" and "like"

2.2.1.1 LOVINGKINDNESS (BASED ON SUMEDHO'S TEACHINGS)

(1) In English the word "**love**" often refers to something that I like. For example, "I love sticky rice," "I love sweet mango." We mean we really like them. It is being attached to something such as food which we really enjoy eating. We don't really "*love*" it; love is here not the same as attachment. *Mettā* is not love in that sense; it is not attachment. Thus, to love your enemy doesn't mean you *like* your enemy (as in the way you like food). If somebody wants to kill you and you say, "I like them," that's silly! But we can love them, meaning that we can refrain from unpleasant thoughts and vindictiveness, from any desire to hurt them or annihilate them.

(2) Even though you might not like them—they are miserable, wretched people—you can still be **kind**, generous and charitable towards them. If some drunk came into this room who was foul and disgusting, ugly and diseased, and there was nothing one could be attracted to in him—to say, "I like this man" would be ridiculous. But one could *love* him, not dwell in aversion, not be caught up in reactions to his unpleasantness. That's what we mean by *mettā*.

2.2.1.2 COMMENTS

The practice described here is about **lovingkindness** (*mettā*) but the section title is simply "kindness," which is one of the terms Sumedho uses for *mettā*. Addressing English-speaking readers, Sumedho then uses "**love**" for *mettā*, and distinguishes it from "like," which has worldly connotations of bias for what is pleasurable, "dislike" for what is not pleasurable and so on. Not to cause any confusion over terms, Sumedho, as a rule, uses *metta* throughout his teaching.

Notice at this stage there is no mention of focusing the mind to gain concentration. Sumedho's teachings only refer to the difference between "love" and "like"; that *mettā* is unconditional love: we do

¹² Sucitto (ed), *Mindfulness: the path to the deathless. The meditation teachings of Ajahn Sumedho* [1985]. 3rd ed. Hemel Hempstead (UK): Amaravati Publications, 2014.

not say “unconditional like”! The drift of this section is simply that of keeping the mind positive and wholesome by not getting caught up with the negative idea of *liking* rather than loving. Hence, this is an insight teaching (*vipassanā*).

2.2.2 Thoughts and feelings

2.2.2.1 SUMEDHO’S TEACHING ON LOVINGKINDNESS

(3) Sometimes there are things one doesn’t like about oneself, but *mettā* means not being caught up in the thoughts we have, the attitudes, the problems, **the feelings** of the mind. So it becomes an immediate practice of being very mindful. To be mindful means to have *mettā* towards the fear, or the anger, or the jealousy in your mind.

(4) *Mettā* means not creating problems around existing conditions, allowing them to fade away, to cease. For example, when fear comes up in your mind, you can have *mettā* for **the fear**—meaning that you don’t build up aversion to it, you can just accept its presence and allow it to cease.

(5) You can also minimise **the fear** by recognising that it is the same kind of fear that everyone has, that animals have. It’s not my fear, it’s not a person’s, it’s an impersonal fear. We begin to have compassion for other beings when we understand the suffering involved in reacting to fear in our own lives—the pain, the physical pain of being kicked, when somebody kicks you.

(6) That kind of pain is exactly the same kind of pain that a dog feels when he’s being kicked, so you can have *mettā* for the **pain**, meaning a kindness and a patience of not dwelling in aversion. We can work with *mettā* internally, with all our emotional problems: you think, “I want to get rid of it, it’s terrible.” That’s a lack of *mettā* for yourself, isn’t it?

2.2.2.2 COMMENTS

Lovingkindness is not directed to only people, but also to mental states (thoughts, feelings, etc), especially negative ones, such as fear and pain (3). In (5) we see the teaching on **nonself** (*anattā*): “It’s not *my* fear ... [it’s] an impersonal fear” (emphases added), and it’s a universal feeling, found even in animals. Nonself is the 3rd and last of the 3 characteristics of true reality. Hence, we see here the practice of *vipassanā* through lovingkindness.

2.2.3 Conditioning: negative and positive

2.2.3.1 SUMEDHO’S TEACHING ON LOVINGKINDNESS

(7) Recognise **the desire-to-get-rid-of!** Don’t dwell in aversion for existing emotional conditions. You don’t have to pretend to feel approval of your faults. You don’t think, “I like my faults.” Some people are foolish enough to say, “My faults make me interesting. I’m a fascinating personality because of my weaknesses.”

(8) *Mettā* is **not conditioning yourself to believe** that you like something that you actually don’t like at all; it is just not dwelling in aversion. It’s easy to feel *mettā* towards something you like—pretty little children, good looking people, pleasant mannered people, little puppies, beautiful flowers—we can feel *mettā* for ourselves when we’re feeling good: “I am feeling happy with myself now.”

(9) When things are **going well** it's easy to feel kindness towards that which is good and pretty and beautiful. At this point we can get lost. *Mettā* isn't just good wishes, lovely sentiments, high-minded thoughts, it's always very practical. If you're being very idealistic, and you hate someone, then you feel, "I shouldn't hate anyone. Buddhists should have *mettā* for all living beings. I should love everybody. If I'm a good Buddhist then I should like everybody." All that comes from impractical idealism.

Have *mettā* for the aversion you feel, for the pettiness of the mind, the jealousy, envy—meaning peacefully co-existing, not creating problems, not making it difficult nor creating problems out of the difficulties that arise in life, within our minds and bodies.

2.2.3.2 COMMENTS

This section teaches us to look deep into how we think and feel, for example, to note how we have the wish to "get rid" of a habit or an idea, but this is not something easy to do (7). In other words, it is not about *believing* in anything; rather, it is about "co-existing" with the negative thought that we may have (8). We show lovingkindness to our way of thinking (9). In other words, we go down to the root of thought and clean it, as it were.

How does a wholesome thought "co-existing" with a negative one clean it? It's like a good wise friend who influences another to give up the latter's wrong ways. When we direct a good thought often enough to a bad one, it weakens the latter from lack of dominance. They both, after all, arise in the same mind: our mindfulness and awareness guard the mind against unwholesomeness and makes it wholesome. This is a part of *vipassanā* practice.

2.2.4 Negative emotions

2.2.4.1 SUMEDHO'S TEACHING ON LOVINGKINDNESS

(10) "In London, I used to get very upset when travelling on the underground. I used to **hate** it, those horrible underground stations with ghastly advertising posters and great crowds of people on those dingy, grotty trains which roared along the tunnels. I used to feel a total lack of *mettā*.

I used to feel so averse to it all, then I decided to practise being patient and kind while travelling on the London Underground. Then I began to really enjoy it, rather than dwelling in resentment. I began to feel kindly towards the people there. The aversion and the complaining all disappeared—totally."¹³

(11) "When you feel **aversion** towards somebody, you can notice the tendency to start adding to it, 'He did this and he did that, and he's this way and he shouldn't be that way.' Then when you really like somebody, 'He can do this and he can do that. He's good and kind.' But if someone says, 'That person's really bad!' you feel angry. If you hate somebody and someone else praises him, you also feel angry. You don't want to hear how good your enemy is."

¹³ Matt Jenkins (one of my proofreaders) confirms this: "I remember getting the Circle Line in to school as a teenager, and every morning the train would stop for a few minutes outside South Kensington station waiting for a free platform. In summer, it was glorious—we were in a Victorian cutting, sharply angled walls of red brick on both sides, half-colonised by ferny plants, the sun shafting down illuminating the motes in the air. I loved it. And every morning, when this happened, a businessman who was always on this same train as me would get up, as if the train had stopped in the station, go to the door and really ostentatiously sigh, tut, and look around for moral support. For me, I had been given a gift—two minutes in a London [train] where everything is urgency and pushing. There was nothing to be done, I could not get the train into the station any quicker, a pause had been enforced on me so I might as well enjoy it. For him, the pause was to be resisted, the urgency clung to. I did not understand it, I cannot imagine that the urgency was something he enjoyed. But it's that man I thought of when I read Sumedho's comments." Thanks, Matt, for sharing this instructive vignette. 25 Dec 2023

(12) “When you are full of **anger**, you can’t imagine that someone you hate may have some virtuous qualities; even if they do have some good qualities, you can never remember any of them. You can only remember all the bad things. When you like somebody, even his faults can be endearing—‘harmless little faults.’”

2.2.4.2 COMMENTS

In (10), Sumedho says that he “decided to practise” being patient and kind to what he is seeing around him instead of feeling negative about it. This is where we intervene when we notice a negative thought process, and replace it with a positive one. Psychologically, this is the practice of “thought displacement” (*añña nimitta*) [5.4.1.6].

In (11) + (12), Sumedho tells us that when we have aversion or anger, it is likely to cloud our thinking. This negative emotion will spill into how we see others and how we view the actions of others, especially what they have done “wrong.” We need to recognize this, so that it ends right there. The details are given in the next section.

2.2.5 The nature of faults

2.2.5.1 SUMEDHO’S TEACHING ON LOVINGKINDNESS

(13) So recognise this in your own experience; observe the force of **like and dislike**. Practising patience and kindness is a very useful and effective instrument for dealing with all the petty trivia which the mind builds up around unpleasant experiences. *Mettā* is also a very useful method for those who have discriminative, very critical minds. They can see only the faults in everything, but they never look at themselves, they only see what’s “out there.”

(14) It is now very common to always be **complaining** about the weather or the government. Personal arrogance gives rise to these really nasty comments about everything; or you start talking about someone who isn’t there, ripping them apart, quite intelligently, and quite objectively.

You are so analytical, you know exactly what that person needs, what they should do and what they should not do, and why they’re this way and that. Very impressive to have such a sharp, critical mind and know what they ought to do. You are, of course, saying, “Really, I’m much better than they are.”

(15) But with *mettā*, you are **not blinding yourself** to the faults and flaws in everything. You are just peacefully co-existing with them. You are not demanding that it be otherwise. So *mettā* sometimes needs to overlook what’s wrong with yourself and everyone else – it doesn’t mean that you don’t notice those things, it means that you don’t develop problems around them. You stop that kind of indulgence by being kind and patient—peacefully co-existing.

2.2.5.2 COMMENTS

Lovingkindness is described as “the practice of patience and kindness” even to oneself. That is to recognize our own actions for what they are, and so accepting them (like how we accept a dear friend even when that friend does something wrong). Hence, lovingkindness is neither pretending that faults do not exist nor accepting those faults as “all right.” Rather we know those faults are unhelpful, even bad, but we see them with lovingkindness. We accept them as they are and let them go. So we peacefully co-exist with others. These are all *vipassana* teachings in a social context.

3 The divine abodes as a path?

3.1 THE DIVINE ABODES AND AWAKENING

3.1.1 Texts in context

3.1.1.1 Early Buddhism recognizes various types of **liberation** (*vimutti*) or approaches to awakening. Not all of these equal *the liberation from all defilements* that comes with the attainment of arhathood.¹⁴ The meditative cultivation of **the divine abodes** leads to liberation of mind (*ceto, vimutti*), an expression meaning that this is a merely temporary state. Otherwise, to denote *supreme liberation* from all defilements, it is qualified with the expression “unsurpassed” (*akuppa*, literally, “unshakeable”) or else in combination with “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*).

3.1.1.2 The cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) or immeasurables (*appamañña*) has often been thought as originally being an independent path to awakening. The main reason for this seems to be that **the (Karaja, kāya) Brahma, vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208) (5) shows the practice of the divine abodes as **a liberation of the mind** (*ceto, vimutti*) to have an effect on one’s karma.¹⁵ This seems to be confirmed by **Dhammapada 368**, which says: (6)

<i>metta, vihārī yo bhikkhu</i>	A monk who dwells with <i>mettā</i>
<i>pasanno buddha, sāsane</i>	who has faith in the Buddha’s teaching,
<i>adhigacche padaṃ santam</i>	will reach the place of peace,
<i>sāṅkhārūpasamaṃ sukhaṃ</i>	the happiness that is the stilling of formations. ¹⁶ (Dh 368)

Dh 368 indicates that a monk (ie, a meditator) who practises lovingkindness with faith in the Buddha’s teaching will gain awakening.¹⁷ Both **the (Karaja, kāya) Brahma, vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208) and its

¹⁴ For a more detailed survey of different types of *vimutti*, see Anālayo, “*Vimutti*,” *Ency Bsm*, 2009.

¹⁵ A 10.208/5:300,7 (SD 2.10). On the Sutta, M Wiltshire (*Ascetic Figures before and in Early Buddhism*, 1990: 268) says “we see here that *mettā* eliminates in the present body kamma which would otherwise come to fruition in a future existence”; cf Maithrimurthi, *Wohllullen, Mitleid, Freude und Gleichmut*, 1999:73-78.

¹⁶ **Mahāvastu** (Senart 1897:421,18) has a very similar verse, followed by 3 verses that differ only in taking up the other 3 abodes similarly treated. A parallel in **Udānavarga** (Uv) 32.21 (Bernhard 1965:437) comes with 2 similar verses dealing with the same abode and having faith in the Buddha, but differing in the results they mention for such practice. Thus Uv 32.22, eg, indicates that such a monk will not regress and draws close to nirvāṇa (*abhavyaḥ parihāṇāya, nirvāṇayaiva so’ntike*). A parallel in **Gāndhārī Dharmapada** (GDh) 70 (Brough 1962/2001:128) also comes with a similar verse, GDh 69, suggesting that the monk, similarly described, shakes off evil (*duṇḍi pavaka dharma*). A parallel in **Patna Dharmapada** 59 (Cone 1989:119) continues after 4 *padas* similar to Dh 368 with *dr̥ṣṭe va dhamme nibbāṇam, yogacchemaṃ anuttaram*, thus clearly confirming that the preceding refers to full awakening. Roth, “Text of the Patna Dharmapada” (1980:102), however thinks that this part belongs to the next verse: Roth “Particular features of the language of the Ārya-Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins and their importance for early Buddhist tradition,” in (ed) H Bechert, *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung. Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, Nr 117, Göttingen, 1980:78-135.

¹⁷ Wiltshire op cit 1990:269 interprets **Dh 368** to imply “that *metta-vihāra* leads not to anāgamin status but to *nibbāna* itself, since elsewhere in the Nikāyas *santipada* is a synonym for *nibbāna*”; cf M Maithrimurthi, 1999:69.

parallels in Dh 368¹⁸ (5) point to karma influencing the next rebirth only. In other words, the passages refer to a temporary suspension of karma, not its final and total removal.¹⁹

3.1.2 “Systematic reading”

3.1.2.1 When examining a single verse, such as **Dh 368** (6), scholars advise that we should make a “**systematic**” reading of it. This means that we should read it in the context of the suttas or passages related to it.²⁰ If we wish to properly understand what the text properly means or refers to (in the early Buddhist teachings), such a single passage or passages need to be read in conjunction with other passages that are related to the present context.²¹

For example, on an unsystematic reading, taking **Dh 368** on its own, we may indeed conclude that dwelling with lovingkindness and having faith in the Buddha’s teaching is *all* that is needed to gain awakening, thus: [3.1.1.1]

A monk who dwells with <i>mettā</i>	who has faith in the Buddha’s teaching,	
will reach the place of peace,	the happiness that is the stilling of formations.	(Dh 368)

3.1.2.2 When we do a “unsystematic” or *isolated* reading of this passage in connection with another closely similar **Dhammapada** verse, we may conclude that being delighted and having faith in the Buddha’s teaching is all that is needed to gain awakening, thus:

<i>pāmojja, bahulo bhikkhu</i>	A monk who has great delight,
<i>pasanno buddha, sāsane</i>	who has faith in the Buddha’s teaching.

¹⁸ For a tr and study of the parallels MĀ 15 and a sutta qu in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikaṭīkā* see **Anālayo**, “Karma and Liberation—the Karajakāya-sutta (AN 10.208) in the light of its parallels,” in *Pāsādīkadānaṃ*, 2009, and **G Martini**, “The ‘Discourse on Accumulated Actions’ in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikā*,” *Indian International J of Buddhist Studies* 13 2012:49-79, respectively.

¹⁹ For more detailed discussions, see Giuliana **Martini**, “Meditative Dynamics of the Early Buddhist appamāṇas,” *Canadian J of Buddhist Studies* 7 2011:137-180, and **Dhammadinnā**, “Semantics of wholesomeness: purification of intention and the soteriological function of the immeasurables (appamāṇas) in early Buddhist thought,” in (ed) K-p Chuang, *Buddhist Meditative Traditions: Their Origin and Development*, Taipei 2014: 51-129. In this connection, we should refer to **D 13/1:251,5**, where the parable of the mighty conch-blower whose sound is heard in all directions illustrates how *mettā* that develops as a boundless radiation in all directions cannot be overruled by other more limited karma [4.1.2]. Note that in this parable the conch-blower is not able to silence any other sound forever. This parable illustrates a temporary suppression. The conch-blower imagery does not convey the idea that the *mettā* overcomes all limited *karma* forever, but so long as there is *mettā* (and the other abodes), other limited types of karma will not remain, just as when the conch is blown, other sounds will not be heard.

²⁰ The term “**systematic**” reading is explained by **PARK Jungnook** (*How Buddhism Acquired a Soul on the Way to China*, Sheffield: Equinox, 2012) thus: “by a ‘systematic’ reading I mean one which provides a consistent understanding of the text, consistent not merely within itself but within a wider textual context” (74). Park adds: “I regard a ‘systematic’ reading as an honest effort to understand the whole context of a text or its doctrinal system, proscribing minority ... from appropriating the true voice of the whole text.” (78)

²¹ **Bodhi**, “Musīla and Nārada revisited: seeking the key to interpretation,” in (edd) Blackburn & Samuels, *Approaching the Dhamma, Buddhist Texts and Practice in South and Southeast Asia*, Pariyatti, 2003, explains in relation to the Pāli suttas that “not only are the texts themselves composed in a clipped laconic style that mocks our thirst for conceptual completeness, but their meaning often seems to rest upon a deep underlying groundwork of interconnected ideas that is nowhere stated baldly in a way that might guide interpretation ... the *nikāyas* embed the basic principles of doctrine in a multitude of short, often elusive discourses that draw upon and allude to the underlying system without explicitly spelling it out. To determine the principles one has to extract them piecemeal, by considering in juxtaposition a wide assortment of texts.” (47)

adhigacche padarāṃ santarāṃ will reach the place of peace,
sāṅkhārūpasamarāṃ sukharāṃ the happiness that is the stilling of formations. (Dh 381)

This Dhammapada verse (Dh 381) differs from the other one (Dh 368) only in the first line, in referring to “having great delight [joy].” On following the same mode of interpretation, one may conclude that even divine-abode practice is not needed. All that is required to reach awakening, it seems, is only delight and faith; but we know that this is unlikely considering the early Buddhist teachings as a whole.

3.1.2.3 It is likely that an “unsystematic reading” of such passages will fail to reflect the true spirit of early Buddhism. A proper interpretation of these verses is that it poetically points to showing our faith and joy in the Dharma, that is, a positive attitude towards Dharma training.²²

We must thus conclude that these 2 verses by themselves do not support the notion that the divine abodes were recognized in early Buddhist thought as an independent path to awakening. Analayo adds that “this notion is to my mind as unconvincing as the hypothesis that the *jhānas* in general constituted an independent path to the final goal.” (2015d:17)

3.2 THE POTENTIAL OF DIVINE ABODE PRACTICE

3.2.1 The divine abodes and non-returning

3.2.1.1 Although the divine abodes do not constitute an independent path to full awakening in early Buddhism, this does not mean that they do not play a significant role in the progress to awakening. This is in fact the theme of both of the Dhammapada verses we mentioned [3.1.2]. **Dh 368** clearly highlights that “dwelling in lovingkindness,” that is cultivating *mettā*, can help us progress on the path of awakening.

The (Karaja,kāya) Brahma,vihāra Sutta (A 10.208) and its Madhyama Āgama parallel are even more explicit about this: they present a noble disciple’s practice of the divine abodes as particularly helpful for attaining non-returning.²³

3.2.1.2 A similarly significant statement is found in the well known **Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Sn 1.8 = Khp 9). This Sutta closes by stating that when one cultivates lovingkindness:

diṭṭhiñ ca anupagamma And not falling into views,
silavā dassanena sampanno virtuous, accomplished in insight,
kāmesu vineyya gedham having discarded greed for sense-pleasures—
na hi jātu gabbha,seyyam punā-r-etī ti one will not return to lie in a womb. (Sn 152)

The first 2 lines seem to allude to the overcoming of the first 3 fetters (*samyojana*) of self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), attachment to rituals and vows (*śīla-b,bata parāmāsa*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*): this

²² See Anālayo, “Exemplary qualities of a monastic, the Saṃyukta-āgama counterpart to the Mahāgopālaka-sutta and the need of balancing inner development with concern for others,” *Sri Lanka International J of Buddhist Studies* 1 2010d:23 n35, where 3 Chinese parallels to **Dh 368** in fact clearly mention the need for calm and insight; cf T210 (T4.572a11) and T212 (T4.764c27): 比丘為慈，愛敬佛教，深入止觀，滅行乃安， and similarly in T213 (T4.796b1): 苾芻為慈，愛敬於佛教，深入妙止觀，滅穢行乃安。

²³ **A 10.208/5:300,12** (SD 2.10) explains that a noble disciple (*ariya,sāvaka*) who develops *mettā* (and the other abodes) in this way will progress to non-returning, similarly stated in MĀ 15 (T1.438a22); on the slightly differing phrasing in Tib version, but which still speaks of a noble disciple, see discussion in Martini 2012:68 f n58.

refers to **the streamwinner**. The last 2 lines then can only allude to **the non-returner**, one who has overcome both sensual desire and its opposite, *ill will*; and will not return to (be reborn in) the sense-world. This is, in fact, confirmed by the Commentary (KhpA 251,22).²⁴

In other words, **the Karaja, kāya Brahma, vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208) and its parallels as well as **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Sn 1.8 = Khp 9) may be stating that *mettā* is able to help in our progress from stream-winning to non-returning. Due to the frequent occurrence of teachings on *mettā* in the suttas, it is not surprising that it is so. We will examine this further below [5].

3.2.2 Lovingkindness and the mental fetters

3.2.2.1 The liberating potential of lovingkindness in this respect [3.2.1] would then be closely related to **the mental fetters** (*saṃyojana*) that the streamwinner must overcome if they are to progress and gain non-returning. More specifically, lovingkindness helps in the overcoming and uprooting of the twin defilements of sensual desire (*kāma-c, chanda*) and ill will (*vyāpāda*).

These defilements are significantly weakened with the attaining of **once-returning** and uprooted by **non-returning**. **The (Tika) Sikkhā Sutta 1** (A 3.85) and **the (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta 2** (A 3.86), and their Saṃyukta Āgama parallels²⁵ further show that to progress from streamwinning to non-returning requires in particular fulfilling the training in concentration (based on being accomplished in moral virtue and with some deep level of wisdom).

To progress from streamwinning to non-returning, we must fulfill the training in concentration by mastering the dhyanas, with which *sensual desire* and *ill will* are uprooted. The reason is clear and simple: in order to be free from sensual desire which is sense-based, we need to be well acquainted with transcorporeal bliss—that of the dhyanas. When we have overcome sensual desire, its opposite, *ill will* is also uprooted.

This process of gaining the dhyanas can indeed be accomplished with the help of lovingkindness. Lovingkindness cultivation is thus one of the ways for fulfilling the training in concentration. The experience of inner happiness and peace of deep concentration is able to free us from the sensual pleasures when we are still under the power of our physical senses.

3.2.2.2 Lovingkindness helps in attaining deep meditation concentration, which in turn is needed for overcoming and uprooting **anger and hatred**, since lovingkindness is, by its very nature, opposed to them. This transformative potential of lovingkindness is widely confirmed by contemporary psycholog-

²⁴ Sn 1.8/142-152 (SD 38.3). W H Walters (“New light on enlightenment: a convergence of recent scholarship and emerging neuroscience?” *J of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* 3 2012) is wrong in concluding that the parable of the mother caring for her only child (**Sn 149b**) “apparently, is how one may achieve enlightenment” (2012: 162). The closing verse **Sn 152** should be read with the lovingkindness cultivator “having understood” *abhisamecca* (**Sn 143b**; a durative verb meaning), ie, “with the understanding” of the nature of nirvana. The last verse (Sn 152) refers to the streamwinner who is capable of attaining non-returning. Thus—as Analayo notes (2015d)—“when Crosby 2008:8 concludes that ‘*mettā*, according to this text, is salvific’ [cf Maithrimurthi 1999:65-67 and Gombrich 2009:87] then this is correct only as long as such cultivation is undertaken by a virtuous person and based on the transcendence of views and the vision attained with stream-entry, leading through the removal of sensuality to non-return [sic]. The stanza does not present *mettā* as leading to realization all by itself, without being combined with these other aspects of the path.” (Analayo 2015d: n94, citing Crosby, “Gendered symbols in Theravada Buddhism: missed positives in the representation of the female,” *Hsuan Chuang J of Buddhist Studies* 9 2008:8; Maithrimurthi, *Wohllwollen, Mitleid, Freude und Gleichmut*, 1999:65-67, and Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought*, 2009:87.)

²⁵ A 3.85/1:232,12 (SD 3.3(2)) and A 3.86/1:233,22 (SD 80.13) with their parallels SĀ 820 (T2.210c1) and SĀ 821 (T2.210c27). Cf **(Tika) Sikkhā S 3** (A 3.87,4/1:235), SD 80.14.

ical study and research, which has empirically shown various benefits of lovingkindness cultivation.²⁶ Studies have shown, for example, that the cultivation of lovingkindness is often effective in reducing, even removing, anger and psychological distress,²⁷ as well as the negative symptoms of schizophrenia,²⁸ and to increase positive emotions and pro-social behaviour.²⁹

Hence, undoubtedly, to engage in the practice of **lovingkindness** or any of the other divine abodes, especially compassion, benefits human vis-à-vis adversities and suffering. Very significantly for Buddhist practitioners, lovingkindness is a great help for the path of awakening. Although lovingkindness in itself is not a path to awakening, it offers (as we have noted above) great support for the path of awakening.

4 Verbalization or pervasion?

4.1 DIFFICULTIES WITH LOVINGKINDNESS CULTIVATION

4.1.1 Difficulties with verbalization and visualization

4.1.1.1 We are often taught the lovingkindness meditation by way of directing our intentions or feelings toward selected people or subjects (including our pets and “beings”), beginning with oneself, then to a dear friend, followed by a neutral person, after that a difficult person (such as an enemy), and finally, “breaking the barriers,” to all beings.³⁰ This method is, as a rule, done with verbalizing or “sub-verbalizing,” mentally expressing the positive attitude, sometimes with some visualization.

Various modern meditation researchers learned that meditators often had **difficulties with this popular structured method** of cultivating lovingkindness or any of the other 3 immeasurables (compassion, gladness or equanimity).³¹ A study by Barnhofer et al (2010) found that meditators with habitual brooding tended to respond better to instructions in the breath meditation and therefore are not taught

²⁶ For a survey, see S G **Hofmann** et al, “Loving-kindness and compassion meditation: potential for psychological interventions,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 31 **2011**:1126-1132.; B **Alba**, “Loving-kindness meditation: a field study,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 14,2 2013. [[ResearchGate](#)] 7 Oct 2023.

²⁷ J W Carson, F J Keefe, T R Lynch & K M Carson, “Lovingkindness Meditation for Chronic Low Back Pain,” *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 23.3 2005:287-304.

²⁸ D P **Johnson**, D L Penn, B L Fredrickson, P S Meyer, A M Kring, and M Brantley, “Loving-kindness meditation to enhance recovery from negative symptoms of schizophrenia,” *J of Clinical Psychology* 65,5 **2009**:499-509. D P **Johnson**, D.L. Penn, B L Fredrickson, A M Kring, P S Meyer, L I Catalino, & M Brantley, “A pilot study of loving kindness meditation for the negative symptoms of schizophrenia,” *Schizophrenia Research* 129 **2011**: 137-140.

²⁹ B L **Fredrickson**, M A Cohn, K A Coffey, J Pek, & S M Finkel, “Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources,” *J of Personality and Social Psychology* 95,5 **2008**:1045-1062. C A **Hutcherson**, E M Seppala, & J J Gross, “Loving-kindness meditation increases social connectedness,” *Emotion* 8,5 **2008**:720-724. Notably in a study of *mettā* as a buffer for social stress R W **Law** (2011) found that exposure to even very brief sessions of *mettā* can actually have negative effects for those who are in a negative mood (*An Analogue Study of Loving-Kindness Meditation as a Buffer against Social Stress*, PhD thesis, Tucson: Univ of Arizona, **2011**) [[ProQuest](#)] 7 Oct 2023. Law explains that “engaging in LKM [lovingkindness meditation] may bring attention to whatever feelings the participant is having in the moment. If the participant enters into [an] LKM session in a negative mood (or not in a positive mood), these negative (or non-positive) feelings would become more salient during the meditation. While these negative (or non-positive) feelings may dissipate in a longer meditation session, they may actually become accentuated in the short run in a brief meditation session.” (Law 2011:112)

³⁰ See eg S Salzberg, *Loving-kindness: the revolutionary art of happiness*, Boston: Shambala, 1995.

³¹ X Zeng, R Wang, V Y L Chan, T P S Oei, & F Y K Leung, “The development of the difficulties during meditation involving immeasurable attitudes scale,” *Mindfulness* 10 2019:812-823.

the cultivation of lovingkindness.³² Lumma et al (2015), too, reported the meditators' preference for the breath meditation over lovingkindness, probably because of the high degree of cognitive effort involved in expressing positive thoughts.³³

Boellinghaus et al (2013) reported that meditators found it challenging to intellectually engage with the concept and task of the LKM (lovingkindness meditation) while cognitively connecting with it. Some participants felt that the meditation was too structured or abstract, as it was "taking away from how I was feeling and it was just kind of trying to think certain thoughts about [it], you know, it was really cognitive, really brainy, and I couldn't connect with it."³⁴

4.1.1.2 Meditators find difficulties not only with the stereotyped verbalizing ("May I be well ... happy ...) but with the visualization, too. Galante et al (2016) reported that a participant, who had received instructions in lovingkindness meditation that combined the standard approach with some degree of visualization, remarked:

I'm finding it really hard to summon up a feeling when I visualise people. I do not feel any different, and I do not have the same feeling that I would if I saw them for real.³⁵ (1)

Other meditators even reported feelings of sadness—which is the contrary to the purpose of cultivation of lovingkindness:

Visualising a loved one was ... difficult. Most of my loved ones live far away since I started uni[versity], so that exercise was sadly rather upsetting for me as I ended up feeling longing rather than love. (2) (Galante et al 2016 id)

In case (1), the meditator had difficulty evoking lovingkindness in the absence of the subject. He said that he "did not feel any different," meaning that he was unable to show or feel love for anyone in their absence. It is likely that lovingkindness meditation was not suitable for him at this stage. Perhaps he should be instructed to do some breath meditation first. When he has attained some level of focus or peace, he should then cultivate lovingkindness. Yet, there might be other reasons for the meditator's inability to evoke lovingkindness.

In case (2) the meditator actually *missed* the loved one he had started thinking about! He could be told to only direct his lovingkindness to loved ones at a later stage when his lovingkindness was strong enough. Or, if he was attached to those loved ones, he should avoid using them as his meditation subjects until he has built up his mental focus with the lovingkindness, or with breath meditation.

³² T Barnhofer, T Chittka, H Nightingale, C Visser, & C Crane, "State effects of two forms of meditation on pre-frontal EEG asymmetry in previously depressed individuals," *Mindfulness* 1 2010:21-27.

³³ A L Lumma, B E Kok, & T Singer, "Is meditation always relaxing? Investigating heart rate, heart rate variability, experienced effort and likeability during training of three types of meditation," *International Journal of Psychophysiology* 97,1 2015:38-45.

³⁴ I Boellinghaus, F W Jones, & J Hutton, "Cultivating self-care and compassion in psychological therapists in training: the experience of practicing loving-kindness meditation," *Training and Education in Professional Psychology* 7,4 2013:271.

³⁵ J Galante, M J Bekkers, C Mitchell, & J Gallacher, "Lovingkindness meditation effects on well-being and altruism: a mixed methods online RCT," *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 8,3 2016:338 (Word version p21). [[ResearchGate](#)] [[msWord](#)] 24 Sep 2023.

There is a 3rd case worth mentioning, reported to me by Matt Jenkins:

I remember a meditation teacher who was originally from Thailand saying that they had noted cultural differences in some of the difficulties new practitioners experienced with metta meditation. Those they had taught back home struggled with expressing metta for their ‘enemies’ while those in the West had no problem there but really struggled expressing metta for themselves. He conceptualised this in terms of ‘guilt cultures vs shame cultures’—in the West we hate ourselves because *we blame ourselves for our humiliations*, elsewhere *people blame others for humiliating them*. I’ve never been persuaded of that heuristic, but find the barrier itself interesting—it certainly reflects my experience of learning to meditate with lovingkindness.

(Matt Jenkins, personal communication, 25 Dec 2023) [4.1.1.3 n]

In fact, most experienced teachers would stress on the importance of practising *both* breath meditation and lovingkindness meditation. One of them should be easier for the meditator, and this would be the basis for their focus. Once they have attained some focus, they could go on to cultivate the other meditation with which they have difficulty. Anyway, the point remains that they may still have difficulty with lovingkindness for various reasons.

4.1.1.3 The Visuddhi,magga advises against the “faults regarding persons” (*puggala,dosa*) in loving-kindness meditation. These 4 kinds of people should not be used as the first subject, that is, as a “dear person”: someone who is unloved, unloving or unpleasant (*appiya*), a dearly loved friend (*atippiya sahāyaka*), a neutral person (*majjhatta*) and a hostile person (*veri,puggala*). (Vism 9.4-7)

Buddhaghosa (the Visuddhi,magga’s compiler) explains that it would tire us to have an unloved person as the first subject (that is, to see them as a “dear” person). Similarly, to have a neutral person as the first subject would also be tiring. It will be very difficult for us to show lovingkindness to either of these people at the start. So too putting a dearly beloved in the “neutral” stage will be tiring, too, since it will be difficult to think of a loved one as being a neutral person.

When we put a hostile person in the first stage, we are likely to feel anger or hatred. On the other hand, putting someone of the opposite sex (*liṅga,visabhāga*) is likely to arouse lust in those attracted to them. The Visuddhi,magga, in its section of reflecting on a corpse, gives the same advice, defining *visa-bhāga* to mean the “opposite” sex (Vism 6.14). Psychologically, however, it makes good sense that we understand *visabhāga* (“different, opposing, opposite, unusual, uncommon”) to mean the sex that arouses lust in us. In other words, we should avoid taking as the first subject anyone whom we find sexually attractive. The reason for this is very clear: we are likely to arouse lust instead of lovingkindness.³⁶

Similarly, we should avoid putting anyone we have emotional issues with—such as parents, relatives, friends, or a sick person—as the first subject of our lovingkindness meditation. Among Asians, as a rule, it is not advisable to put a parent, especially the mother, as the first subject. This is likely to instead conjure up overwhelming feelings of pity, sadness, worry or anger depending on one’s relationship with her. Of course, this similarly applies to a father in a similar situation. In the case of a sick person or any such

³⁶ Matt Jenkins’ feedback: “Going back to my earlier comment [4.1.1.2]: The meditation teacher did actually shift to starting with a hated or disliked person when dealing with some Western groups of meditators. Their thought was a practical one—if it’s easier for them to wish lovingkindness on a foe, that is [as] an introduction to loving-kindness which they can then extend to themselves. | (After all, however reflexively I am resistant to wishing myself well, I can at least acknowledge that my faults are not as severe as those of, say, the late Henry Kissinger, so if I can manage to wish him well it’s a double standard to refuse the same for myself.)” 25 Dec 2023

difficult person, we should only direct our lovingkindness to them when we are sufficiently focused with lovingkindness, or better, cultivate compassion³⁷ [4.2.1.2], to be able to do it effectively.

4.1.1.4 It is important here to remember **the primacy of lovingkindness** amongst the 4 immeasurables.³⁸ It should be noted that there is really *only one key positive emotion*, that is, **lovingkindness** (*mettā*), that is, the *essential* divine abode [SD 38.5 (2.1.2)]. This is the basis for compassion (*karuṇā*), which is the basis for gladness (*muditā*), which is the basis for equanimity (*upekkhā*). When we have habitually mastered lovingkindness, we can then more effectively direct compassion to the subject. We build up the positive emotions cumulatively, *pari passu*, one after the other.³⁹

4.1.2 Radiation of lovingkindness

4.1.2.1 Considering the growing frequency of difficulties [eg 4.1.1.2] with lovingkindness meditation as taught and practised today, it's time that we re-examine the standard instructions for lovingkindness meditation and bring to them new perspectives. To begin with, the idea of using the verbal formulas to cultivate lovingkindness to specific individuals—starting with oneself and proceeding to a dear friend, then a neutral person, followed by a hostile person—is *not* found in the early Buddhist texts.⁴⁰

In the suttas, called “the early Buddhist texts” (EBTs), compiled between the 5th and the 3rd centuries BCE,⁴¹ the cultivation of the 4 immeasurables (*appamāṇa* or *appamañña*) or divine abodes (*brahma*, *vihāra*) by way of radiating them in all directions. **The (Brahma, vihāra) Subha Sutta** (M 99), records the well known metaphor of **a mighty conch-blower** who “with little difficulty makes a proclamation to the 4 quarters,”⁴² even so:

[one,] with a heart⁴³ of **lovingkindness**, dwells suffusing one quarter;
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,
he dwells suffusing all the world with lovingkindness
that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

*mettā, sahaḡatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati
tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ
iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbatthatāya
sabbāvantāṃ lokāṃ mettā, sahaḡatena cetasā
vipulena maha-g, gatena appamāṇena averena avyāpajjhena pharitvā viharati.*⁴⁴

(M 99,24-27/2:207 f), SD 38.6

³⁷ To cultivate, one needs to start off with some lovingkindness, and then progress to compassion cultivation: SD 38.5 (4).

³⁸ A parallel situation is found in the primacy of the 1st dhyana, see SD 8.4 (5.1.1.6, 12.2). The 4th dhyana is, in turn, the basis for all the following 4 formless dhyanas: SD 8.4 (12.3).

³⁹ See eg **Tevijja S** (D 13,76-79), SD 1.8.

⁴⁰ Analayo, “Immeasurable meditations and mindfulness,” *Mindfulness* 10 2029:2620-2628. Analayo further refers to his “Compassion in the Āgamas and Nikāyas,” *Dharma Drum Journal of Buddhist Studies* 16 2015:1-30.

⁴¹ **Analayo**, “The historical value of the Pali discourses,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 55 **2012e**:223-253. **Sujato & Brahmali**, *The Authenticity of the Early Buddhist Texts*, Perth, Australia, 2015: ch 3. [OCBS].

⁴² *Saṅkha, dhama*, M 99,24-27/2:207 f = S 42.8/4:322.

⁴³ “Heart,” *citta*.

⁴⁴ M 99,24-27/2:207 f (SD 38.6).

4.1.2.2 In the ancient India, blowing a **conch-shell** was a regular means of communication over distances and for important rituals. Hence, it was employed in warfare, too, for communicating strategic moves, since its pervasive sound could be heard above the battle din. Even today, the conch is blown during certain ceremonies, especially at the start of Hindu *pūjā* or ritual worship.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the blowing of a conch requires skill and strength. One has to breathe into the abdomen and thorax. The lips need to be properly puckered to create the vibratory force to sound the conch. Different kinds of conch sounds are made by adjusting the lips and tongue. The conch sound is then pervasive and resonant. The spread and beauty of the conch-sound is thus an apt illustration for the radiation of lovingkindness in all directions.⁴⁶

The cultivation of lovingkindness and of compassion—these 2 are popular with psychology specialists and researchers—thus needs both strength and skill. The key idea of the conch metaphor is the immeasurable or boundless pervasion in all directions by the sound of the conch. The same pervasive nature of the mental radiation of the 4 divine abodes are thus made in an “immeasurable” or “boundless” manner in the 6 quarters (east, south, west, north, below and above). The key characteristic of the mental radiation of lovingkindness and the other 3 divine abodes is their immeasurability and boundlessness.

4.1.2.3 The (Majjhima) Dhānañjāni Sutta (M 97) has the “divine abode” pericope (on lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity), but without the conch-blower parable. The Sutta relates how the elder Sāriputta attends to the brahmin Dhānañjāni on his deathbed, one who clearly has not received the teaching on the divine abodes before. The Sutta also tells us that this brahmin has at an earlier time been engaging in immoral conduct.

Clearly then the brahmin is not a meditator but, compassionately guided by an arhat (Sāriputta), he is able to meditate to reach sufficient mental focus so that, upon dying (and despite his terminal pains), is reborn in a brahma heaven. The practice of the divine abodes literally brings the brahmin Dhānañjāni to the divine abiding (*brahma, vihāra*) of the brahmas (high gods).

Given that according to **the (Majjhima) Dhānañjāni Sutta** (M 97) the brahmin is able to cultivate the brahmavihāras sufficiently well to be reborn as a brahma, it follows that he must have been able to successfully execute Sāriputta’s instructions on radiating the abodes, despite his dying state and lack of meditative expertise. From all this, we may rightly conclude that it is possible to benefit from the practice of the immeasurables by radiating lovingkindness and the other divine abodes without the need of attaining dhyana, as in Dhānañjāni’s case.

4.1.2.4 From the parable of the conch-blower [4.1.2.2] and the account of Dhānañjāni’s rebirth [4.1.2.3], it is clear that the stock passage on the divine abodes [4.1.2.1] does not mention any *subject* of such radiation, that is, no one is mentioned as the “recipient” to whom the positive emotion is directed. Rather, the emphasis is on *the personal experience* of **the boundless radiation** itself.

The boundless radiation of the positive emotion takes the intentions and feelings of lovingkindness and the other divine abodes as both its *object and content*. The attention is not in any external person, being or state (or their internalized images) but in the subtler experience of the immeasurable state

⁴⁵ The conch is the shell of the giant sea-snail, *Turbinella pyrum*, abundantly found in the Indian Ocean. The **conch** is blown thrice before a *pūjā*, and also during such occasions as honouring the earth deity (*bhūmi pūjā*) (as ground-breaking ritual), and during marriage, house-warming and *upanayana* (brahminical thread ritual) marking passage into adulthood. It is also used for pouring the “dedication water” (*dakḥiṇ’odaka*) during marriage and dedication of merits.

⁴⁶ On cultivating the divine abodes *directionally*, see SD 38.5 (2.1.3.2).

(*appamāna*) itself, that is, the intention rooted in lovingkindness, compassion, gladness or equanimity itself. One’s heart or mind is then said to be “boundless” or “immeasurable” (*appamāna*).⁴⁷

4.1.3 The subjects of radiation

4.1.3.1 Although the stock passage on cultivating the divine abodes only mentions a pervasive radiation of each abode extending in all directions [4.1.2.1], we can also see more specific instructions on the subjects of the cultivation described elsewhere, such as in **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Khp 9 = Sn 1.8) or simply the Metta Sutta (attesting to its popularity in being included in the Khuddaka, pāṭha, the first book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, and which is meant to be learnt by novices and the laity). The fact that the Metta Sutta is also included in **the Sutta Nipāta**, perhaps the oldest of the sutta collections, suggests that it is probably an ancient text.

The Metta Sutta (Sn 1.8), composed in verse, in fact lists categories of beings that can be the subjects of our lovingkindness, thus:

<p>4 <i>Ye keci pāṇa, bhūt’atthi tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā dīgha vā ye mahantā vā majjhimā rassakā aṇuka, thūlā</i></p>	<p>Whatever living beings there are— be they <u>moving or still</u>,⁴⁸ without any exception: be they <u>long</u>, or be they <u>large</u>, <u>medium, short, fine or gross</u>;</p>	<p>Sn 146</p>
<p>5 <i>diṭṭhā vā ye vā addiṭṭhā ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhit’attā</i></p>	<p>be they <u>seen or unseen</u>; those dwelling <u>far or near</u>; those already <u>born</u> or those <u>seeking birth</u>— may all beings be happy at heart!</p>	<p>Sn 147 (Khp 9,4 f = Sn 1.8,4-5c), SD 38.3</p>

The method laid out here—which makes use of categories of beings (as differing from the “directional” method of the better known text)—may serve as a simpler way for meditators who need some palpable visualization. The beings are listed in pairs—“moving/still,” “seen/unseen,” “far/near,” “already born/seeking birth”—or in triads—“long/large/medium,” “short/fine/gross.” We pervade them all, indeed, the whole world, with boundless radiation of lovingkindness (Sn 148 f). However, notice that these are merely “categories,” without explicitly stating any kind of beings, or in terms of individual humans.

A careful study of **the Metta Sutta** will show that it not only *opens* with instructions in moral training (Sn 142-145b) but also *closes* with the mention of being “virtuous” (*sīlavā*) (Sn 152b). This shows that the whole Sutta is a training for the path rooted in moral virtue (*sīla*) as the basis for concentration (*samādhi*), and with both as the bases for liberating wisdom (*paññā*). In other words, moral virtue and lovingkindness promote one another, and this co-operation promotes insight or vision (*dassana*, or right view), that is, wisdom. In short, this is **virtue ethics** [5.1.1.1].

4.1.3.2 Another interesting sutta development of the radiation of lovingkindness involves the famous parable of the saw, that is, **the Kakacūpama Sutta** (M 21), which says:

⁴⁷ See Dhammadinna, “Semantics of wholesomeness: purification of intention and the soteriological function of the immeasurables (*appamānas*) in early Buddhist thought,” in (ed) K-p Chuang, *Buddhist Meditative Traditions: their origin and development*, Taiwan: Dharma Drum Publishing Corp, 2014:90.

⁴⁸ **Karaṇīya Metta S** (Khp 9,4b = Sn 146b) + SD 38.3 (5.3); **Nālaka S** (Sn 704b), SD 49.18; SD 12.4 (6.7.2). Foll PED, *tasa* is metaphorically used of people who are in *fear and trembling*, as distinguished from *thāvara*, one *self-possessed and stable being* (= arhat, KhpA 245). Traditional translators tend to tr *tasā vā thāvarā vā* as “the frail or the firm” or such like, and interpret it as referring to those who still have craving (*tasā*) and the arhats (*thāvarā*) respectively, in keeping with Comy (KhpA 245).

Bhikshus, even if low-down thieves were to cut you up from limb to limb with a **double-handled saw**, if you were ever to defile your mind with anger, you are thereby not a doer of my teaching.

Therein, bhikshus, you should train yourselves in this way:

*‘Our hearts will not be perverted in any way, nor shall we utter any bad speech, but **we shall dwell with a heart of lovingkindness, moved by goodness, without a hating heart.***

And we will dwell pervading that person with a heart of lovingkindness.

And based on that, we will dwell pervading the whole world with a heart of lovingkindness, *vast, grown great, boundless, free from hate, free from ill will.*’ [§11.4]

This is how you, bhikshus, should train yourselves.

(M 21), SD 38.1

In the study of such a difficult text, we should carry out the advice of **the Neyy’attha Nī’t’attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5 f).⁴⁹ First, we should examine whether the Buddha is talking on the ultimate Dharma level (referring to true reality) or using some conventional teaching to point to such a reality. Clearly, the parable of the saw refers to a conventional teaching. This teaching is directly addressed to the monk, Phagguna, who lusts after some nuns, and angrily resents anyone who speaks ill of the nuns (and the nuns, too, would angrily react against those who disapprove of Phagguna).

On account of Phagguna’s strong lust, the Buddha has to speak emphatically in a hyperbolic manner to shake Phagguna out of his infatuation. Firstly, he is taught to overcome *lust* by cultivating lovingkindness. Since lust is life-affirming, the Buddha resorts to a skillful means of using an imagery that denies life: vicious bandits who enjoy murdering their victims by dismembering them with a double-handed saw! This imagery is not from real life (we have no other mention of this horrific act other than in the parable).⁵⁰ This is actually a hint of hellish sufferings which are the karmic fruits of a monk who breaks his vows and falls into lust.⁵¹

4.2 RECIPIENTS OF LOVINGKINDNESS

4.2.1 A living being as meditation subject

4.2.1.1 Although the emphasis in the cultivation of lovingkindness is that of universal pervasion, that is, radiating lovingkindness towards “all beings,” there is an early Buddhist text, **the Mettā Bhāvanā Sutta** (It 27), where we can show lovingkindness to “even a single living being” (*ekam pi pāṇam*). The Sutta’s key verse says:

*ekam pi ce pāṇam aduṭṭha,citto
mettāyati kusalī tena hoti
sabbe’va pāṇe manasā’nukampī
pahūtam ariyo pakaroti puññaṃ*

If one has a hate-free mind for even a single living being,
one shows lovingkindness: one is thereby wholesome.
One has a mind of compassion towards all life;
the noble one creates abundant merit.

(It 27,11/1.3.7/21), SD 30.7

The Sutta highlights lovingkindness as a source of “abundant merit” (*pahūtam puññaṃ*): any other way of making merit does not amount to even a “16th part” (*sojasim*; an iota) of this hate-free mind towards a single living being (It 27,13b). *Mettā* and merits cannot be measured; so this is another sutta

⁴⁹ A 2.3.5+6/1:60 (SD 2.6b).

⁵⁰ On the Buddha admonishing Phagguna, see SD 38.1 (1.2).

⁵¹ For a scholarly view on the parable of the saw—that the radiation of *mettā* to the vicious bandits is an interpolation—see Analayo op cit 2019a:2623.

hyperbole to highlight that showing lovingkindness to even a single person or being clears our mind of unwholesomeness here and now; what more when we make a habit of cultivating lovingkindness.

4.2.1.2 The Vibhaṅga (“analysis”), the 2nd book of the Pali Abhidhamma, has its chapter 13, the “analysis of the immeasurables” (*appamañña, vibhaṅga*), open by making a similar remark. While **the Mettā Bhāvanā Sutta** (It 27,11) speaks of lovingkindness in terms of merit-making, **the Vibhaṅga** passage explains how mentally seeing a dearly beloved, one then radiates that lovingkindness to all beings in one direction (to begin with):

And how does a monk dwell pervading one direction with a mind imbued with **lovingkindness**?

Just as one may have lovingkindness upon seeing one person (*ekam puggalaṃ*) that is dear and pleasant (*piyaṃ manāpaṃ*), in the same way, one radiates *lovingkindness* to all beings.

kathaṃ ca bhikkhu mettā, sahatena cetasā ekam disaṃ pharivā viharati?
seyyathā pi nāma ekam puggalaṃ piyaṃ manāpaṃ disvā mettāyeyya, evam eva sabbe
satte mettāya pharati (Vbh 272)

Although this Vibhaṅga passage speaks of evoking lovingkindness by “seeing” a single person, it still does not say that such an individual be taken as *the meditation subject*. The dear and pleasant person is held up only as the starting-point of lovingkindness cultivation.

The Vibhaṅga goes on to explain the starting-point of **the cultivation of compassion** (*karuṇā, bhavaṇā*) as follows:

And how does a monk dwell pervading one direction with a mind imbued with **compassion**?

Just as one may have compassion upon seeing one person that is miserable, suffering from one’s own misconduct (*duggataṃ durūpetam*), in the same way, one radiates *compassion* to all beings.

kathaṃ ca bhikkhu karuṇā, sahatena cetasā ekam disaṃ pharivā viharati?
seyyathā pi nāma ekam puggalaṃ duggataṃ durūpetam disvā karuṇāyeyya, evam eva sabbe
satte karuṇāya pharati (Vbh 273)

It should be noted then that while in lovingkindness cultivation, we as a rule start with a dear person (or ourself if that is easier), but in compassion cultivation, we start with someone who is suffering some negative situation. Then, we should remember that we must begin with lovingkindness cultivation before we can do compassion. Once we have mastered lovingkindness, we may need only a relatively short time to get into a state of lovingkindness as the basis for cultivating compassion.⁵² [4.2.1.3]

4.2.2 Specific persons as meditation subjects

4.2.2.1 The idea of taking individuals as the subjects of lovingkindness or of compassion is explained in detail by Buddhaghosa in his **Visuddhimagga** (5th-century Theravāda meditation manual). He, however, does not rely on the suttas for this. Instead, he quotes from an Abhidhamma work, **the Vibhaṅga**, 2 passages on lovingkindness (Vbh 272) and on compassion (Vbh 273) mentioned above [4.2.1.2]. Buddhaghosa takes these Vibhaṅga passages literally, and thus encouraged the person-oriented methods in

⁵² On compassion cultivation, see SD 38.5 (4).

his Visuddhimagga. His commentary provided the template for the way that lovingkindness and compassion are generally taught and practised today.

Buddhaghosa probably had no choice but to bow to the Theravāda orthodoxy of the Mahāvihāra in highlighting the Abhidhamma.⁵³ Another reason for Buddhaghosa's promotion of the person-based method was probably because of sectarian competition or borrowing of sources. On this account, Anala-yo concludes: "This goes to show that the above passage in the Vibhaṅga is best understood as exemplifying a general trend rather than being the one instance responsible for this development." (2019a:2624)

4.2.2.2 In fact, a similar person-based approach to the cultivations of the immeasurables is found in Sarvāstivāda.⁵⁴ **The Abhidharma,kośa,bhāṣya** (4th-5th centuries), Vasubandhu's Sarvāstivāda exegesis, tries to simplify the method of radiating the immeasurables for those who have difficulties doing them. He prescribes that, in such a case, one should divide the subjects into 3 categories: friends (3 kinds), a neutral person (1 kind), and hostile persons (3 kinds).⁵⁵ **The 3 kinds** of friends and hostile persons are divided into *inferior, middling, and superior*. We thus have as subjects for these cultivations: a very dear friend, a good friend, a distant friend, a neutral person, a slightly hostile person, a hostile person, and a very hostile person.

4.2.2.3 These categories of subjects differ from those of **the Visuddhimagga**, which presents only 4 subjects: *oneself, a friend, a neutral person, and a hostile person*. The idea of progressing from a friend to a neutral person and then to a hostile person is common to both traditions. The Abhidharma,kośa,-bhāṣya method expands on this common idea by introducing categorization of friends and the hostile persons into 3 levels each. The Visuddhi,magga method merely adds a 4th subject to the common set of 3 subjects, that is, oneself. The suttas do not have any such categorizations.

4.2.3 Loving oneself

4.2.3.1 The practice of directing lovingkindness to oneself probably originated from an interesting Pali term used in the stock passage for the radiation of the immeasurables. The term is a variant reading found in different editions of the Pāli suttas: the term occurs either as **sabbatthatāya** or as **sabbattatāya**. The difference is only in a single letter, which is either an aspirated *-th-* or an unaspirated *-t-*, that is, *-attha-* or as *-atta-* right in the middle of the above 2 words.

The different spellings give different meanings to the term. The first term, *sabbatthatāya* means "in every way" (*sabbattha*) while the other reading, *sabbattatāya*, which is the reading accepted by the Visuddhimagga (Vism 308), gives the sense "to all as to oneself" (*sabba + attā*). Here is the passage where this interesting variation in reading occurs: [the full Pali is at 4.1.2.1]

[one,] with a heart⁵⁶ of *lovingkindness*, dwells suffusing one quarter;
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,

⁵³ For a similar situation for Buddhaghosa's not acknowledging Upatissa's Vimutti,magga (prob belonging to the more liberal Theravāda tradition of the rival Abhayagiri monastery). See SD 60.1d (1.2.7.3).

⁵⁴ K L Dhammajoti, "The apramāṇa meditation in the Sarvāstivāda, with special reference to maitrī-bhāvanā," J of the Centre for Buddhist Studies 8 2010:165-186. **Sarvāsti,vāda** (Skt, "the doctrine that all exists") was one of the most influential of the mainstream (ie, non-Mahāyāna) schools of Indian Buddhism, having separated from the main body of the Elders (*thera*; Skt *sthavira*) around mid-3rd cent BCE. It was named after its doctrine that all conditioned factors (*dharma*) continue to exist (*sarvam asti*) throughout all 3 time-periods of past, present and future.

⁵⁵ Abhk 8.31d (Abhk:Pr 1269).

⁵⁶ "Heart," *citta*.

he dwells suffusing all the world with lovingkindness
that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

The highlighted lines read in Pali as follows: *iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbatthatāya | sab-bāvantāṃ lokāṃ mettā, sahatena cetasā*. In the stock passage of the immeasurable radiation (the above excerpt is that of lovingkindness), the variant reading mentioned occurs between *sabbadhi*, “everywhere,” and *sabbāvantāṃ lokāṃ*, “all the world.” This register of synonyms and near-synonyms occurs very often in the Pāli, handed down in the oral tradition. Thus it is very likely that the variant reading mentioned has a meaning closely similar to what precedes and what follows it; that is to say, meaning “in every way.” Moreover, the alternative rendition “to all as well as to oneself” (*sabb’attatāya*) is not found anywhere in the Pāli suttas.⁵⁷

This apparent silence does not mean that we do not pervade ourself with lovingkindness. The point is that in cultivating lovingkindness, our mind naturally also pervades itself with lovingkindness. Some teachers must have started adding “to all as well as to oneself” to ensure that their students do have or feel lovingkindness, too. This may be taken as a case of “popularizing” or “vernacularizing” the teaching.

4.2.3.2 Analayo, in a comparative study of parallels to Pāli descriptions of the immeasurable radiation, confirms the fact that the original reading is simply “in every way.”⁵⁸ That the Visuddhi, magga opts for the variant, “to all as well as to oneself,” may have compelled the inclusion of oneself in the practice, or at least supported the notion that the practice should be directed toward *oneself* as a phase or stage of the practice.

In terms of practical cultivation of lovingkindness or of compassion, we are likely to notice that we do not have to direct either of these positive emotions to ourself. To repeat the vital point: In cultivating lovingkindness or compassion, we will be immersed in it ourself anyway. It is simply unlikely that in generating such a wholesome state we would not ourself be pervaded by it, too.

We can thus rightly conclude that the idea of including oneself would have arisen only when the cultivation is directed to other individuals as the subject. Using this approach, we would naturally be inclined to include oneself among the subjects.

4.2.4 Flexibility and versatility

4.2.4.1 We had earlier on mentioned difficulties with verbalization and visualization faced by meditators cultivating lovingkindness during studies conducted by psychology researchers [4.1.1]. In such cases, clearly holding in mind or visualizing of various subjects (including oneself) was used. In other words, the current method of directing immeasurable lovingkindness to *oneself, a dear friend, a neutral person*, and then *a hostile person* does not work for many people. This is where using the original method taught in the suttas [4.1.2] is more likely to benefit such meditators.

This is not to say that the “individuals” method promoted by the Visuddhi, magga is wrong, despite being non-canonical. For such a development to have occurred in the Buddhist meditation tradition showed that meditators up to Buddhaghosa’s time at least must have had difficulties using the sutta method of cultivating the immeasurables. For such people, the immeasurable cultivation using “individuals” must have worked or at least been easier to practise.

⁵⁷ Analayo 2019a:2624. M Maithrimurthi, *Wohllwollen, Mitleid, Freude und Gleichmut, Eine ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung der vier apramāṇas in der buddhistischen Ethik und Spiritualität von den Anfängen bis hin zum frühen Yogācāra*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999.

⁵⁸ Analayo, “Compassion in the Āgamas and Nikāyas,” *Dharma Drum J of Buddhist Studies* 16 2015f:1-31, see 16-22.

Considering religious history, we must, of course, understand that sectarian rivalries do factor in such a development, and there were bitter sectarian rivalries during Buddhaghosa's time between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri, for example. The idea of having a meditation method or variant practice that was known to have been initiated by the Mahāvihāra, or promoted by it, would enhance its prestige and attract greater influence and support from others. Such developments were not unique to Sri Lanka Buddhism, since it often happened in other Buddhist communities, too.⁵⁹

4.2.4.2 From all the evidence we have studied above, it is clear that the cultivation of lovingkindness by way of taking 4 individuals as meditation subjects, proceeding from oneself to a friend, a neutral person, and then a hostile person, is a later innovation. This is not saying that there is anything wrong with it—except for difficulties individual meditators may have with any of the stages. The popularity of these meditation practices today testifies to their practical value. Still, it means that this is *not* the only way to cultivate lovingkindness.⁶⁰

With the rise in popularity in Buddhist meditation, we will have to address different difficulties that different meditators face for the meditation they are doing. We need to be flexible in promoting meditation, especially outside of the Buddhist context. In promoting **the sutta method** we have the advantage of versatility in not only promoting the early Buddhist method, but have a range of alternative methods that will in due course inspire meditators to take up the Buddhist life or at least be influenced and guided by early Buddhist values.

4.2.5 Mindfully boundless mind

4.2.5.1 Boellinghaus et al (2013) reported an interesting incident when a meditator was doing the standard cultivation following the Visuddhimagga method. The meditator gave a very insightful feedback on how the experience differed significantly from mindfulness practice:

I was feeling like I was trying to create something, or cultivate something, so being quite active ... and that, to me, seemed to be ... pulling in the opposite direction to doing the mindfulness.
(Boellinghaus et al 2013:271)

The meditator's feedback is said to be insightful because it reflected what was missing from the cultivation. A proper cultivation of lovingkindness and of compassion as boundless radiation would arouse in us a state that is very close to what is experienced in the practice of **mindfulness** (*sati*).

4.2.5.2 The similarity between the cultivation of lovingkindness and of compassion and the practice of mindfulness in early Buddhist tradition becomes particularly evident in some depictions of **mindfulness of the body**.⁶¹ In such descriptions, mindfulness rooted in the presence of the body remains at the same time openly receptive to whatever may happen at any of the 5 sense-doors.

The Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta (M 38), for example, uses the very same meditation language of the "immeasurable" state of mind that describes lovingkindness and the other 3 immeasurables to describe the resulting state of such a mindfulness practice:

⁵⁹ There were numerous such sectarian rivalries and doctrinal developments such as the rise of koan and huatou in Chinese Buddhism [SD 40b (5.1.3)], nationalist Zen in Japanese Buddhism [SD 60.1c (19.3)] and "path" Buddhism in the Myanmar tradition [SD 60.1f (6.4, 6.6)].

⁶⁰ Only lovingkindness is mentioned because the sequence of subjects in the other 3 divine abodes—compassion, gladness and equanimity—are different: SD 38.5 (4-6).

⁶¹ Analayo, "Open monitoring and mindfulness," *Mindfulness* 10 2019a:1437-1442.

“On seeing a form ... on hearing a sound ... on smelling a smell ... on tasting a taste ... on feeling a touch ... on knowing a mind-object, one does not lust after it if it is pleasurable. One does not dislike it if it is unpleasurable.”

One dwells with mindfulness of the body established, and with an immeasurable mind.
upaṭṭhita, kāya.sati ca viharati appamāṇa, cetaso. (M 38,40/1:270), SD 7.10

In this way, the cultivation of lovingkindness and of compassion shares an immeasurable mind as in the practice of the mindfulness of the body (that is, sense-restraint). In both cases, the mind opens up and frees itself from unwholesomeness (at least for the moment).

5 The divine abodes and the cultivation of moral concern

5.1 MORALITY, CALMNESS, INSIGHT

5.1.1 Instructive debate on the twin practices

5.1.1.1 We have seen how **mindfulness of the body**, by way of sense-restraint, can open up the mind to immeasurability or boundlessness (that is, not limited or held back by greed, hate or delusion), and so become free of these unwholesome roots at least for that moment. Let us now take a step back and ask: How far can meditation empower us to guard our body from committing any unwholesome karma, that is, keeping us from killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, falling into wrong livelihood, and avoiding wrong speech; and to cultivate the wholesome for our spiritual growth? In other words, how can meditation help us become morally good people? At least one concerned scholar, **Damien Keown**,⁶² has given this some serious thought in his book, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992), where he speaks of Buddhist morality as a type of “virtue ethics.”

Virtue ethics or aretaic ethics is an approach to ethics that treats virtue as central. Virtue ethics is usually contrasted with two other major approaches in ethics, consequentialism and deontology, which make the goodness of outcomes of an action (consequentialism) and the concept of moral duty (deontology) central. While virtue ethics does not necessarily deny the importance to ethics of goodness of states of affairs or of moral duties, it emphasizes virtue, and sometimes other concepts, like *eudaimonia* (Greek, “good spirit,” ie, true happiness or welfare), to an extent that other ethics theories do not.

In virtue ethics, a **virtue** is a disposition to *think, feel, and act* well or wholesomely in some domain of life. Similarly, a vice is a disposition to think, feel, and act poorly or badly. Virtues are not everyday habits; they are character traits, in the sense that they are central to someone’s personality and what they are like as a person. A virtue is a trait that promotes or exhibits human excellence in the person who exhibits it, and a vice is one that impedes human excellence in the person who exhibits it.⁶³

5.1.1.2 “**Virtue ethics**” best describes early Buddhist ethics as the basis for its soteriological goal, awakening, resulting from “not doing evil, doing good, purifying the mind” (**Dh 183**). However, much of the monastic Vinaya, comprising mostly of conventional or prescribed (*paññatti*) ethical rules and sangha

⁶² **Damien Keown** (born 1951) is a British scholar and authority on Buddhist bioethics. He is Professor Emeritus in the Dept of History at Goldsmiths, Univ of London. Keown earned a BA in religious studies from the Univ of Lancaster in 1977 and a PhD from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Univ of Oxford, in 1986. [[h-net](#)]

⁶³ **D Keown**, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, **1992**; this is a revision of his Oxford Univ diss (1986). Julia Annas, “Virtue and duty: negotiating between different ethical traditions,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 49,4 2015:609. On virtue ethics, see [[SEP 2022](#)] [[IEP](#)] 7 Oct 2023.

acts, prescribing duties and responsibilities of monastics:⁶⁴ these are based on deontological ethics. Although the 5 precepts for lay Buddhists are based on natural morality,⁶⁵ their observance is often seen to result in good karmic fruits (*kusala,kamma*); hence this is based on consequential ethics.

Monastic rules and lay precepts, however, are “provisional” arrangements or “moral training” (*sīla,-sikkhā*), that is the basis for mental or concentration training (*samādhi,sikkhā*), both of which are the bases for wisdom training (*paññā,sikkhā*) which leads to awakening. The stages of the path of awakening comprise the gradual removal of **mental fetters** (*samyojana*),⁶⁶ which progressively frees one from self-centred vices (making one a streamwinner and a once-returned), from dependence on sense-based vices (making one a non-returned), and from rebirth and suffering (making one an arhat). The moral basis for this is best described as aretaic, that is, moral virtue.

5.1.1.3 Early Buddhist meditation, as any informed Buddhist knows, has 2 key aspects, that is, **calmness** (*samatha*) and **insight** (*vipassanā*). Basically, *samatha* refers to calming mind to clear it from hindrances. The calm and clear mind, having emerged samadhi is directed to observe true reality: this process is called *vipassanā*. There are however cases where people naturally have a clear and analytical mind that picks up *vipassanā*, insight into true reality, but they lack *samatha*, and have to learn to be calm.

It is well known that **lovingkindness** is able to help bring calmness to meditators, as we have been discussing. On the other hand, when we are able to take charge of our senses, that is, to see our experiences for what they are—impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself—we will be able to calm and clear the mind so that it becomes immeasurable (*appamāṇa*) as in lovingkindness meditation.

In this section we will examine an interesting debate on the nature and functions of Samatha and Vipassanā in the light of the 4 immeasurables: lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. To complicate this debate—which is between scholars—we have also to be aware that modern Buddhists, especially ethnic teachers from Myanmar, who regard Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhi,magga as canonical, see Samatha and Vipassanā as different kinds of **meditation**, that is, more than being just aspects of meditation. To highlight the modern usages of the term, they have been spelt with initial capitals, that is, as Samatha and Vipassanā.⁶⁷

5.1.1.4 Ethan Mills, originally from Augsburg College (Minneapolis, MN, US), is a specialist in Indian (including Buddhist) philosophy, currently an Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, USA. He has written a delightfully engaging paper of the debate on the roles of Samatha and Vipassanā in Buddhist soteriology, between what he calls the “Samatha-inessentialists” and the “Samatha-essentialists.” **The Samatha-inessentialist** camp—the view that Vipassanā is essential and Samatha

⁶⁴ Not all Vinaya rules, however, are “conventional” (*sammuti*), since there are some that are based on “natural morality” (*pakati,sīla*), such as the first 4 “defeat” (*pārājika*) rules regarding sexual intercourse, stealing, murder, and making false claims to spiritual attainments, and related rules. These Vinaya rules are said to be “prescribed morality” (*paññatti,sīla*) since they have been promulgated by the Buddha’

⁶⁵ Unlike “prescribed morality” [prec], “natural morality” (*pakati,sīla*) are rules that are karmically potent and they work naturally. The best examples are those of the 5 precepts.

⁶⁶ The 10 fetters are: 1. personality view, 2. doubt, 3. attachment to rituals and vows; 4. sensual lust, 5. repulsion; 6. greed for form existence, 7. greed for formless existence, 8. conceit, 9. restlessness, and 10. ignorance: SD 60.1d (3.3.4.1).

⁶⁷ When these terms are with an author’s quotes, I have followed the original form of these 2 terms, whose usage should be understood from its context. For a thorough exegetical and philological study of the early existence of *samatha* and the peculiar early Buddhist conception of *vipassanā*, see by Johannes Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*, Stuttgart, 1986.

inessential in the pursuit of nirvana—is represented by the arguments of Paul J Griffiths⁶⁸; **the Samatha-essentialist**—the view that both Samatha and Vipassanā are essential for the path of nirvana—is supported by the arguments of Damien Keown [5.1.1.1].

Mills' study is helpful for Buddhist students because he is sensitive to Buddhism. He includes a small part of Keown's theory, namely Keown's assertion that Samatha can cultivate moral concern. Mills admits that this is not a definitive solution to the Samatha-Vipassanā controversy. However, he supports Keown's theory of the cultivation of moral concern, which he asserts as making it "more plausible we have more reasons to accept his larger theory of the importance of both samatha and vipassanā" (Mills 2004:22).

5.1.1.5 So far, we have been mostly quoting from scholars. Some thoughtful Buddhists may ask: "Why should we study what scholars think about Buddhism? Many of them are not Buddhists anyway. Some of them come up with bizarre views of Buddhism. Why should we trust them?" Successful scholars are often said to live in ivory towers remote from people and their concerns.

There are of course good and great scholars who love learning and teaching. In the early 1990s (as a Visiting Scholar to the University of California, Berkeley), I was fortunate to find a seat in the capacity crowd attending sociologist Robert Bellah's final lecture before retiring. As an auditor, I submitted a short essay for his class and was quite surprised that he actually marked my paper! I wrote about one of his ideas about religion, arguing that it would not apply to Buddhism in Malaysia. He noted that he "could understand" why I disagreed with his view there.

Academic lecturers and writers, trained in reputable institutions and experienced teachers, are well trained in how to study and observe Buddhism and write about it. Despite the occasional flaws with Pali terms or Dharma details, many of them are often admirably perspicacious and thorough in their critique of Buddhism. They come up with interesting new perspectives into Buddhism which even Buddhists themselves have not considered.

5.1.1.6 Many scholars of Buddhism find Buddhism a meaningful part of their life. However, there are those who teach Buddhism but do not practise it in some meaningful way; and there are even those who merely see Buddhism as a career, a profitable product to sell. This is like teaching music, but not being a musician or not loving music! In due course, a few may even "give up" Buddhism and turn to some other religion. For many scholars, this may happen because either they have not understood Buddhism well enough (despite all their learning, even because of it) or because there is a more lucrative career in another religion—usually for both reasons. This seems to be the case with Paul Griffiths, whose work on Buddhism was all undertaken in the early part of his career and who now writes mainly on Christianity.

Another academic reality we must accept is that often even the best scholars go out of date, or they are today shown to be completely wrong in their views, despite being widely accepted in their own day and being influential for decades after that. Take the case of the Dutch linguist and orientalist, Hendrick Kern (1833-1917),⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Griffiths (1955-) was a London-born theologian and philosopher of religion, specializing in Buddhism (esp Yogācāra) and Christianity, who had taught in the Univ of Notre Dame, Univ of Illinois (Chicago) and Univ of Chicago. He received his doctorate in Buddhist studies in 1983 from Univ of Wisconsin-Madison. After converting from Anglicanism to Catholicism, he accepted the Schmitt Chair of Catholic Studies at UIC, and largely gave up his work in Buddhist studies.

⁶⁹ This anecdote was quoted by J Bronkhorst, "Hendrik Kern and the body of the Buddha," given at Leiden Univ, 2008:2 & an expanded version in *Asiatische Studien/Etudes Asiatiques* 63,1 2009:7-27.

Like [the French scholar Émile] Senart, he considered the Buddha to be a solar god. However, Kern was much more astronomical in his exegesis than Senart. The twelve nidāna are the twelve months of the year. The six heretical teachers are the planets. The Buddha's first preaching takes place in midsummer, and this is why the Middle Way is its theme. Kern never hesitates in his identifications with stars, planets, and constellations.

(J W de Jong, *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America*, Tokyo, 1997:29)⁷⁰

If a modern scholar were to speak or write in this manner, they are likely to be ignored, or worse, taken to task by discerning colleagues, as happened in the case of Roger Corless (1938-2007) who was reported to have given a rather cavalier presentation of Buddhism punctuated with Zen jokes. One might thus be remembered in academic history for the wrong reasons.⁷¹

On the other hand, often, we can learn very useful lessons from good scholars in how to express our ideas correctly, clearly and courageously. Although unbiased writing (like encyclopaedia entries) can be useful for research, it is the *insightfully biased* writings of scholars—sensitive to Buddhism, that is—that Buddhists would enjoy reading with benefits. Ethan Mills' paper (2004) is a good example. What follows is not a commentary on Keown or Mills, but an examination of how their ideas can help us understand why moral virtue and moral concern are a vital part of insight or wisdom, and how “virtue ethics” is the basis for mental development, and both the bases for reaching the path of awakening.

5.1.2 Scholars' views about Samatha and Vipassanā

5.1.2.1 Most scholars of Buddhism considered Vipassanā or insight meditation to be the more important of the twin ideas of *Samatha-Vipassanā* in modern Buddhism. They view that Samatha is not necessary for the attainment of nirvana. Such scholars include, for instance, Bodhi (J Block),⁷² H Gunaratna, W L King, W Rahula, and A Solé-Leris.⁷³ Rahula, a modernist priest, for example, has written that the states created by Samatha are “... mind-created, mind-produced, conditioned They have nothing to do with Reality, Truth, Nirvana” (Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 1959:68). These sentiments are shared by Bodhi: “The role of serenity [Samatha] is subordinated to that of insight because the latter is the crucial instrument needed to uproot the ignorance at the bottom of the samsaric bondage” (Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 2000:38). To such scholars, to reach nirvana, one must have Insight into the true reality created by Vipassanā meditation (*vipassana-bhāvanā*).⁷⁴ Thus, to them, Samatha is generally considered to be inessential for practice or for the path to nirvana.⁷⁵

Understandably, Mills asks “If *Samatha* is inessential, why is it included in Buddhist meditation traditions?” (2004:22). The answer, apparently, for Rahula and most scholars of this group, is that Samatha techniques can sometimes help develop qualities useful in Vipassanā meditation. Nonetheless, accord-

⁷⁰ Further, see SD 60.1b (1.2.2).

⁷¹ On the case of Jan Nattier's criticism of Roger Corless (1992), see SD 60.1d

⁷² **Bodhi** (Jeffrey Block) (1944-), of Jewish descent, a well known scholar of the Sinhalese order, and successful translator, by his own admission, said that he is unable to meditate due to years of suffering from an inexplicable “karmic” headache. Among his learned papers are “Two styles of insight meditation,” [[AccessToInsight](#)]. His own foundation, Buddhist Global Relief, funds projects to fight hunger and empower women across the world. His views (as a monk) of a “just war” are very controversial [[InquiringMind](#)]. See SD 60.1b (2.1.1.2).

⁷³ It is important to understand that although these scholars agree on this point, it does not mean that they all see it in the same way. It is often likely that they each also hold differing views on other aspects of Buddhist meditation, and that they may not themselves be meditators, or serious ones. Bodhi, eg, by his own admission says that he is unable to meditate due to a persistent headache. On details on these names see SD 60.1b (2.1.1.2).

⁷⁴ This is a comy term, not found in the Pali canon.

⁷⁵ See SD 60.1b (2.1.1.2).

ing to them, Samatha techniques are not as inherently valuable as Vipassanā techniques. Griffiths' views about Vipassanā fall into this category [5.1.2].

5.1.2.2 A smaller group of scholars hold the view that Samatha and Vipassanā are of equal importance in Buddhist practice. Edward Conze⁷⁶ and Robert M Gimello are two examples. Conze does not claim that Samatha can lead one to nirvana without Vipassanā, but neither does he claim that Vipassanā can lead one to nirvana without Samatha.

Samatha can bring about a one-pointedness of mind and “a mind of single intent is capable of doing more effectively whatever it does, be it good or bad” (Conze 1956:19). He still considers the wisdom gained by Vipassanā to be the highest good because even when the greatest concentration is developed, insight is needed to reach nirvana. However, we can never gain this wisdom without Samatha either.

Conze sums up this idea as follows:

Trance [*jhāna*], as it is developed, approaches a condition of rapt attention to an objectless inwardness (*anarambana*); the more wisdom develops, the clearer the intuition of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). These are the two terminal points at which the world is on the verge of extinction. The combination of the two leads to final emancipation.

(Conze 1956:17, emphasis added).

5.1.2.3 Gimello very much agrees with Conze: “While it is true that discernment [Vipassanā] is not to be attained without some degree of calming as a precondition, it is no less true that calming itself, without discernment, is of no soteric avail whatsoever” (Gimello 1978:185). Gimello, too, holds that *both* Vipassanā and Samatha are necessary for the path of awakening.

In Conze's case, although he clearly affirms that both are necessary in the quest for nirvana, he concedes that there “is even some tension between the two modes of approach” (Conze 1956:17). Griffiths develops this tension without giving a helpful solution [5.1.3], but Keown offers an interesting and important solution to this apparent tension. [5.2]

5.1.3 Griffiths' problematic yoking

5.1.3.1 Griffiths, in his book, *On Being Mindless* (1986), discusses the attainment of cessation (*nirodha, samāpatti*), which informed Buddhists basically understand to be a “living experience” of nirvana. In his book, Griffiths specifically addresses the relationship between Samatha and Vipassanā, and characterizes Samatha as enstatic and Vipassanā as analytic, thus:

Such analytical meditations are designed, then, to remove standard cognitive and perceptual habit-patterns and to replace them with new ones. Furthermore, these techniques are designed to teach the practitioner something new about the way things are, to inculcate in his consciousness a whole series of knowledges that such-and-such is the case. In contrast, the enstatic meditations are designed to reduce the contents of consciousness, to focus awareness upon a single point and ultimately to bring all mental activity to a halt.

(Griffiths 1986:13)

⁷⁶ Conze deals extensively with Mahāyāna than with Theravāda, but his respect for Theravāda is evident from his remark about Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*: “he has composed one of the great spiritual classics of mankind. If I had to choose just one book to take with me on a desert island, this would be my choice—with perhaps a Horace tucked away out of sight in my pocket” (Conze, *Buddhist Meditation*, London, 1956:25).

Griffiths' view here seems to be that the 2 aspects of training (according to the suttas) or the 2 methods (according to modern ethnic Buddhism), Samatha and Vipassanā, have actually different soteriological goals in themselves. He says, "Those who follow and advocate the analytic techniques tend to perceive the basic human problem as one of ignorance, and inaccurate understanding of the way things are" (Griffiths 1986:14). Basically, he is saying: if the disease is ignorance, the cure must be knowledge.

Further, compare this with what he says about those who engage in Samatha: "In drastic contrast, the practitioners of the enstatic techniques aimed at tranquility tend to perceive the basic human error as one of attitude rather than cognition; the key Buddhist term here is 'thirst' (*taṇhā*), a term that denotes all types of passionate desire and attachment" (Griffiths 1986:14). Again, the logic works: if a certain attitude causes suffering, then we must change that attitude to one that does not cause suffering.

His logic works, but Griffiths' ideas do not apply to Buddhism in theory or in practice. Neither the suttas nor the modern ethnic Buddhists see the 2 doctrines in this way. It is Griffiths' own view. As a result of such thinking, Griffiths has himself created a tension here.

5.1.3.2 For Griffiths then, there are two completely separate Buddhist goals, each with its own method, both jostling with one another. Understandably for Griffiths, this created a great many philosophical problems: "Throughout Buddhist history, intellectuals have attempted to reconcile thought-systems which are on the face of it, irreconcilable" (Griffiths 1986:16). Specifically, Griffiths attributes many of the problems surrounding the attainment of cessation to the tension between Samatha and Vipassanā.

For Griffiths, the attainment of cessation is merely a stage of enstatic meditation following the attainment of the 4 jhānas. He thought that, for example, the commentators Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla were thus wrong to insist that insight must be present to reach the attainment of cessation. Buddhaghosa talks about "yoking together" calm and insight in order to achieve successively higher jhānas up to the attainment of cessation (Vism 23.43).

Griffiths thinks that this yoking process is insufficiently explained and confusing given his ideas about the relations between method and soteriology. This is his main point: it is difficult at best and impossible at worst to try to yoke together the 2 methods to gain one goal when the 2 methods are themselves designed to reach radically different goals.⁷⁷

5.2 BUDDHIST MORALITY AS VIRTUE ETHICS

5.2.1 The twin causes of suffering

5.2.1.1 Keown discusses the relation between Samatha and Vipassanā in connection with ethics and psychology in his book, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (ch 3). The main idea of the Chapter is that moral virtue (*sīla*) and wisdom (*paññā*) are two complementary and equally necessary strands of Buddhist soteriology: they are after all the 1st and the 3rd trainings, connected by "concentration" (*samādhi*) in between.

The other supporting ideas or **subtheses** of Chapter 3 of Keown's *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* can be listed as follows:

1. the mind (*citta*) is an aggregate of both rational and emotional elements (dharma);

⁷⁷ On the problems of this view, see SD 60.1b (1.2).

2. the moral and the rational are fundamentally interconnected as shown in the linking of the intellectual vice of delusion (*moha*) and the moral vices of greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*) in a “triangle of craving (*taṇhā*)”;
3. the Buddha’s compassion is based on wisdom, and his awakening is preceded and followed by non-cognitive, non-rational, moral sentiment; the Buddha provides the case of ethical motivation.

5.2.1.2 Keown’s **main idea** about Samatha and Vipassanā may be summarized as follows:

calmness meditation (*samatha, bhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*vipassana, bhāvanā*) are equally necessary, interdependent methods of attaining awakening by ridding oneself of both moral and intellectual vices.

Thus, Keown’s theory about the relationship between Samatha and Vipassana is meant to supplement his larger theory on the equal importance of morality (*sīla*) and wisdom (*paññā*), which in turn is used to support the main argument of his book that Buddhist ethics can be best characterized as a type of **virtue ethics**.

This context is important because it shows us what Keown says for his theory about Samatha and Vipassanā to resolve the tension conjured up by Griffiths, and at the same time advance his theory that morality (*sīla*) is important throughout Buddhist training and the path.

Although Keown agrees with Griffiths that Samatha and Vipassanā have different outcomes, he disagrees about the nature of these outcomes, and this disagreement is very important:

Since progress in the religious life is made on two fronts, there exist two kinds of meditation techniques. I wish to suggest that “calming meditation” (*samatha-bhāvanā*) cultivates moral virtue and “insight meditation” (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) develops knowledge or insight.

(Keown 2001:77)

5.2.1.3 Keown’s shift in interpretation of the different goals of Samatha and Vipassanā is subtle yet extremely important. Keown is aware of Griffiths’ difficulties and explains:

For Griffiths these facts are problematic but in terms of the thesis set out here they are not. Indeed, they are exactly as we should expect. Griffiths’s difficulty arises from the suppressed premise of his argument that the unique soteriological objective of Buddhism is knowledge (*paññā*). Any soteriological technique which does not issue in *paññā* is therefore redundant and its experience puzzling. If nibbana is defined exclusively in terms of *paññā* then Vipassanā will quite naturally appear to be essential while Samatha remains a curious anomaly.

(Keown 2001:77)

Thus, according to Keown, to gain awakening requires *both* moral virtue and wisdom, so it makes sense that there are various meditation methods to address these needs. Griffiths and those who, like him, view *paññā* as the unique goal of Buddhist meditation will of course be confused by the presence of any practice that cultivates anything else.⁷⁸

5.2.1.4 Keown explains that a mistranslation of *paññā* has encouraged this misinterpretation. He explains, “*Paññā* is essentially the knowledge of facts, but wisdom means something more than just

⁷⁸ Gunaratna seems to share Griffiths’ assumption that: “Since bondage ultimately springs from ignorance (*avijjā*), the key to liberation, for Buddhism, is found in wisdom (*paññā*)” (Gunaratna, *A Critical Analysis of the Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation*, 1980:3).

knowledge [of facts]" (Keown 2001:80). To begin with, *paññā* is knowledge in the sense of knowing that $2 + 2 = 4$, all formations are momentary, and so on. It is the knowledge of facts about the universe. This type of knowledge is vitally important for Buddhism; the lack of it is ignorance, which is one key cause of suffering.

However, ignorance is not the only cause of suffering, and neither is wisdom the only cure of it:

The goal of the Eightfold Path is indeed wisdom, but wisdom is much more than *paññā*. This is why two meditative techniques are required for the eradication of the roots of evil and the attainment of the ethical and intellectual perfection which is nibbana.

(Keown 2001:80)

As Keown says elsewhere, "there exist two techniques of meditation precisely because the obstacles to awakening are themselves twofold, both moral and intellectual" (Keown 2001:79, emphases added). It is the twofold nature of the causes of the disease and the complementary twofold cure that Griffiths does not see in his interpretation.

5.2.2 The mind's 2 aspects

5.2.2.1 As for **the mind** (*citta*), Keown sees it as comprising both *vedanā* (feelings) and *saññā* (perception), which he takes to be the emotional and the rational respectively (**subthesis 1**). This is slightly different from the way we usually analyze the 5 aggregates, but to appreciate Keown's arguments, let us accept his contextual usage of these terms here to understand the rest of his theory regarding moral concern. Keown himself is aware that the emotional and the rational aspects of the mind "may be logically distinguished, but do not correspond to any real division in the structure of the human subject" (Keown 2001:67). Although these emotional and rational elements are both part of the mind, they are different processes and each has its own virtue:

The virtue of the cognitive [perceptive] aspect (*saññā*) is to understand and discriminate correctly; its vice is delusion and error. The virtue of the non-rational part of the psyche is to sense, feel, and respond affectively in an appropriate manner; its vice is to swing to the extremes of craving (*rāga*) and aversion (*dosa*).

(Keown 2001:67, emphases added)

This makes it clear that if the mind consists of 2 elements, each with their own virtues, and if the goal of meditation is to cultivate mental virtues, then there must be ways of cultivating these types of virtues. Whereas Griffiths and other Samatha-inessentialist scholars seem to feel that the development of wisdom automatically leads to the development of morality, Keown thinks that **morality** requires its own cultivation separate from the cultivation of **wisdom** (**subthesis 2**).

5.2.2.2 Keown stresses the moral aspects of Samatha more than its enstatic (*jhana*) aspects, and in fact sees the enstatic as part of moral cultivation. He says that the "technique of Samatha meditation exists to enrich and deepen the capacity for human sympathy which exists in all to some degree and which reached its perfection in the personality of the Buddha" (Keown 2001:77).

Keown's **subthesis 3** refers to the Buddha as the moral example for all Buddhists. He puts it succinctly: "The Buddha's moral concern is found in his sympathy (*anukampā*)⁷⁹ for all beings" (Keown 2001:73). Since this moral sentiment is non-cognitive, Vipassanā meditation (being the realm of the cognitive) is unsuitable for this task of its development. We need a kind of meditation that deals with the non-cognitive, that is, Samatha.

Attaining dhyanas is "a specialized technique for gaining access to the non-rational, emotional dimension of the psyche. It is a means of penetrating the deeper layers of consciousness and restructuring them in accordance with virtue rather than vice." (Keown 2001:78)

5.2.3 How dhyana helps morality

5.2.3.1 Here I will simplify Keown's explanation on how dhyana (*jhāna*, by which I mean the 1st dhyana and any of the other 3 form dhyanas) helps us become moral (that is good and kind) people. Firstly, when we attain the 1st dhyana, lustful desire (*lobha* or *rāga*) and its opposite ill will (*dosa*) are overcome (at least temporarily). This happens because of one very important reason: we are filled with **joy**.

Even the 1st dhyana is overwhelmingly supported by **joy**—"zest and joy" (*pīti, sukha*) to be exact—on account of being freed from the gravity-field of the physical senses: the zest and joy born of bodily solitude (*viveka, ja pīti, sukha*). In the 2nd dhyana, this zest and joy becomes more refined with the arising of full concentration born of samadhi, *samādhi, ja pīti, sukha*.

In the 3rd dhyana the mindfulness is total and refined: the mind directly experiences "with the body" (*kāyena*). In meditation lingo, this means an experience that is "total and direct, in person" (there is no more "body" of the senses, but only the "mental body"); hence, there is also a *feeling* of equanimity (like a satiated fullness after a good meal). In the 4th dhyana, all sense of "self" has evaporated into total mental stillness. It's like we have done our work and can just sit back and relax with full satisfaction and total equanimity.

5.2.3.2 Those of us who neither meditate nor meditate well, may despair here: we will never attain jhana, we can never be moral persons. This is clearly *not* the case. If we are able to feel good after taking a meal or watching a good movie, we will be able to feel a sense of calm focus with just a bit of effort in mindfulness practice or simple meditation, especially under the guidance of an experienced and happy teacher. Or, we can teach ourself to be calm and happy enough to sit with a suitable mindfulness exercise or meditation practice, for even just a few minutes, but to do it often enough, preferably regularly, supported by a joyful understanding of the suttas.

The vital lesson here is to learn to be **happy** for ourself by way of self-acceptance: this is the beginning of lovingkindness practice. When we are truly joyful in this way, we will naturally become morally good people: we will at least try our best to keep the 5 precepts. This is what Keown means by training for moral concern. He puts it succinctly thus:

The passions will not be extirpated in the course of a single Samatha session any more than a single session of Vipassanā will boost *paññā* to the point of perfect illumination; both techniques are slow and gradual but each is the most appropriate in its own sphere.

(Keown 2001:79)

This is not a McMindfulness "get enlightened-quick" session or some Zen-like "you are already enlightened" experience—it is the sure straight path of **self-effort** that goes back to the Buddha's time, and

⁷⁹ Keown uses *anukampā* (usually tr as "pity" but overlaps with "compassion") for "moral concern." This will receive more treatment towards the end of his *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 1992: section 2.2.

to the path of awakening. It takes time—we must be willing to *take time away* from distractions and unwholesome conduct. We also begin to have more time and happiness as we learn to live in **the present** of true reality, freeing ourselves from the *past* and shaping our future *now*.

5.2.3.3 The cultivation of **moral concern** is important because “the fundamental inspiration for the Buddhist moral life is concern for others ... it is a non-rational sentiment which precedes the formulation of moral objectives” (Keown 2001:74, emphasis added). From studying Keown’s teaching on *moral concern*, I am inspired to see that it is in **our nature** to show moral concern, that is, a “concern for others”: this is what we are. We are able to know this because we have evolved thus far; we have evolved thus far because we realized we are *not* alone, that we *cannot* be alone.

We have thus become what we are through our understanding that we have an “**extended mind**,” that we are a network of consciousness beings. We have become human, we have *humanity*, and civilization is possible through our accepting others, working and living with others. We are a community of minds. Even when we enjoy solitude, it is because we are able to appreciate the joy of aloneness in contrast to the necessity of togetherness. This is, in fact, the basis of moral concern.⁸⁰

Without this concern for others there can be no morality; without morality there can be no wisdom; with neither morality nor wisdom, there can be no nirvana. The link between moral perfection and nirvana is vital to Keown’s thesis, because it is the fact that moral perfection can only be realized through Samatha meditation that gives us a reason to assign an essential importance to Samatha within Buddhist soteriology. To do otherwise is to go against nature. It is our nature to see that we are not alone; that there are others, and we have to accept them. To wish others well is what moral concern is about. When we have this moral concern, it means that we have learned that we are capable of self-agency, self effort.

5.2.4 An internalist theory of motivation

5.2.4.1 The greatest advantage of Keown’s theory is that it clearly explains how it is that there are 2 seemingly independent and contradictory meditation methods within the same tradition. It provides us with a resolution to Griffiths’ unhelpful tension and gives us a reason to think that the Buddhist philosophers and practitioners throughout the ages had good reason to incorporate both Samatha and Vipassanā techniques into their lives.

Given the advantage of Keown’s theory of the twin practice, we still must ask whether Keown’s brief suggestions about how it is that Samatha cultivates moral concern gives us enough reasons to accept his thesis and discount that of Griffiths. This is clearly not the case: we still have unanswered questions. For instance, if this explanation is correct, why is there so much tension and confusion among scholars of Buddhism?

According to Mills (2004:29), Keown seems to have **an internalist theory of motivation**, meaning that his reasons for moral action are dependent—at least in part—on the moral agent’s *positive affective states* (such as lovingkindness). However, others—particularly Samatha-inessentialist scholars [5.1.1.4]—might maintain that Buddhism generally espouses an externalist theory of motivation, meaning that reasons for moral action lie entirely *outside* our affective states like the joy or lovingkindness we feel [5.2.3.3].

There are still questions we need to consider and possibly answer. If Buddhist ethical theorists do in fact generally support an externalist theory, how can Keown be right? Is there enough textual evidence for Keown’s claim to warrant making it a pan-Buddhist (or at least pan-Theravāda) theory? How exactly do Samatha techniques cultivate moral concern?

⁸⁰ On the extended mind, see SD 16.1e (12.7).

5.2.4.2 The last question, according to Mills, is “the most preliminary” in the sense that we need it to fully and precisely understand what Keown’s theory is. In the following section, I will discuss the 2 possible answers Mills offers to the question: *how could Samatha techniques cultivate moral concern?* (2004:29). According to Mills, if one of these answers can be shown to be “exegetically responsible and philosophically compelling,” then Keown’s theory will be more complete than it is and can be more easily evaluated as a response to the alleged tension of Samatha and Vipassanā techniques within the Theravāda.

By “**exegetically responsible**” Mills means “that it represents the Buddhist texts in a more or less accurate way,” that is,

- (1) “the argument is grounded somehow in one or more Buddhist texts either verbatim or via analysis”;
- (2) “the argument does not patently distort or go against the core ideas of Buddhist philosophy such as the 4 noble truths, dependent arising, etc.”

In short, Keown’s theory and explanations must keep to the sutta teachings.

By “**philosophically compelling**” Mills means Keown’s arguments must have “philosophical merit,” that is to say:

- (1) they work toward solving a philosophical problem;
- (2) that they are consistent with Keown’s other claims; and
- (3) that there are compelling philosophical reasons for us to believe they are true.

In short, they are also acceptable by academic standards.

To Mills, “philosophically compelling” means that Keown’s ideas make good sense in theory, and “exegetical responsibility” means that they work in practice. This is the familiar Buddhist teaching of “theory” (*pariyatti*) and “practice” (*paṭipatti*), by which Samatha and Vipassanā interact with one another.

The purpose of all this strategy and accuracy is to show how Keown’s ideas work while Griffiths’ views are wrong. More importantly, Keown’s ideas will help us better understand how Samatha and Vipassanā work together even in our own time. Basically, Keown uses these 2 principles: the human nature argument [5.3.1] and the divine abodes argument [5.3.2] to which we shall now turn.

5.3 HOW SAMATHA CULTIVATES MORAL CONCERN

5.3.1 The human nature argument

5.3.1.1 The first of Keown’s 2 principles, **the human nature argument**, has been basically summed up as follows by Mills [with amplifications or alternate suggestions within square brackets by me]:

- (1) Human beings in their most natural state exhibit non-cognitive [affective] moral concern.
- (2) Negative mental states such as greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*) cover up this otherwise natural tendency. [They prevent us from expressing our good nature.]
- (3) If humans increasingly master Samatha meditation, then these negative mental states are increasingly removed.
- (4) If these negative mental states are increasingly removed, then humans will increasingly exist in [our] natural state, ie, they will exhibit non-cognitive moral concern.

Conclusion: If humans increasingly master Samatha meditation, then humans will increasingly exist in their **natural state**, ie, they will exhibit non-cognitive [affective] moral concern. (by 3, 4)

5.3.1.2 Note the word “**increasingly**”⁸¹ in premises 3 and 4, which is meant to capture the gradual developmental nature of Buddhist meditation. Samatha, properly done, is the basis for Vipassanā —if we are to follow the sutta teachings. Mills remarks saying that “to master Samatha techniques would mean that one exists totally within human nature and completely exhibits non-cognitive moral concern” (2004:31 f). The Buddha arises as a human amongst humans—the middle state between the subhuman (animals, pretas and hellbeings) and the divine—because “humans both know enough suffering to be motivated to practice Buddhism (unlike the gods) and are capable of making the changes prescribed by the Buddha (unlike animals).” (2004:32)

5.3.1.3 Mills then quotes **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21), where “a deva tells the Buddha that he will happily seek a human existence in the next life so that he can practice the Buddha’s teachings (D 21,2.8)” (2004:32). However, we should also note that the same Sutta records Sakra (P *sakka*) as attaining the path of streamwinning, even as he listens to the Buddha teaching the Dharma (D 21,2.7.10), and later gains its fruition (D 21,2.10.4, SD 54.8). Hence, as Mills himself concedes (2004:32), all this may be helpful in encouraging humans towards moral concern, but, in itself, it does not fully support the “human nature” argument as such. *Pace* Mills, it *does* not give us premise one [5.3.1.1], because the lower gods are at least also capable of attaining streamwinning.

5.3.1.4 Keown’s human nature argument seems very useful in explaining how it is that Samatha techniques cultivate moral concern. He even has a section entitled “The Buddhist View of Human Nature” in the chapter on moral and intellectual virtue (Keown 1992:66-68). The statement that most evokes premise 1 of this argument is: “The malfunction of *vedanā* [feeling] and *saññā* [cognition], which is *taṇhā* [craving], is the basic soteriological problem of Buddhism” (Keown 1992: 67). Simply, when our feeling and knowing are filled with craving, we will stray away from the path of awakening (even fall from the human path into the subhuman realm).⁸²

When feeling and cognition are malfunctioning (not seeing true reality, thus acting unwholesomely), then they are aberrant from their natural state. For instance, when we say the car is malfunctioning, it means that it is not in its natural working state. The natural working state of feeling and cognition is exemplified by the awakened Buddha.

“Philosophical merit” in premise 3 dictates that we ask such questions as: Just what do we mean by “natural state”? Can “natural state” be taken to mean “the usual, normal state”? **The Visuddhi,magga** quotes **the Paṭisambhidā Commentary**, thus:

But in the world, the nature (*pakati*) of such and such beings is called their “habit (*sīla*),” of which they say “This one is of happy habit, this one is of unhappy habit, this one is of quarrelsome habit, this one is of vain habit.”⁸³ (PmA 1:210,8; Vism 1.38/14)

⁸¹ Hereon I have departed from Mills’ explanation so that the passage is coherent with the explanations I am offering.

⁸² This is discussed in some detail in SD 60.1f (5.4.9).

⁸³ *Yasmā loke tesarṃ tesarṃ sattānarṃ pakati pi sīlan ti vuccati ayarṃ sandhāyaya ayarṃ sukha,sīlo ayarṃ dukkha,-silo ayarṃ kalaha,silo ayarṃ maṇḍana,silo ti bhaṇanti.* “Interestingly, the relationship between morality and habits would probably please Keown greatly given his characterization of Buddhist ethics as related more closely to Aristotle’s Virtue Ethic than to other Western theories” (Mills 2004 fn9).

5.3.2 Moral conduct as habit

5.3.2.1 Any monastic student who has learned basic Pali will know that *pakati* and *sīla* share the same sense of “habit,” with a practical difference. While *pakati* means “a natural habit or tendency,” such as the sun rising in the east or that water will douse a wood fire, *sīla* means “a habit from practice,” such as when we are filled with lovingkindness we will also be kind. This is the simple application of the rule of conditionality or moral causation (*hetu, paccaya*), and the basic mechanism of dependent arising.⁸⁴

5.3.2.2 Another convenient concept we may use to explain this idea of “moral habit” (the combined senses of the *pakati* and *sīla* is the Mahāyāna innovative doctrine of “Buddha-nature” (*bodhi, citta*), an idea not found in the suttas for very good reasons). It basically means “the thought of enlightenment” or “the aspiration for enlightenment” (basically to become Buddha); secondarily, it means the “innately pure mind” (*prakṛtiparisuddhicitta*). It is this latter idea that is often construed as “original enlightenment” and so on; in other words, we are already “enlightened” but are not aware of it. Religiously, this is a comforting dogma but which can easily be misconstrued as a deterministic status—we do not need to do anything more: we do not even need the Buddha, we *are* Buddha! As Mills gingerly puts it, “This option, unfortunately, is not available in Theravāda.”⁸⁵

5.3.2.3 The notion that we are “already awakened” is not only a cavalier presumption, but also has a dark deterministic undertone that is simply contrary to the spirit of Buddha’s constant reminder: “But there is here something more to be done” (*atthi c’ev’ettha uttarim karaṇīyaṃ*);⁸⁶ in other words, we should be diligent in our training, especially in progressing to the next stage of the Buddhist path. For most of us, it is to live a life of moral or wholesome habits (*kusala sīla*).⁸⁷ We need to keep moving, as it were, until we reach the true and final stillness of nirvana.

5.4 THE DIVINE ABODES ARGUMENT

5.4.1 The immeasurables: variations and uses

5.4.1.1 Mills proposes the “**divine abodes argument**” (he uses the term “divine abidings”) which he characterizes as the following arguments and syllogisms (with some simplification):

- (1) If lovingkindness, compassion, gladness, and equanimity—**the immeasurables** (especially loving-kindness to begin with)—are made the subject of certain Samatha techniques, then they begin to entrench themselves in the mind.
- (2) If the immeasurables begin to entrench themselves in the mind, then they have a strong tendency to remove the main vices—namely, *lobha* (greed) and *dosa* (hatred)—from the mind.
- (3) If the immeasurables are made the subject of certain Samatha techniques, then they have a strong tendency to push the main vices out of the mind. (by 1,2)

⁸⁴ As the 1st of the 24 conditions (*paccaya*) in Abhidhamma, it is called “root condition”: SD 60.1e (13.21.1).

⁸⁵ Mills 2004: fn 10.

⁸⁶ (**Ānanda**) **Subha S** (D 10,1.31 + passim), SD 40a.13; **Assa, pura S** (M 39,3.5/1:271), SD 10.13; (**Gaha, pati**) **Potaliya S** (M 54,14), SD 43.8; **Sevitabbâsevitabba S** (M 114), SD 39.8 (1.1.1.8); SD 51.17 (3.4.2.5).

⁸⁷ **Samaṇa, maṇḍika S** (M 78/2:26), SD 18.9.

- (4) If the immeasurables neither entrench themselves in the mind nor remove their opposite vices out by means of the first techniques, then there are other more specific Samatha techniques that will eventually accomplish this.
- (5) If the immeasurables begin to entrench themselves in the mind, they cultivate **moral concern** (*anukampā*).
- (6) If the immeasurables are made the subject of certain Samatha techniques, then they cultivate moral concern. (by 1,5)

Conclusion: Certain Samatha techniques cultivate moral concern by entrenching the immeasurables in the mind (premises 1 and/or 4), removing greed and hatred out of the mind (premises 3 and/or 4), and creating affective states that foster moral concern (premise 6).

5.4.1.2 To begin with, **the divine abodes** (*brahma, vihāra*)—lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), gladness (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—are commonly found in the key early Buddhist texts, such as **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13).⁸⁸ Both **the Mahā Rāhu’ovāda Sutta** (M 62) and **the Vuṭṭha Vass’-āvāsa Sutta** (A 9.11) present the immeasurables in terms of “element-like” meditations for overcoming negative emotions.⁸⁹ **The Visuddhi, magga** devotes a whole chapter to explaining the 4 immeasurables (ch 9), where Buddhaghosa explains that the immeasurables are called *brahma, vihāra* because “these abodes are the best in being the right practice towards beings. And just as the brahmas abide with faultless (hate-free) minds, so meditators who associate themselves with these abidings abide on an equal footing with the brahmas” (Vism 9.106).

5.4.1.3 We shall not go into the details of how to cultivate lovingkindness, since this has been done elsewhere.⁹⁰ We will look at a few ways of cultivating lovingkindness mentioned in the texts. Just a couple of points before we do that.

Firstly, a reminder on how to cultivate lovingkindness the sutta way [4.1.2.1] as illustrated by the parable of the mighty conch-blower. Another metaphor will help: that of **the radiant lotus or “sun-lotus.”** Visualize a small beautiful white lotus in the centre of our heart radiating brilliantly, brighter than the sun itself. It is so radiant that our whole body and mind are radiant, too.

Then, we direct the radiance of lovingkindness **directionally**: firstly, in the front quarter. We can if we wish or subverbalize, “May all beings be well and happy!” (non-cognitively, with deep feelings). After a suitable duration, we turn clockwise to the right-hand quarter and repeat the process of radiating; then on to the back quarter; then the left-hand quarter; then the quarter above; then the quarter below. The word “across” in the sutta stock passage [4.1.2.1] technically refers to the intermediate directions, but it can also be understood as any directions or quadrant we feel need the lovingkindness, and radiate it there. Finally, brighten the whole universe with all its beings (which of course includes oneself) with lovingkindness.

The second point is about the ideal way to cultivate lovingkindness. We should first build up the cultivation until we reach **dhyana**; then emerging from dhyana, with the calm and clear mind, we radiate lovingkindness. This means that the preliminary practice can be a method other than lovingkindness: we may begin with, say, the breath meditation. (Vism 9.56)

Thirdly, when there are the difficulties with a subject of our lovingkindness cultivation, it is wise then to change the subject, or even switch to breath meditation (for the moment at least). However, if we habitually have difficulties with a subject, usually **a hostile person**, we should review whether we

⁸⁸ D 13,76-79 (SD 1.8), SD 51.14 (3.2.2.3). The immeasurables are also presented in **Jīvaka S** (M 55,6), SD 43.4, and **Makhā,deva S** (M 83,6), SD 60.8. For a fuller list of refs, see **Brahma, vihāra**, SD 38.5 (2.1.3.2).

⁸⁹ Respectively, M 62,18-21 (SD 3.110 and A 9.11,4), SD 28.2a.

⁹⁰ See eg **Karaṇīya Metta S** (Kh 9 = Sn 1.8), SD 38.3. On the subjects of lovingkindness radiation, see [6.1.3].

have been recalling the (perceived) wrongs they have done or projecting onto them some wrong we perceive as having been done to us. We should then go back to radiating lovingkindness to the 1st subject (the dear friend) and then direct the lovingkindness to that hostile person again (Vism 9.14).

This practice needs to be repeated until we are able to radiate lovingkindness happily to that hostile person. Then, we should review how we have done this: this is a kind of insight (*vipassanā*) perspective into our lovingkindness practice.

5.4.1.4 There are **other techniques** toward the full cultivation of lovingkindness given, for example, in **the Visuddhi,magga**. An easy way, especially for children is the use of a suitable cameo or episode from the Jātakas, stories of the Bodhisattva's past lives. The Visuddhi,magga lists a number of Jātaka passages that can be used as the basis for our lovingkindness cultivation (Vism 9.26-35).

Then, there is the reflection that, due to the infinity of previous rebirths, everyone has been everyone's mother, brother, sister, etc, in the past (Vism 9.36). An interesting way of cultivating lovingkindness is to reflect on the deconstruction of the "angry person" into the elements (based on Vism 9.40, but here given in the 1st person) for gradual and careful reflection:

THE 4 ELEMENTS

What am I **angry** with?

Is it the head-hairs I am angry with? Or with the body-hairs? Or the nails? Or the teeth? Or the skin?

Am I angry with the earth element (solidity) in the head-hairs ... ?

Am I angry with the water element (fluidity, cohesiveness) ... ?

Am I angry with the fire element (heat, decay) ... ?

Am I angry with the wind element (motion) ... ?

THE 5 AGGREGATES

Am I angry with the person's form? It is impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself.

Am I angry with the person's feelings? They are impermanent ...

... perceptions? ... formations? ... consciousness? They are impermanent ...

THE 12 SENSE-BASES

Am I angry with the person's eye? It is impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself.

... the ear? ... the nose? ... the tongue? ... the body? ... the mind? ...

Am I angry with the person's sight? It is impermanent ...

... the person's sound ... smell ... taste ... touch ... thoughts ...

It should be noted here that we are not likely to get much concentration with so much mental verbalizing; in other words, this is actually **a mindfulness practice**, that is, we mindfully verbalize these instructions, or rather we are willing ourself into these lovingkind⁹¹ states. These are example of conative exercises.⁹²

5.4.1.5 Since lovingkindness cultivation works with overcoming hatred towards a person, it is possible for us to cultivate it for **overcoming lust**, that is, some kind of sexual attachment or fixation. The same teachings can be adapted for the use of overcoming lust, for example,

⁹¹ Although "lovingkind" is not attested by OED, it does record the usage of "lovingkindly" (adv) (OED 2nd ed sv loving-kindness).

⁹² On conative awareness, see SD 60.1e (5.5).

THE 4 ELEMENTS

What am I **lusting** for?

Is it the head-hairs I lust for? Or for the body-hairs? Or the nails? Or the teeth? Or the skin?

Am I lusting for the earth element (solidity) in the head-hairs ... ?

Am I lusting for the water element (fluidity, cohesiveness) ... ?

Am I lusting for the fire element (heat, decay) ... ?

Am I lusting for the wind element (motion) ... ?

THE 5 AGGREGATES

Am I lusting for the person's form? It is impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself.

Am I lusting for the person's feelings? They are impermanent ...

... perceptions? ... formations? ... consciousness? They are impermanent ...

THE 12 SENSE-BASES

Am I lusting for the person's eye? It is impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself.

... the ear? ... the nose? ... the tongue? ... the body? ... the mind? ...

Am I lusting for the person's sight? It is impermanent ...

... the person's sound ... smell ... taste ... touch ... thoughts ...

This self-therapy cultivation is best done with breath meditation as the base practice to fall back on whenever we feel distracted. However, once some stillness arises, we only need to *smile* at it (to prevent thoughts from distracting the stillness), and simply hold the stillness by doing nothing except enjoying it. This is the kind of energy—it can be lovingkindness—that we need for our moral strengthening.

5.4.1.6 Let us now examine if and how **the directional cultivation of lovingkindness** [5.4.1.3] can be the bases for establishing both Samatha and Vipassanā. How do we use such practices to instill the mind with moral concern? Following premise 2 [5.4.1.1] we have these principles:

- It is not possible to have **lovingkindness** and feel anger at the same time (Vism 9.98).
- It is not possible to have **compassion** and be cruel to living things at the same time (Vism 9.99).
- It is not possible to have **gladness** and be discontented with solitude and spiritual qualities at the same time (Vism 9.100).
- It is not possible to look on with **equanimity** and be fired up with greed or be resentful at the same time (Vism 9.101).

According to the 7 methods of mastering the mind given in **the Vitakka Saṅṭhāna Sutta** (M 20), this is the very first method, that of “thought displacement” (*añña nimitta*), countering the unwholesome mind with a wholesome mental sign (*nimitta*).⁹³ Once we have cleared the mind of such an unwholesome state, we should guard that mind by keeping it even more deeply focused, even to the level of dhyana. This may be done with any suitable meditation we know, such as the breath meditation.

5.4.2 How the divine abodes arouse moral concern

5.4.2.1 In terms of “exegetical responsibility” [5.2.4.2]—accurately representing the suttas and teachings—**the divine abodes argument** is superior to the “human nature” argument [5.3.1]. Although we may not see clear sutta references to the human nature argument (which is a modern idea), the lat-

⁹³ M 20,3 (SD 1.8).

ter certainly supports the divine abodes argument: that the divine abodes will touch and arouse our goodness, what is truly spiritual in us, to emulate the Buddha in his great compassion by at least habitually showing **lovingkindness** to begin with.

Keown himself uses this argument (exegetical responsibility). In fact, he specifically mentions the divine abodes in the context of his subthesis on the Buddha's moral concern. It appears, conveniently enough, in a section entitled "The Cultivation of Moral Concern" in chapter 3 of *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*:

The states or dispositions cultivated through the Divine Abidings in Samatha meditation also occur in waking consciousness in the course of daily life—they are not exclusive to meditation or to the meditator. The technique of transic meditation (*jhāna*), however, is a powerful device for accelerating their cultivation and pervasion of the psyche.

(Keown 1992:76)

Keown's statement here gains greater significance when we understand and accept that moral virtue is not a ritual "status" we gain by reciting the precepts or being empowered by some religious authority or imagining that we already have. **Moral concern** is a self-empowerment—the finest moment in our self-effort—to act lovingkindly, humbly, morally with all our humanity. We then simply make this wholesome act a **habit** (*sīla*) [5.3.1].

5.4.2.2 Moral concern as a **habit** is when goodness—manifesting at least as love, ruth,⁹⁴ joy and peace—pervades our waking state, ever ready to be voiced and embodied in our actions and thoughts. This is our natural human conduct when we show a deep respect (fully accepting things as they are) for *life, happiness, freedom, truth* and *mindfulness* (the 5 values in which the 5 precepts are respectively rooted).⁹⁵

Our moral concern for others (other beings and the environment) must be present, ready and active whether we are meditating or not. Our meditation is our deep and full well of moral sustenance. Dhyana is the fire (*jhāna*) that burns up our negative emotions, from whose ashes rise lovingkindness (and the other immeasurables) which fires us up with moral concern and moral action.

5.4.2.3 The most compelling **philosophical issue** for the divine abodes argument is whether the cultivation of lovingkindness can be said to bring about moral concern (*anukampā*) when moral concern is supposed to be the *fundamental* quality of lovingkindness. On logical terms, this seems to be circular—how can lovingkindness both cause lovingkindness and be caused by it?

However, in terms of practical reality, "circular" takes on the positive sense of interdependent: moral concern *moves* lovingkindness into actions; lovingkindness, in turn, feeds and *follows* moral concern. The kinder we are, the better and wiser we are at it. This explanation is close to that found in the Pali Commentaries, as conveniently summarized by Aronson, in his *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism* (1980), as follows:

Etymologically, "sympathy" (*anukampā*) can be understood as the condition of "being moved" (*kampa*) "in accordance with [others]," or "in response to [others]" (*anu*) ... there are definitions

⁹⁴ In practical terms, this is love, ruth, joy and peace. "Ruth" is a good old early Middle English word for "compassion" which should be resurrected. It survives today as "ruthless." See Skeat, *An Etymological Dict of the Eng Language*, 1888 sv ruth. "Ruthless" (*Measure for Measure* 3.2.121); "ruthful" (*Troilus and Cressida* 5.3.48). Also SD 38.5 (2.3.2.1); SD 48.1 (5.2.1.3).

⁹⁵ On the 5 values behind the 5 precepts, see SD 60.1d (4.1.4.0).

in the commentaries—“the preliminary level of love” (*mettāya pubba,bhāga*, DA 2:456) or “the state of having a tender mind” (*mudu,cittatā*, SA 2:169). Similarly it is said to be synonymous with “tender care” (*anuddaya*, SA 2:169) and “simple compassion (*kāruñña*, SA 2:169).”

(Aronson 1980:3, abridged quote by Keown 1992:73)⁹⁶

5.4.2.4 Further, lovingkindness or *mettā* is etymologically related to *mitta*, “friend”: lovingkindness is the act or habit of befriending others (Vism 9.92). Lovingkindness moves into action, benefitting the needs of others, that is, compassion or *karuṇā*, which Buddhaghosa explains as follows: “When there is suffering in others it makes (*karoti*) good people’s hearts to be moved (*kampana*), thus it is compassion (*karuṇā*)” (Vism 9.92). The verb *karoti* simply means “to do, act.”

The “tender mind (or heart)” (*mudu,cittatā*) and “tender care” (*anuddaya*) remind us of the well-known parable: “Just as a mother would guard her own child—her one and only child, with her own life (*mātā yathā niyaṃ puttāṃ | āyusā eka,puttāṃ anurakkhe*), so should we cultivate a boundless heart to all beings” (Sn 149).

The phrase “the preliminary level of love” or “harbinger of lovingkindness” (*mettāya pubba,bhāga*) roots us deeply and firmly into the golden rule: “Do not do to others what you do not wish others to do to you,” or stated positively as: Do unto others what you wish them to do to you. This is stated in **the Dhammapada** as follows:

All tremble at the rod [violence]; Making oneself the example,	all fear death. one should neither kill nor cause to kill.	(Dh 129)
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All tremble at the rod; Making oneself the example,	all love life. one should neither kill nor cause to kill.	(Dh 130)
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If we understand the “preliminary level of love” as the respect for life, then “simple (or basic) compassion” (*karuñña*) is promoting the value of life: neither causing to kill (that is, preventing harm to others) and appreciating (or praising) others who are compassionate. **The Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7) puts this principle as follows: we should keep the precepts, we should encourage others to do the same, and we should speak in praise of the precepts.⁹⁷ In essence, this is moral concern.

6 Conclusion

6.1 In this essay, we have discovered these surprisingly vital facts about lovingkindness:

1. lovingkindness helps us better understand our mind-body being;
2. lovingkindness may be cultivated as either samatha or vipassanā depending on our need and inclination;
3. lovingkindness is not a spiritual path in itself, but greatly helps in expediting progress on the path;
4. psychological researches have observed that the popular verbalized method may not work for many people, and the simple directional sutta method may work better for such people;
5. lovingkindness plays a vital role in promoting our moral training and life.

⁹⁶ See W G Weeraratne, “Anukampā” in Ency of Buddhism, Sri Lanka, 1967 4:742; C A F Rhys Davids, “Love (Buddhist)” in (ed) Hastings, Ency of Religion and Ethics, 1916 8:159-162.

⁹⁷ S 55.7,6-12 (SD 1.5).

6.2 Since the encounter between modern psychology and Buddhism, with more non-Buddhists doing meditation, we are likely to see even more psychological developments in Buddhist meditation. There may come a time when the meditation of the psychologists will evolve into its own independent system. Meantime, we must work to inspire and help such meditators to evolve spiritually to envision, even attain, the awakening of the Buddha and the early arhats. For this reason, we must master, propagate and preserve early Buddhism so that it will be a cosmic presence in the future to benefit numerous beings.

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60.3

Pilinda Sutta

The Discourse on Pilinda | U 3.6/28-30

Be **Pilinda,vaccha Sutta** The Discourse on Pilinda,vaccha

Theme: Dealing with habitual tendencies

Translated & annotated by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2008; 2023

1 Summary and commentary

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY & RELATED STORIES

1.1.1 Summary

The Pilinda Sutta (U 3.6)—also called the Pilinda,vaccha Sutta—is about an arhat named Pilinda,-vaccha. Pilinda or Pilindi is his personal name, and his nickname is Vaccha (literally, “one-year-old calf”), which is also his family or clan name (*gotra*) [§2]. The Sutta is about his peculiar “residual impressions” (*vāsanā*) or functional habits (the effect of past karma) [1.1.2] of addressing other monks as “outcaste” (*vasala*). The Buddha explains that this habit of his was the result of being a brahman in many past lives, and that he is without any bad intention. He is, after all, an arhat. [2.1.1.2]

1.1.2 Other possible cases of *vāsanā*

1.1.2.1 A number of stories in the suttas and Commentaries may be taken to be cases of *vāsanā*, each with its special characteristics. **The Anabhirati Sutta** or Arati Sutta (S 8.2), for example, records the elder Vaṅgīsa’s self-admonitions against his dissatisfaction (*anabhirati*) with his teacher **Nigrodha,kappa**, a resident solitarian (*vihāra,garuka*)—one who places importance (*garuka*) on keeping to his cell—as soon as he returns from his alms-round, he enters his cell and not emerge until evening or the next day.

Nigrodha,kappa’s habit disaffects Vaṅgīsa, who quells it through self-admonition (S 1:186; SA 1:169 f). He also has doubts about Nigrodha,kappa’s awakening, as he has seen him sleeping with his arms moving about involuntarily (*hattha,kukkucca*). As a rule, this is unbecoming of an arhat, but in Nigrodha,kappa’s case it is an old habit (ThaA 3:198).

This is a case of reflexive action, explained as rooted in Nigrodha,kappa’s *vāsanā*.¹ Psychologically, this would not be difficult to understand, since such reflexive movements of the body,² work without any involvement of the cognitive areas of the brain. They are non-karmic processes that are categorised as part of “natural process of conditionality” (*dhmma,niyāma*), that is, reflex or motor action.³

1.1.2.2 The next case of *vāsanā* is not an arhat, but a young goldsmith, who became a monk, a pupil of Sāriputta, and is found in **the Suvanna,kāra-t,thera Vatthu** (DhA 20.9). Thinking that because the young student has been dealing with things of beauty and would thus have strong lust, Sāriputta teaches him to meditate on the bodily impurities. Even after a month in the forest doing this meditation, the young student does not progress in his meditation at all.

¹ S 8.2/1:186 f (SD 53.7 (1.2)). His elder’s verses are at Tha 1212-1218 (its prose intro is missing from S 8.2).

² The uppermost part of the brainstem (the midbrain) controls motor movements, particularly movements of the eye, and in auditory and visual processing, the heart rhythm, breathing, blood flow, and oxygen and carbon dioxide levels. It also controls swallowing, coughing, sneezing, and vomiting. [TO BE CONFIRMED]

³ The 5 natural orders (or laws) (*pañca,niyāma*) are those of: (1) heat (*utu,niyāma*, “laws of physics”), (2) seeds (*bīja,niyāma*, “law of genetics”), (3) karma (*kamma,niyāma*, “law of moral intentions”), (4) thought (*citta,niyāma*, “laws of mental processes”), and (5) nature (*dhmma,niyāma*), “laws of conditionality”: SD 5.6 (2).

Sāriputta consults the Buddha on the matter. Surveying the young man's past lives, the Buddha learns that he was reborn in 500 lives in the family of goldsmiths. Each time, he would work on making ornamental flowers of red gold. Hence, the Buddha advises that he should do **the red kasiṇa**⁴ to begin with. The method works and, in due course, he is able to progress into vipassanā and see the true reality of impermanence, suffering and nonself.⁵

1.2 SUTTA COMMENTARY (UA 1:192-195): A PRECIS

1.2.1 An arhat's "fault"

§2 "(An arhat) habitually addressed [monks] with the word, 'Outcaste (*vasala*)'" (*vasala, vādena samudācarati*). Pilinda would refer to and would address the monks with the word, "outcaste" (*vasala*), such as "Come, *vasala!* Go, *vasala!*" and so on. In other words, it is not some bowdlerized way of "treating others in a condescending manner." To the unawakened, he seems to be speaking harshly to the them. The awakened, of course, know him better.

§3 "Many monks" (*sambahulā bhikkhu*), seeing the elder treating them that way, [UA 1:193] thought that the elder must be bearing hatred to treat them in this manner. They did not know that he behaved that way on account of karmic impressions not abandoned, but his intentions were kind. Hence, the monks complained to the Buddha about his conduct.

Some say that the monks recognized that the elder was an arhat, yet he treated the monks with "harsh speech." Again, they did not understand the nature of lingering karmic impressions (*vāsanā*). Some thus doubted his noble superhuman state because of such a fault. In other words, Pilinda's curious name-calling was not intentional; technically, it is said to be merely functional action (*kiriya*).

1.2.2 The Buddha's explanation

§4 In response to the complaint against Pilinda, the Buddha summoned him for an interview. When the Buddha asks Pilinda whether he had spoken to the monks in the alleged manner, Pilinda at once admitted it.

§5 The Buddha then directed his mind to looking into Pilinda's past lives (*pubbe, nivāsam manasikarivā*), and saw that Pilinda had been reborn a brahmin for 500 successive lives. He had become habituated to using the "outcaste" (*vasala*) word that it had become second nature to him.

Hence, the Buddha declared:

"Vaccha, bhikkhus, does not bear hatred when he used the word *vasala* to address monks."

The meaning of this statement is that Pilinda, during his 500 past lives, had lived and behaved as a brahmin, arrogantly used to calling non-brahmins "outcaste." But he was now an arhat, one without hatred or ill will when he spoke thus. He had uprooted all his defilements. His habit of speaking that way was thus due to past births (*purima, jāti, siddham*, UA 1:194, 2 f).

⁴ The red kasiṇa is a meditation done with a colour device (*kasiṇa*): see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.29-32), SD 9; SD 15.1 (9.2).

⁵ DhA 20.9/3:425-429.

1.2.3 The verse of uplift (*udāna*) [§7]⁶

§7a “In whom dwells neither deceit nor conceit”

Pilinda, as a noble disciple, has neither deceit—the concealing of any present hatred—nor conceit—the arrogance based on the idea “I am superior” (as a brahmin), and so on. All this has been rooted out by means of the path. In other words, he is free from all biases (*agati*) rooted in greed, hate, delusion or fear.⁷

§7b “greed-free, not thinking of “mine,” without any expectation”

As an arhat, Pilinda is free from any kind of greed (such as lust, passion, delight, lustful desire, etc).⁸ He has no thought of owning things (“this is mine”) whether material (such as wealth, houses) or immaterial (such as praises, titles). He expects no benefits or rewards for himself in this life, or even any rebirth in the next life.

§7c “with anger pushed away, with self fully quenched”

Anger (*kodha*) arises from dislike for someone or something, which is rooted in ill will. Ill will is, in turn, the twin defilement with lustful desire. Both lust and ill will (repulsion) are uprooted with **non-returning**. Pilinda is himself an arhat, one who has overcome all the mental fetters.⁹

An arhat is free from all notions of **self** and self-centredness; he is not narcissistic at all. All the fires of defilement—greed, hate and delusion—are “fully quenched”: while he lives, these do not bring him any more suffering; upon dying, all the 5 aggregates are fully quenched: there is no more rebirth, no more samsara for the arhat.

§7d “he is brahmin, he is recluse, he is monk”

The Pali of this line is *so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo sa bhikkhu* as translated above. The inherent verb *hoti* is rendered as “is” in the translation. Either of the English articles “a” and “the” should be applied before each of the nouns, but in saying: “he is a brahmin ... ” and so on makes Pilinda a mere label, title or statistic (*saṅkha*), an imagined status, which an arhat is not, as stated in **the Muni Sutta** (Sn 209d).

An arhat (like Pilinda) is called “**brahmin**” (*brāhmaṇa*) in the sense that he has pushed out all evil (*bāhita, pāpattā*).

He is called “**recluse**” (*samaṇa*) in the sense that he has stilled all evil (*samita, pāpattā*) and by virtue of his own “level” or harmonious conduct (*sama, cariyāya*), he is in harmony with everyone and everything around him.

He is called “**monk**” (*bhikkhu*) on account of being one who has broken up all defilements (*bhinna, -kilesattā*).

In the case of the Buddha, some past karma may be activated under the right present (usually physical conditions) conditions, but these present karmic fruitings have nothing to do with any defilements (they have all been destroyed by the Buddha. Similarly, too, in the case of arhats, some past karma may fruit under the right present conditions, but it has nothing to do with defilements (like the Buddha,

⁶ This is mostly modern commentary based on traditional exegesis.

⁷ Also called the “4 motives” (*thāna*): **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

⁸ Possibly an allusion to the register of over 100 synonyms and metaphors for greed (*lobha*) in the Abhidhamma (Dhs §1059.189).

⁹ **The 10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*) are (1) self-identity view, (2) doubt, (3) attachment to ritual and vows, (4) sensual lust, (5) aversion, (6) lust for form existence, (7) lust for formless existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance: SD 10.16 (1.6.6-8); SD 11.1 (5.1.4); SD 3.3 (2); SD 56.1 (4.4).

arhats, too, have destroyed their defilements). Such present karmic fruitions are termed “functional karma” (*kiriya*). [3.1.3]

2 Pilinda,vaccha

2.1 ORIGINS

2.1.1 The lesser Gandhāra charm

2.1.1.1 Pilinda,vaccha (also Pilindi,vaccha) was a brahmin of Sāvatti, born before the Buddha’s awakening. Pilinda was his personal name, Vaccha his family name.¹⁰ He became a recluse and learned the lesser Gandhāra charm (*cūla,gandhā vijjā*),¹¹ but when the Buddha arose in the world, the charm stopped working.¹²

Having heard that the great Gandhāra charm (*mahā,gandha vijjā*) prevented the working of the lesser Gandhāra charm, and having concluded that the Buddha knew the former, he joined the sangha at the Buddha’s suggestion in order to acquire the great charm. The Buddha taught him meditation and in due course, he became an arhat.

The Apadāna says that Pilinda is well respected by devas, asuras and gandharvas (ApTha 388.84/-1:307).

2.1.1.2 Certain devas had been reborn in the deva world as a result of Pilinda’s guidance in a former birth. Out of gratitude, they waited on him morning and evening. He thus became famous as being dear to the devas, and was declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of such monks (A 1:24). Pilinda was also one of the 80 great disciples (*mahā,sāvaka*) of the Buddha (ThaA 3:205 f).

2.1.2 Pilinda,vaccha’s past lives

2.1.2.1 In the time of **Padumuttara Buddha**,¹³ Pilinda was a rich householder of Hamsavatī and wished to become a monk beloved of the devas. In the time of **Sumedhā Buddha**,¹⁴ he was born in the human world and paid great honour to the Buddha’s stupa (tumulus shrine). In a later birth, he became a world monarch (*cakka,vatti*) named Varuṇa, who established his subjects in righteousness so that after death they were reborn in heaven.¹⁵

The Pilinda Sutta (U 3.6) recounts how Pilinda habitually addresses others as “outcaste” (*vasala*). When this is reported to the Buddha, he explains that this is because Pilinda had, for 500 lives, been born among “outcaste-caller” (*vasala,vādī*) brahmins. His habit is reflexive, that is, due to an old “karmic trace” (*vāsanā*), free of unwholesome intentions, that is, without greed, hate or delusion (since he is an arhat).¹⁶

One day, on entering Rājagaha, Pilinda met a man carrying a bowl of long pepper (*pippalī*).

¹⁰ Mv 1.13-17 (V 1:204-209), Pār 2.7.47 (V 3:67), Nis 23.1 (3:248-252); also called *pilindi* (U:Ce). ThaA 1:53 f; UA 192.

¹¹ The charm is said to confer the power of going through the air and of thought-reading.

¹² The charm is mentioned in **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11,5/1:215), SD 1.7. Also called *gandhāri vijjā* (eg DA 1:322, 2:389; PmA 3:686; J 4:499).

¹³ Padumuttara was 15th buddha before our Gotama (SD 36.2 (3.4.3)). DA 2:410.

¹⁴ Sumedha was the 14th buddha before our Gotama (SD 36.2 (3.4.3)). DA 2:410.

¹⁵ ThaA 1:53; AA 1:276.

¹⁶ U 3.6; DhA 26.25/4:181 f; AA 1:277.

“What’s in your bowl, outcaste?” he asked, and the man, in anger, said, “Rat-dung!”

“So be it,” said Pilinda, and the pepper turned into dung.

Horrified, the man pleaded with the elder to set things back to normal. The elder instructs the man to tell the truth when asked again. This time the man replied: “Peppers, bhante.”

And so they reverted to being peppers.

(AA 1:277 f)

2.2 STORIES CONNECTED WITH PILINDA

2.2.1 Vinaya rule about medicines

The **Vinaya** mentions that on several different occasions, Pilinda suffered from various ailments, and the Buddha permitted him to have suitable remedies.¹⁷ Once Bimbisāra found Pilinda clearing a cave in order to provide a cell for himself. The king promised to build a monastery for him if he could obtain the Buddha’s permission.

The permission was obtained, which was then reported to the king, but he forgot the matter until one hundred days later. On remembering, he made ample amends, gave Pilinda 500 attendants to look after the monastery, and granted for their maintenance a village which came to be called Arāmika,gāma (Monastery Village) or Pilinda,gāma (Pilinda’s Village).

2.2.2 Miraculous stories

2.2.2.1 One day, while in the village for alms, Pilinda went into a house where a girl was weeping because the day was a feast-day and she had no ornaments to wear, her parents being too poor to afford any. Pilinda gave her a roll of grass to put round her head, and it turned instantly into solid gold. The king’s officers, hearing of this wreath, suspected the family of theft and cast them into prison.

The next day, Pilinda, learning what had happened, visited the king and convinced him of his psychic powers by turning the whole palace into gold. The family was released, and the king and his courtiers gave to Pilinda large quantities of the 5 medicaments, all of which Pilinda distributed among those who wished for them.¹⁸

2.2.2.2 Another story is related to Pilinda’s psychic powers (V 3:67). Once a family of Benares, which habitually ministered to Pilinda, was attacked by robbers, and two girls were kidnapped. Pilinda, by his psychic power caused them to be brought back, and the monks complained of this to the Buddha, but the Buddha held that no wrong had been done.

2.2.3 Two elders named Pilinda,vaccha?

2.2.3.1 The **Apadāna** has 2 verse accounts ascribed to Pilinda: the first, in Vagga 2, a short one of only 13 verses (Ap 1.15/1:59 f), and the second, in Vagga 40 (the last *vagga*), a very much longer one of 206 verses (ApTha 388/1:302-316). The presence of 2 Apadānas ascribed to the same name supports the probability that there were 2 elders named Pilinda,vaccha. On the other hand, there might possibly have been a confusion of legends, and it is no longer possible to separate them.

¹⁷ V 1:204 f. Some (eg, Tha:RD 14, n4) hold that the elder of Rājagaha of these stories was different from the elder of Sāvattī. See below.

¹⁸ V 1:206 ff; 3:248 ff. This was the occasion for the forming of the rule that all medicaments required by a monk should be used within 7 days. It was in reference to this occasion that **Gandhāra J** (J 406/3:363-369) was told. The story of the palace being turned into gold is mentioned at Kvu 608.

2.2.3.2 In the second Apadāna, we are told that in the time of **Padumuttara Buddha**, Pilinda was a very wealthy gatekeeper (*dovārika*). He gave many precious gifts to King Ānanda, Padumuttara’s father, and won from him a boon. He asked, as his boon, that he should be allowed to entertain the Buddha.

The king refused to grant this boon, but the gatekeeper appealed to the judges, and they ruled in his favour. Thereupon, he held a great almsgiving of unparalleled splendour for 7 days and gave away all manner of gifts. As a result, he was born 1,000 times as king of the devas and 1,000 times as king of humans.

In his last birth, he suffered from neither heat nor cold, dust did not stick to his body, and the rain did not wet him. This means that he did not suffer any discomfort from the weather or the environment.

3 Vāsanā and its significance

3.1 THE EARLY TEXTUAL ROOTS OF VĀSANĀ

3.1.1 Vāsanā in the suttas

3.1.1.1 The Pali-English Dictionary defines *vāsanā* as “that which remains in the mind, tendencies of the past, impressions, usually as *pubba,vāsanā*, “former impressions” (Sn 1009; Miln 10, 263).¹⁹ In the Sutta Nipāta, the term appears as a compound, *pubba,vāsana,vāsita*, “by a former impression,” used in a positive sense in **the Vatthu,gāthā** (introduction to the Pārāyana Vagga, Sn ch 5), describing the 16 youths, “all with their own groups, famed throughout the world, meditators, delighting in meditation, wise, impregnated with their former [good] impressions” (Sn 1009).²⁰

3.1.1.2 The phrase *pubba,vāsana,vāsitā* (Sn 1009d) “habituated by the resultant force of the past” too sheds light on the date of the Vatthu Gāthā. The doctrine of *vāsanā* is apparently alien to early Buddhism, though the same ideas may be found in *germinal* form in phrases like *pubbe kataṃ kammaṃ* (actions done in the past).²¹

The developed idea as such, however, is found in **the Milinda,pañha**:

pubbe vāsanāya coditā hadayo, “his heart rebukes the past habits” (Miln 10); and
pubbe,vāsita,vāsanā, “habits impressed by the past” (Miln 263, cp Sn 1009d);

and in **the Visuddhi,magga**:

kata,samaṇa,dhammo, vāsita,vāsano, bhāvita,bhāvano, “he who has discharged the tasks of a recluse has his former deeds impressed on him and has developed his meditation” (Vism 185).

3.1.1.3 It has already been noted that this term does not occur in earlier Pali works. It is probable that the concept of *pubba,vāsanā* was further developed into a fuller theory by the time of the Commentaries.

The frequent occurrence of this idea in **the Culla Niddesa** is very significant. The concluding passages in the comments on each of the 16 questions (*pucchā*) contain one standard phrase in which the word *vāsanā* occurs—(Nc:Be 40), *ye tena brāhmaṇena saddhīm eka-c,chandā²² eka-p,payogā, ekādhīpāyyā*,

¹⁹ PED: Cp Nett 4, 21, 48, 128, 133 sqq, 153, 158 sqq, 189 sq. Cp BHSD *vāsanā*, eg Mvst 1:345.

²⁰ *Pacceka,gaṇino sabbe | sabba,lokassa vissut || jhāyī jhana,rātā dhīrā | pubba,vāsana,vāsitā* (Sn 1009).

²¹ V 2:189; cf Miln 100.

²² Nc:Ee xiii f *ekajjhā*.

eka, vāsanā, vāsītā, “they who were together with the brahmin, of a common desire, of a common intention and with the same former impressions.”²³

3.1.2 Vāsanā in other paracanonical texts

3.1.2.1 *Vāsanā* is often mentioned in **the Netti-p, pakaraṇa**, where it occurs no less than 12 times each with a slightly different sense but all sharing the fundamental idea of “karmic trace.” Some suttas called it *vāsanā, bhāgiya* (pertaining to *vāsanā*). All the works in which this term is employed, reflected an accepted theory of *vāsanā*, and are comparatively late. The date of the Visuddhi, magga is to some extent certain, that is, 5th century CE. Hardy limits the date of the Netti-p, pakaraṇa between 2nd century BCE and 5th century CE, though he is more inclined to favour a date in the neighbourhood of the latter limit.²⁴

3.1.2.2 Mrs C A F Rhys Davids, in her *Milinda-Questions* (1930), suggests a date towards the beginning of the Common Era for **the Milinda, pañha**; and in her *Outlines of Buddhism* (1934:103), she assigns the date 80 BCE. These instances show that all the other references to *vāsanā* do not go back earlier than the 2nd century BCE. This fact may, to some extent, help in determining the date of the Vatthu Gāthā. All these references to *vāsanā* presuppose the existence of at least a contemporary belief in “former impressions.”

3.1.2.3 The term *vāsanā* appears twice in **the Milinda, pañha**, the first in a negative sense. In the first occurrence, *vāsanā* describes the young boy Nāgasena who, having completed his Vedic studies with a teacher, and reflecting in solitude, found “his heart rebuking him for his former impressions ...” (*pubba, vāsanāya codita, hadayo*, Miln 10, 21 f). Seeing that the Vedas lacked any essence, he turned to look for a Buddhist teacher.

The second occasion for the usage of *vāsanā* (in a positive sense) is found in a description of those monks training for the path and delighting in “non-proliferation of thoughts” (*nippapañca*). King Milinda asks Nāgasena about *nippapañca*. In reply, Nāgasena says that “those who are fully purified in their self-nature on account of their past impressions are without mental proliferation from the moment their minds are unified” (*ye te sabhāva, parisuddhā pubbe vāsita, vāsanā te eka, citta-k, khaṇena nippapañ cā honti*, Miln 263, 18 f).

3.1.3 Vāsanā in the Commentaries

3.1.3.1 It has already been noted that this term does not occur in earlier Pali works, and that it is probable that the concept of *pubba, vāsanā* was developed into a fuller theory by the time of the Commentaries [3.1.1.3]. The Commentary uses the non-canonical term *vāsanā* to explain the peculiar habit of Pilinda, vaccha of addressing other monks with the word “outcaste,” which, according to the Buddha, was an old habit resulting from Pilinda’s 500 successive past lives as a brahmin.

When the offended monks complain to the Buddha about Pilinda’s habit, the Buddha, we are told, (after surveying Pilinda’s past lives) explains that this is due to Pilinda’s numerous past lives as a brahmin. Considering the uncertainties and oddities that seem to turn the canonical teaching on the arhat’s nature on its head, we can only safely regard this account as being **apocryphal**, that is, lacking authenticity so that it is included in neither the canon nor commentaries, and is of doubtful authorship).

²³ See Jayawickrama, “The Vaggas of the Sutta Nipāta,” *Univ of Ceylon Review* 6, 4 1948:247; repr *Pali Buddhist Review* 1, 3 1976:154 f. Also E Lamotte, “Passions and impregnations of the passions in Buddhism,” in *Buddhist Studies in honour of I B Horner*, Dordrecht, 1974:91-104.

²⁴ *Netti-p, pakaraṇa* (ed E Hardy, PTS, 1902:xx).

3.1.3.2 Since Pilinda is an arhat, clearly he has *no* unwholesome roots—greed, hate or delusion—his odd name-calling; it is just reflex or functional karma. The Sutta closes with the Buddha affirming Pilinda’s arhathood. It is true that although no *new* karma will arise for the arhat, an old karma may fruit again under the right *external* conditions (like the weather). Accounts relating to the Buddha having a severe headache from prolonged standing in the hot sun beside the river Rohinī, for example, brought on a painful headache was attributed to some distant past karma in **the Pubba,kamma,piloti(kā)** (“rag-pieces of past karma”), a late Apadāna text.²⁵

In other words, certain *external* conditions may cause some past karma to fruit again in an arhat, but not any negative mental state, since an arhat has overcome all defilements. Thus, we can only regard any account of arhats behaving oddly on account of present karma, especially acting against right speech, right action or right view (for example) would clearly be apocryphal [3.1.3.1].

3.1.4 Vāsanā in the Mahāyāna imagination

3.1.4.1 *Vāsanā* is a Sanskrit term accepted into Pali (hence called *tatsama*). It literally means “perfuming” or “scent,” such as “a sesame seed perfumed by a flower retains the flower’s scent when the latter is no more.”²⁶ Hence, *vāsanā* means “predispositions,” “habituations,” “residual tendencies.” The Chinese translated *vāsanā* literally as 習氣 *xíqì*, “habit energies.”²⁷ These are individual tendencies arising as a result of repeated wholesome or unwholesome acts or states.²⁸

The Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism defines it as follows:

“Habitual tendencies or dispositions, a term, often used synonymously with *bīja* (‘seed’). It is found in Pali and early Sanskrit sources but comes to prominence with the Yogācāra, for whom it denotes the latent energy resulting from actions which are thought to become “imprinted” in the subject’s store-house-consciousness (*ālaya, vijñāna*). The accumulation of these habitual tendencies is believed to predispose one to particular patterns of behaviour in the future.” (2003:323)²⁹

3.1.4.2 For the unawakened, *vāsanā* are usually forms of defilements (*kleśa*; P *kilesa*) that hinder them from progressing spiritually. For the awakened, they seem to remain as peculiar habits that appear at odds with the arhat’s natural nature. One Mahāyāna text has taken liberties to dramatically attribute *vāsanā* to a few great arhats.

According to the 大智度論 *dàzhìdù lùn* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra), arhats remain subject to the influence of *vāsanā*. The Mahāyāna masters alleged that Śāriputra still had “traces of anger” (*dveṣa-vāsanā*) and Nanda had “traces of lust” (*rāgā-vāsanā*)³⁰—just as the scent of incense remains behind in a censer even after all the incense has burned away [3.1.5.2]. Thus, it seems that arhats still have karmic flaws, and that only the buddhas have fully removed such habitual tendencies! We do not any such sug-

²⁵ See SD 49.12 (2.3.1.10).

²⁶ Lamotte, op cit 1974:91.

²⁷ Digital Dict of Buddhism. Cf *Princeton Dict of Buddhism* 2014:960 which says that “‘perfumings,’ hence ‘predisposition,’ ‘habituations,’ ‘latent tendencies,’ or ‘residual impressions,’” 薰習/習氣 *xūn xí/xíqì* is sometimes “overliterally” tr from Chin as “habit energies.”

²⁸ See S Zacchetti, *The Da zhidu lun ... and the History of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā*, Hamburg, 2021:57 f (n118).

²⁹ For a Mahāyāna def of *vāsanā*, see Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, sv 2014:960 f.

³⁰ Comy on Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra (T1509) [MPPŚ], attr Nāgārjuna (100 fasc), tr Kumārajīva, T1509.25.57a4-756c19. [DDB] 11 Oct 2023. Chs 1-15, French tr Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grand Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (5 vols 1944-1980), Eng tr, *The Treatise on the Great Virtue of Wisdom of Nāgārjuna*, by G K M Chodron 2001. MPPŚ: Chodron 2001:110-116.

gestion in the Pali sources, where it is unequivocally states that an arhat is one “whose defilements are destroyed (*khīṇ’āsava*) ... one completely freed through final knowledge (*samma-d-aññā vimuttā*).”³¹

The Mahāyāna went on to attribute *vāsanā* to all unawakened conditionings in terms of phenomenology. Xuanzang, in his 成唯識論 *Cheng Weishi Lun* (*Vijñaptimatratāsiddhi),³² mentions these 3 types of *vāsanā* (amongst other types):³³

- (1) ***vāsanā* of language** (**nāma, vāsanā*, 名言習氣 *míngyán xíqì*), that is, (a) terms and words as referents, ie, meanings; and (b) terms and words revealing perceptual fields, ie, as thoughts and mental factors;
- (2) ***vāsanā* of self-grasping** (*ātma, grāha, vāsanā*, 我執習氣 *wǒzhí xíqì*), or inherent attachment to a self-view, that is, (a) the attachment to “me” and “mine” (destroyed by the “cultivation path,” *bhavaṇā, mārga*);³⁴ and (b) self-grasping to “me” and “mine” from discrimination (destroyed by the “vision-path,” *darśana, mārga*);
- (3) **rebirth-linking *vāsanā*** (*bhavaṅga vāsanā*, 有支習氣 *yǒuzhī xíqì*), means fruition of karmic seeds carried over from life to life in the 3 worlds (the sense, form and formless worlds); ie, (a) wholesome but defiled (*sāśrava kuśala*) karma producing desirable fruits, and (b) unwholesome (*akuśala*) karma producing undesirable fruits.

3.1.4.3 We can see here (especially in the 3rd concept) the early developments of the Mahāyāna polemics that arhats are still not fully awakened like the Buddha himself. We will leave such views where they lie as Mahāyāna errors or polemics. Further, we must reaffirm the following teachings:

- (1) in terms of awakening, the Buddha is simply the pathfinder, the first amongst equals: **Pavāraṇā Sutta** (S 8.7). SD 49.11; **Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58), SD 49.10.
- (2) that there is no need for the laity to attain buddhahood to awaken; streamwinning will lead to arhat-hood in time: **(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), SD 16.7, also S 25.2-10; arhat-hood is the same for both ordained and lay: **(Mahānāma) Gilayāna S** (S 55.54,19) SD 4.10.
- (3) that, in terms of liberation, Buddhahood and arhat-hood are the same: **(Mahānāma) Gilayāna Sutta** (S 55.54,19), SD 4.10.
- (4) there nothing more beyond arhat-hood: **(Mahānāma) Gilayāna Sutta** (S 55.54,19), SD 4.10;
- (5) that after arhat-hood, nothing more to be done: **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14; **(Ānanda) Subha S** (D 10,2.39), SD 40a.13; SD 15.10a (1.1.1).
- (6) that even the Buddha respects the Dharma: **Gāraṇa Sutta** (S 6.2), SD 12.3.

3.1.5 Mahāyāna degradation of arhats

3.1.5.1 The Mahāyāna theologians and writers, it seemed, had a field day in using the *vāsanā* idea (though it is non-canonical) to misrepresent many of the great arhats. This was probably to better these early elders (out of sectarian rivalry and other unenlightened reasons) and boost their innovative dogmas

³¹ On the pericope: *khīṇ’āsavā* *visitavā kata, karaṇīya ... sammad-aññā, vimutta*: **(Indriya) Arahanta S 1** (S 48.27,-3), SD 56.16a. See also SD 51.19 (2.2); SD 55.9 (1.3.2.5); SD 70.18 (1.4.1 n).

³² *Chéng wéishí lùn* (*Vijñaptimatratāsiddhi-śāstra; **nam par rig pa tsam du grub pa’i bstan bcos kyi ’grel pa*) 10 rolls. T1585.31.1a-59a. Completed in 659 in 玉華宮寺 *Yù huá gōng sì*. Mainly tr 玄奘 *Xuánzàng* of Dharmapāla’s 護法 *hù fǎ* commentary on Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only 唯識三十頌 *wéishí sānshí sòng*, by Vasubandhu 世親 *shì qīn*, but it also includes ed trs of other masters’ works on the same verses. [DDB] 11 Oct 2023.

³³ For a discussion, see D Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology*, RoutledgeCurzon, 2002:472-474.

³⁴ These are Mahāyāna terms. These *mārgas* are outlined in *Cheng Weishi Lun*, part 4. See Lusthaus 2002:481 n6.

of the Bodhisattva ideal. Unlike the arhats, the Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas were paragons of immaculate virtue and power (but none of whom really existed)!

Mahāyāna texts were written slandering the arhats by attributing odd habits as what may be called “**chronic atavistic relapses**” or simple old bad habits, that is, on account of *vāsanā*. Worldly details of the great arhats before their awakening were incorporated into the descriptions of the arhats, even though neither the suttas nor the Commentaries give any such details.³⁵

3.1.5.2 These slanderous accounts are found in Mahāyāna works such as the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa (Upadeśa in short) 大智度論 *Dàzhìdù lùn* (T1509), “the treatise of the great perfection of wisdom”;³⁶ the **Mahāyānasaṅgrahopaniḥandana** 攝大乘論釋 *Shè dàchéng lùn shì* (T1598);³⁷ 大方便佛報恩經 *Dà fāng biàn fó bào ēn jīng* or briefly *Fó bào ēn jīng* (T156);³⁸ and other Chinese texts. It should be noted that none of these texts belong to early Buddhism nor are they found in Pali. They are all post-Buddha works, mostly with revised or new ideas about Buddhism. They are interesting readings on Mahāyāna or East Asian Buddhism, but generally do not reflect early Buddhism, and in some places even reject it.

Here are some Mahāyāna depictions of the early arhats in terms of the *vāsanā* doctrine as imagined by the Mahāyāna writers. These examples (abridged) have been extracted with quotes from the Belgian Catholic priest scholar of Mahāyāna, Étienne Lamotte’s article, “Passions and impregnations of the passions in Buddhism” (op cit 1974:92-94).³⁹ We are left to wonder why such stories are told at all, and why they are published in a learned journal.

(1) **Śāriputra** was (according to the Mahāyāna), in a previous life, a serpent who refused to re-swallow the poison he had injected, and instead threw himself into a fire. In his last life, he was once offered a special dish by a householder. When the Buddha reproached him for having eaten impure food, Śāriputra, “deeply upset, vomited his meal and swore never again to accept an invitation to someone’s home.”⁴⁰ This seems to be a slanderous plagiarism and corruption of a well known Pali story preserved in the Jātaka Commentary attesting to Sāriputta’s discipline and dignity as an arhat.⁴¹ (Lamotte 1974:92)

(2) **Mahāmaudgalyāyana**, Śāriputra’s childhood friend who had great psychic powers, had been a monkey in his past lives, “and holy though he may have been, he would gambol whenever he heard

³⁵ Except, of course, in the cases of Pilinda and Nigrodho, kappa.

³⁶ We only have the Chinese *Dàzhìdù lùn*, prob tr from a lost Skt work (hence the reconstructed title), attr either to Nāgārjuna (c150-c250 CE) or to Kumārajīva, who tr it between 402 and 406. It is a polemical work promoting the Bodhisattva ideal. Between 1944 and 1980, Lamotte published an annotated French tr of the 1st section and ch 20 of the 2nd section as *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu der Sagesse*, in 5 vols [3.1.4.2]. See Princeton Dict of Buddhism: Dazhidu lun.

³⁷ Written by Aśvabhāva (10 fasc), comy on Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasaṅgraha; tr Xuanzang between 647 and 649. Partially tr Lamotte, *La Somme du Grande Véhicule d’Asaṅga*, 2 vols, Louvain, 1973. Gives a detailed theory on “store-consciousness” (*ālaya, vijñāna*).

³⁸ Composer & tr unknown. Prob written in China during Later Han 後漢 *hòu hàn* (25-220 CE). Tib tr *Thabs mkhas pa chen po sañs-rgyas drin-lan bsab paḥi mdo* (Peking ed, *Mdo-sna-tshogs (ke)* 89a-204b).

³⁹ Care should be taken with his Taishō refs: they are mostly inexact or wrong.

⁴⁰ Lamotte’s refs are mostly inaccurate or erroneous, and have been corrected here against the Taishō. Mahiśāsaka Vin, T1421.22.173c13-25, 22.179c8-11; Sarvāstivāda Vin, T1435.23.463a14-16; Mahāvibhāṣā, T1545.27.77b1-2; Upadeśa, T1509.25.70c9-18, 71a1-16, 25.247c17-18, 25.260c12-16. Other refs in Traité 1:118-121, 2:1632.

⁴¹ Sāriputta, the story goes, was fond of meal cakes (*piṭṭha, khajjaka*), but when his young student remarks: “Who does not love sweetmeat?” (*madhuraṃ nāma bhante kassa appiyan ti*), Sāriputta vows never to eat them again. (Intro to **Visavanta J**, J 69/1:310)

music.”⁴² (Lamotte 1974:92). Again, this Mahāyāna caricature of an early arhat is not found in the Pali texts.

(3) **Mahākāśyapa** is not only represented as showing unarhatly ill will towards Ānanda,⁴³ but also as having succumbed to “simian atavism.” “One day, on hearing the music of some great Bodhisattvas, he leapt up from his seat and traced some dance steps. Even if the five objects of the divine and human bliss left him completely, he was unable to resist a tune.”⁴⁴ (Lamotte 1974:92 f). It’s probably not surprising that a Catholic priest would show interest in such unedifying stories of a great early arhat.

(4) **Nanda**, the Buddha’s handsome half-brother, joined the sangha, but still had feelings for his bride-to-be, Janapada, kalyāṇī. Having seen even more beautiful heavenly nymphs, he forgot about her and was able to meditate so that in due course he became an arhat.⁴⁵ “His beauty and eloquence made him a highly successful teacher, but—for there is a but—before starting to speak, he would survey his audience closely and hold his gaze at length on the women.”⁴⁶ (Lamotte 1974:93). Again here we see a Mahāyāna lampoon of a great arhat without any sutta basis.

(5) Lamotte mentions **Pilindavatsa**, too. The text says that everyday he crosses the Ganges to collect alms. At the river, he says, “You outcaste, stop flowing so that I can cross.”⁴⁷ In spite of these seemingly insulting words, there was no contempt in his heart. Even for the greatest of holy ones, it is difficult to correct himself of inveterate habits.” (1974:93). Are such remarks actually spoken by an arhat, or is it the work of a Mahāyāna polemicist?

(6) The arhat **Gavampati** “had a detestable habit of spitting out his food and then re-swallowing it: in short, he ruminated.”⁴⁸ Not surprising really, since he had been an ox for five hundred existences,” (Lamotte 1974:93). By now, we probably have a good idea how the Māhāyāna talespinners viewed the early Buddhist arhats.

(7) In Vaiśālī, there was the arhat **Madhuvasiṣṭha**, “Excellent Honey,” who was once a monkey who “met his death after having filled the Buddha’s bowl with honey.”⁴⁹ On account of this, he was reborn into a brahmin family and had as much honey as he needed; hence his name. “Nevertheless he retained his monkey habits and was often seen perched on walls and climbing trees.”⁵⁰ Oddly, we can hard find any such story in the Pali suttas or the Commentaries.

⁴² Mahāyānasaṅgrahopanibandhana 攝大乘論釋 *shè dà chéng lùn shì*, T1598.31.442a26-28.

⁴³ Regarding Mahākāśyapa’s “ill will” during the 1st council, see J Przulski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, Paris, 1926. Mahākāśyapa heaps up reproaches against Ānanda (pp 12-15, 47-51, 62, 64, 97, 120, 182-186); he humiliates him (pp 275-276); he expels him (pp 12, 16, 62,97).

⁴⁴ Upadeśa, T1509.25.367c29-368a3.

⁴⁵ The Pali account of Nanda’s arhathood is found in (**Arahatta**) **Nanda S** (U 3.2), SD 43.7.

⁴⁶ Upadeśa, T 1509.25.260c10-12.

⁴⁷ Mahāsaṅghika Vin, T1425.22.467c20-22; Mahāvibhāṣā T1545.27.77a29-b1; Upadeśa T1509.25.71a17-19, 25.251b4-5, 25.649c14-16.

⁴⁸ *Fó bào ēn jīng*, T156.3.155c14-15; Sarvāstivāda Vinayavibhāṣā, T1440.23.504c4-5; Mahāvibhāṣā, T1545.27.77-b2-3; Upadeśa T1509.25.251b1-2, 25.337a4-5.

⁴⁹ This is reminiscent of the monkey (along with an elephant) who attends to the Buddha during his solitary rains retreat (10th year) in Pārileyya forest: **Pārileyya V** (DhA 1.5b/1:59 f); SD 6.1 (3).

⁵⁰ *Fó bào ēn jīng*, T156.3.155c16-17; Sarvāstivāda Vinayavibhāṣā, T1440.23.504c6-7; Upadeśa, T1509.25.251b3-4, 25.260c20-22, 25.337a6-8, 25.649c10-12.

3.1.6 Mahāyāna as religious fiction

3.1.6.1 When, as a young Buddhist (the 1980s), I was learning Mahāyāna Buddhism from western teachers, I was often told to “suspend our belief (or disbelief)” and lose ourselves in the “Mahāyāna drama.” Taken that way, I did find studying the Lotus Sutra, the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, the Amitayus Sutra, and so on, very engaging and interesting. In other words, it was enjoyable to read or listen to Mahāyāna teaching without having to believe them. It is just like enjoying great secular literature, or watching Star Wars and similar movies.

In fact, Mahāyāna, we now know, was not a monolithic movement, but disparate currents of local teachers and elites who reacted to Buddhism with their own imagination and agenda. Mahāyāna flourished as a written and book-based Buddhism (unlike early Buddhism, which was an oral tradition to begin with). It is not difficult to imagine Mahāyāna writers and their readers freely fictionalizing the Buddha and the great arhats as literary figures, parodizing, even ridiculing them, and promoting more socially engaging, even worldly, yet magical figures of Eternal Buddhas and Cosmic Bodhisattvas. We may even see this as the beginnings of Virtual-Reality RPG, with the Mahāyāna devotees role-playing as Bodhisattvas. One can thus imagine how Mahāyāna became popular.⁵¹

3.1.6.2 In 2014, during a Lotus Sutra Seminar in a Singapore temple, I was the lone representative for early Buddhism. Trying to share how I see Mahāyāna, I spoke of how it is full of colourful uses of words, symbols, metaphors, parables and stories. However, when I mentioned that I enjoyed Mahāyāna stories and teachings like Star Wars fans enjoy the series, there was a woman heckler in the audience who loudly protested, “How dare you compare Mahāyāna to the movies!” No one came to my defence; clearly, there were no Star Wars fans in the audience. I realized that the metaphor did not work for the local Mahāyāna audience.

A young local Mahāyāna zealot who openly championed Pure Land Buddhism even believed that the discovery of the Gandhara texts “proved” that “Mahāyāna was earlier than Theravāda.” I tried to put across to him that I’m more interested in “early Buddhism,” but he was adamant in promoting not just Mahāyāna, but “Chinese Mahāyāna.” To claim that Mahāyāna is right and true, he often proclaimed this Chinese saw:

不可 思议者 <i>bùkě sīyìzhě</i>	“The unbelievable is not always the improbable.”
不一定 不可能 <i>bùyídìng bùkěnéng</i>	“The inconceivable is not always the impossible.”

I simply could not resist putting across to him that a Western philosopher had already warned us of such summary and dangerous claims:

“Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities.”
(Voltaire, translation of passage from “Questions sur les miracles,” 1765)⁵²

⁵¹ A Skilton, *A Concise History of Buddhism*, 2nd ed Windhorse, 1997, 2013:101-112. G Schopen, “Mahāyāna,” (ed) R E Buswell, *Macmillan Ency of Buddhism* 2004:492-499. J Walser, *Genealogies of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Routledge, 2018.

⁵² On a light, no less insightful, note: “Alice laughed. ‘There’s no use trying,’ she said: ‘one *ca’n’t* believe impossible things.’ ‘I daresay you haven’t had much practice,’ said the Queen. ‘When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.’” (Lewis Carroll, *Alice through the Looking Glass*, London: Macmillan, 1871, dated 1872). Thanks again, Matt Jenkins, for this lovely literary recall. Also, a misquote attr theologian Tertullian of Carthage (c160-225), who, in defence of the paradoxical character of certain Christian doctrines (as in Mahāyāna), wrote: *prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est* (“it is immediately credible—because it is silly” [*Flesh*, Tertullian Project] or “it is by all means to be believed, because it is

3.1.6.3 In the name of intrafaith tolerance and compassion, we must accept that the Mahāyāna have created their own Arhats and vested them with their own hagiographic and narrative details, as with their Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Since none of these creations, as described and devised by the Mahāyāna masters exist in early Buddhism, these karmic formations remain with their creators and with those who game these creations as professional Buddhists.

Although almost none of these Mahāyāna cultures have survived history, their virtual worlds still exist today, resurrected as religious and academic realities by professional priests and scholars. In a profoundly sober way, we are reminded how fortunate we are to still have access to **early Buddhism**, indeed, be its custodians. We should not take this difficult but liberating task for granted because, like the Mahāyāna, we too may be plagiarized and plundered again, this time by our own karmic history.

3.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

3.2.1 Arhats with quirks?

3.2.1.1 The Pilinda Sutta (U 3.6) records the Buddha as stating that Pilinda’s habit of addressing other monks as “outcastes” was the reflexive habit of having been such a brahmin for 500 successive lives [§5]. The question now is whether we take such a teaching as “conventional” truth or as “ultimate” reality—as stated in **the Neyy’attha Nīt’attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5 f), SD 2.6b. After all, an arhat—like Pilinda, -vaccha and Nigrodha,kappa—being fully awakened (that is, having destroyed all the roots of sensuality, existence and ignorance), should be able to deal with an old “habit.”

Or, should we understand the arhat’s *vāsanā*-based habits like we do a physical handicap (which is, in fact, the case with Nigrodha,kappa). In the case of Pilinda, if his is a speech “handicap”—both body and speech are regarded as “precept-based”—then, if it is non-intentional, there is no moral breach.

Now there is another interesting case of “speech handicap,” that is, **the namo tassa “latah”** (like pibloktoq of the Inuit) of the brahminee Dhanañjānī. This is however regarded as an “utterance of uplift” (*udāna*)⁵³ since it is triggered by her faith. However, this would still be *vāsanā*-rooted, if she had been doing this in her past lives.

3.2.1.2 If it is difficult for us, as informed Buddhists, to accept the fact or story that an arhat (like Pilinda) could *still* have a peculiar handicap that seems like “harsh speech,” then, we may (conveniently) invoke **the Neyy’attha Nīt’attha Sutta** and proclaim the licence to take the Pilinda Sutta as an instructive “skilful means.” On that reading, the point of the story is that we perceive words as “harsh speech”—that is, they annoy us or make us angry. Then, we should reflect on the fact that only when the act is intentional (rooted in greed, hatred or delusion) that it is an unwholesome act!

Indeed, we would often accept the harsh speech of someone dear (a spouse, relative, friend or significant other) with a positive mind (without anger or hatred). If we are able to tolerate, even show loving-kindness, to such an unawakened source of *intended* harsh speech, could we not then at least accept the possibility that Pilinda’s “harsh speech” is actually unintentional and non-karmic (*kiriya*)?

absurd” [*Flesh, New Advent*]), commonly paraphrased as *credo quia absurdum*, “I believe it because it is absurd.” (Put simply: “... the more improbable an event, the less likely is anyone to believe, without compelling evidence, that it has occurred; therefore, the very improbability of an alleged event, such as Christ’s resurrection, is evidence in its favour. Thus far from seeking the abolition of reason, Tertullian must be seen as appropriating Aristotelian rational techniques and putting them to apologetic us” (D C Lindberg, “Science and the Early Church,” edd Lindberg & Numbers, *God & Nature: historical essays on the encounter between Christianity and Science*, Berkeley & LA: Univ of California Press, 1986:26).

⁵³ **Dhanañjānī S** (S 7.1/1:160 f), SD 45.5.

But the problem remains that an arhat would be able to notice and arrest the negative thought (if any) before it becomes an act! Logically then, either Pilinda is merely acting harshly to keep a social distance with others, or he is not an arhat but thought to be one (assuming that he does not claim to be one).

3.2.1.3 Now we come to a more serious point: should we ever tolerate **the unwholesome conduct** of others, especially that of monastics who habitually commit breaches of the Vinaya? In their lifetime, these teachers, for example, who wear monastic robes or hold high religious positions, are respected by their students, scholars and others, despite their blatantly immoral or dubious habits.

When we are involved in religion, including Buddhism (both monastic and lay), we are likely to meet, even follow, Gurus (cultish teachers or leaders) who are powerful and charismatic. Such persons, on account of their special status, are likely to be looked up to so highly and appear so huge to us, that we are blinded by their dark sides (especially their flouting the Vinaya), or worse, we actually do not mind that they have so many faults since they “are beyond good and evil”!⁵⁴

In fact, it is such knowledge of their followers’ gullibility and obsequiousness that emboldens the Gurus to cavalierly live immoral lives. This situation is painfully common in ethnic Buddhism, especially in Asia. Sadly, we (the blind believers), too, will bear the karma of allowing such abuse of the Dhamma and Buddhists. This dark karma is due to what is called the “**abdication syndrome**.”⁵⁵

3.2.1.4 The unwholesome habits of such negative people are rooted in their *vāsanās*. The point is that *vāsanās* are not excuses for unwholesome habits. In modern Buddhism, we have numerous cases of monks, priests and teachers who act and live immorally, even committing criminal acts. Clearly, these are worldly people who are still overwhelmed by their past karma, and they will face their karmic consequences.

It’s wise to remind ourselves here that simply putting on robes does not mean that one has attained the path or know the Dharma or that one should be “respected” for what one says! Respect is not given, but should be earned by wisdom and compassion. A mere change of garments does not mean that one is still not naked underneath it all.

Naturally, we would be troubled by such reports on account of our understanding of the Dharma. Sadly, the less Dharma we know the more likely we are to play down, even accept, such bad or wrong behaviour of the worldly unawakened. We may even feel troubled by the Pilinda story of his *vāsanā*., but for the wrong reason. This is where we are dealing with our own negative reactions—our acceptance of such conduct or rejection of it. We need to understand such reactions with **lovingkindness**, that is, clear our minds of negative thoughts.⁵⁶ When we understand these *vāsanā* accounts for what they really are, then we have cultivated some wisdom, which is the purpose of **the Pilinda Sutta**.

3.2.2 Psychological significance

3.2.2.1 The karmic “perfuming” (*vāsanā*) of the stream of consciousness conditions our lives. Our experiences in turn produce more *vāsanās* that are “planted” as our latent tendencies (*anusaya*), latently conditioning subsequent experiences until the planted *vāsanās* come to fruition. Then, depending on the type of fruit produced (wholesome, unwholesome or neutral), new *vāsanās* are produced. In this way, claims the Mahāyāna, the karmic conditioning continues until broken upon reaching the path.

⁵⁴ See **Beyond good and evil**, SD 18.7.

⁵⁵ These are symptoms of “**abdication syndrome**” on the followers’ part: see SD 60.1f (2.6).

⁵⁶ To cultivate lovingkindness towards our own bad habits and weakness, see SD 60.2 (2.2.5).

According to scholastic Buddhism, 3 types of *vāsanās* are very common and important, that is, as: (1) language, (2) self-attachment, and (3) rebirth continuum [3.1.4.2]. Let us begin conveniently with the 3rd type of *vāsanā*. **Continuum *vāsanās*** account for karmic continuity between lives and between mind moments. Since *vāsanās* are karmic conditioning, they are “with influxes” (*sāsava*) (the influxes of sensual desires, of existence, and of ignorance),⁵⁷ bringing better rebirths or worse rebirths ceaselessly, and conditioning us to react with liking, disliking or nonchalance (including boredom), thus planting more karmic seeds of lust, repulsion and ignorance.

3.2.2.2 The 2nd kind of *vāsanā*, **self-view *vāsanās***, are of 2 kinds: the inherent and the projected. The inherent self-view *vāsanās* come with our birth (as our past karma)—our “karmic inheritance”—while the projected *vāsanās* are those arising as present conditions by which we differentiate ourself from others, giving us a sense of “I” versus “you” and “them,” and “mine” against “yours” or “theirs.”

It’s not difficult to deal with the latter, the *projected vāsanās*: through proper socialization, that is, as learning good behaviour (through keeping the precepts) and social realities (having good manners). It is more difficult to deal with the former, the inherent *vāsanās*, since they often form a congenital sense of selfhood. We must thus prevent the *vāsanās* from being activated with a strong counter-habit developed through proper meditative interventions and mindful habits.

3.2.2.3 The 1st kind of *vāsanā*, **the linguistic**, is language-based; hence, it is also a vital social dimension when we communicate with others. We use words (*vyañjana*) and sounds (*sadda*), but what we convey are referents (*attha*), that is, ideas and meanings. With some language skill, we may manage to convince and move others, but people will often still react to what we say or communicate according to their own *vāsanās*, that is, habitual traces due to their past karma and present conditions.

Since the meanings of words are often directly apparent in our daily communications, that is, made clear or projected by our “self-referencing” (basic senses, if you like), as when we are chatting with people close to us or when buying things, there is usually a linguistic cycle of closure. We somehow “get by” with the **conventional** language (along with the body language) we use in daily life.

3.2.2.4 The other kind of *vāsanā*—**the psychological**—is more far-reaching. It is our habit of conceptualizing that creates linguistically conditioned intentions and their quality (technically, “mental factors” or *cetasika*). Due to this type of *vāsanā*, we actually experience the world in certain ways and in words we are familiar with. We thus *become* a certain type of person, holding certain views that immediately shape and colour our experiences.

A psychiatrist, trained in certain psychological theories, sees his patients or, indeed, any other person, as enactments of those theories. The psychiatrist may notice things about his patients that the patients themselves or others are unaware of. The insightful psychiatrist is in a unique position—privileged with insight into his client’s mind—to understand it better, and thus to better his own, to work with the client in healing the latter’s mind so that the client is able to heal relying on self-effort.

Often we are conditioned to react to others (we “judge” them) not only based on our own understanding or misunderstanding of knowledge and Buddhism but also on the kind of language we like to hear, or simply whether we like the speaker or not! Our *vāsanās* shape how we understand what we

⁵⁷ D 33,1.11(32)/3:230, 34,1.5(4)/276; A 4.10/2:10; Tha 47 [Tha:N 133 n47]. There are also similar terms like *mānusaka yoga*, “the bonds of being human” (Sn 641; Dh 417), which Comys gloss as “the body” (*kāya*) (DhA 4:425; SnA 2:469), and opp *dibba,yoga*, “the divine bond” (S 1:35 = 60) [PED: yoga]. See also Thī 2: “be free from ties” (*mutte muccassu yogehi*); Thī 4 where *yoga* has 2 senses: as “human body” + “right conditions”; Thī 76 “all ties, divine and human, have been cut” (*sabbe yoga samucchīnā, ye dibbā ye ca mānusā*); See Thī:N for ad loc for helpful nn.

learn, what we know and what happens to us—they condition how we experience things and the ways by which we approach experience. We are thus limited and lied to by what we know.

As Buddhists, even when we think we are “open-minded,” we habitually, often privately, measure others. When another’s view differs from ours, we are likely to regard the other one as “a wrong view,” even unhinged. Or when we deeply respect a well-known teacher, we are likely to accept whatever they say as being “right views.” In time, we realize we are wrong—that’s when we are turning to the right path of self-discovery.

3.2.2.5 What we take as “**form**” (*rūpa*)—sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches—are embodiments of the past (this life or previous ones, or both) expressed through language activity. **Language**, then, is merely an uncertain string of sounds and ideas that shape and shift with experience. That mind behind each sense-field and thinking itself, is itself the creator of **names** (words and sounds), embodied as “things.”

Our ideas of things—categories and terms—are themselves linguistic projections. They arise and “exist” in our experience cognized as sensations and recognized as concepts: they are not always deliberate, often not even conscious, but fruits of the unconscious (latent tendencies). We are driven by our past to project our world; our present virtual world, in turn, projects what we are. Hence, we are the world, but are we really?

Birth and death chase one another in a spiral of intentionality (karma). This swirling current of becoming and being drags us ceaselessly on in cycles, turning and returning, but going nowhere. The ignorant seem to enjoy the ride; the deluded wants more. Both the ignorant and the deluded are harvesting the suffering whose seeds they had sown in the past, fruiting and harvested now, and sowed again and again.

3.2.2.6 There is a **social significance** to a proper understanding of the nature of *vāsanā*, such as when applied to local ethnic Buddhists (in Malaysia and Singapore). Some may view that our ancestors were peasant migrants, and we ourselves may have been reborn as peasants for 500 lives (more or less). This may explain why we seem to enjoy slaving for foreign monks and priests, exclusively supporting and sponsoring foreign teachers. “That’s the way we *were*; that explains the way we *are*!” some may justify.

Thinking in this way is not only a fatalist or deterministic wrong view, but also goes against the teaching of **the Pilinda Sutta**, which shows that even a habitually arrogant brahmin can become an arhat, although it is not the rule that their past habits (*vāsanā*) will *always* haunt them. The suttas and commentaries rarely have such *vāsanā* stories about other great arhats—except in the Mahāyāna tales, whose purpose diverts from promoting the early suttas. The point is that the Buddha’s teaching is about each and every one of us becoming “noble” (*ariya*) by walking the path of awakening.

— — —

Pilinda Sutta

The Discourse on Pilinda
U 3.6

1 Thus have I heard.

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the squirrels' feeding ground in the Bamboo Grove outside Rājagaha.

Pilinda addresses others as "outcaste"

2 At that time, the venerable **Pilinda,vaccha**⁵⁸ habitually addressed⁵⁹ monks with the word, "outcaste" (*vasala*).

3 Then many monks approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the monks said this to the Blessed One:

"Bhante, the venerable Pilinda,vaccha habitually addresses monks with the word, 'Outcaste'."

4 Then the Blessed One addressed a certain monk:

"Come now, monk, go and summon the monk Pilinda,vaccha with my word, thus:

'Avuso Pilinda,vaccha, the teacher summons you.'"

4.2 "Yes, bhante," replied the monk in assent to the Blessed One, and approached the venerable Pilinda,vaccha.

Having approached the venerable Pilinda,vaccha, he said this to the venerable Pilinda,vaccha:

"Avuso Pilinda,vaccha, the teacher summons you."

4.3 "Yes, avuso," the venerable Pilinda,vaccha replied in assent to the monk.

He approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and sat down at one side.

4.4 To the venerable Pilinda,vaccha sitting at one side, the Blessed One said this:

"Is it true, Vaccha, that you habitually address monks with the word 'outcaste'?"

"Yes, bhante."

The Buddha explains

5 Then the Blessed One, having directed his mind into examining the past lives of the venerable Pilinda,vaccha, addressed the monks:

"Bhikkhus, do not be offended⁶⁰ with the monk Vaccha. Bhikkhus, Vaccha does not bear hatred habitually addressing the monks with the word, 'outcaste'."⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Pilinda* is his better known name; also known as *pilindi* (U:Ce). See (2).

⁵⁹ "Addressed," *samudācarati* (*saṃ + ud + ācarati*), pres 3 "he addresses," "to behave towards, to converse with, to address" (V 1:9; D 2:154, 192; A 3:124, 131, 4:415, 440, 5:105; J 1:192). It also connotes habitually (esp in Comys): *samudācāra* (J 4:22; SnA 6; DhsA 392; PvA 279); past part *samudāciṇṇa* (J 2:33; Tikap 320). For its other meanings, see PED.

⁶⁰ "Be offended," *ujjhāyittha* (*u(t) + jhā + ya + tha*) imperative 2 of *ujjhāyati*, "to become indignant or irritated, grumble, murmur, complain, protest": S 1:232,11 ≠ 2:278,9 ≠ U 28,29.

⁶¹ *Mā kho tumhe bhikkhave Vacchassa bhikkhuno ujjhāyittha, na bhikkhave Vaccho dosantaro bhikkhū vasala,-vādena samudācarati.*

5.2 For 500 successive births, bhikshus, the monk Vaccha was reborn in a brahmin family. This “outcaste speech” of his has been his [29] habitual mode of speech for a long time. It is because of this, bhikshus, that Vaccha is in the habit of using the word ‘outcaste’.”⁶²

Pilinda’s verse of uplift (*udāna*)

6 Then the Blessed One, understanding the significance of this, at that time uttered this udāna [inspired verse]:

<p>7 <i>yamhī na māyā vasatī na māno</i> <i>yo vīta,lobho amamo nirāso</i>⁶³</p> <p><i>paṇunna,kodho abhinibbut’atto</i> <i>so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo sa bhikkhū tī</i>⁶⁵</p>	<p>In whom dwells neither deceit nor conceit, greed-free, not thinking of “mine,” without any expectation, with anger pushed away, with self⁶⁴ fully quenched— he is brahmin, he is recluse, he is monk.⁶⁶</p>
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— evaṃ —

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⁶² *Vacchassa bhikkhave bhikkhuno pañca jāti,satāni abbokiṇṇāni brāhmaṇa,kule paccā,jātāni, so tassa vasala,-vādo dīgha,rattam samudāciṇṇo* [Be Ce DhA; Ee Se V 2:80 UA 194,12 *ajjhāciṇṇo*], *tenāyaṃ vaccho bhikkhū vasala,-vādena samudācaratī ti. Ajjhāciṇṇa* (past part of *ajjhācaratī*), “practised, accustomed, committed (V 2:80,34; M 2:248,15, 250,3 f).

⁶³ As at Sn 469b ≈ Sn 494b. *nirāso* = *ni* (without) + *āsā* (hope, yearning, expectation).

⁶⁴ Here “self” (*attā*) refers to the mind.

⁶⁵ This line recurs at Dh 142d (relating layperson on the path). DhA 26.25 relates virtually the same story of Pilinda, but with a different closing verse: “Free from harshness, instructive, | uttering the truthful and instructive || that offends none: | such a one I call a brahmin” (*akakkasam viññāpanim, giram saccam udīraye || yāya nābhisaje kañci, tam aham brūmi brāhmanan ti*, DhA 4:182).

⁶⁶ There is poetic licence here without the use of the “statistical” article, pointing to spiritual states, not social status.

60.4

Go,datta Sutta

The Discourse to Go,datta | S 41.7

Theme: Citta the houselord's teachings on the liberations of mind

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2009, 2016, 2023

1 Introduction

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The **Go,datta Sutta** (S 41.7) is a conversation between the monk Go,datta and the lay disciple Citta Gaha,pati (the houselord) at the latter's wild mango grove outside Macchikāsanda. Go,datta asks Citta about 4 different kinds of liberations of the mind (*ceto,vimutti*):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| (1) the immeasurable liberation of mind | <i>appamānā ceto,vimutti,</i> |
| (2) the liberation of mind by nothingness | <i>ākiñcaññā cetovimutti,</i> |
| (3) the liberation of mind by voidness | <i>suññatā ceto,vimutti,</i> |
| (4) the signless liberation of mind | <i>animittā ceto,vimutti.</i> |

Citta explains that, depending on their application (*pariyāya*), they can be seen as being diverse both in spirit and in the letter; or as being the same in spirit, only diverse in the letter. Broadly, this teaching reminds us to keep an open mind when teaching Dharma and not to be held back by the text or theory. Our deep experience and clear understanding of them will show their context and import.

1.2 SUTTA NOTES

1.2.1 *Pariyāya* and context

1.2.1.1 This Sutta conversation recorded below is reprised in **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43), with Sāriputta and Mahā Koṭṭhita as the speakers.¹ This overlapping of passages is valuable information, hinting to us how the Dharma is transmitted amongst the sangha members and lay disciples. It shows that the Dharma is openly taught to both renunciants and laity, in so far as they are willing and able to receive it. It's also the same Dharma to the awakened and those on the path: the awakened have attained it, the path saints see it ever clearer as they progress up the path.

1.2.1.2 In terms of teaching and practice, the keyword of the Go,datta Sutta is ***pariyāya***, “way, method, reason” [§3]; elsewhere, it can also mean “presentation, interpretation; metaphor, figure of speech.” As an adverb, *pariyāyena* has the sense of “relatively, figuratively, contextually.” In other words, it is richly polysemic and its proper usage should be teased out from the context. *Pariyāyena* thus overlaps in some ways with “skillful means” (*upāya*). Both *pariyāya* and *upāya* share the sense of using or practising the Dharma in a manner that suits and helps our personality and difficulties.

1.2.1.3 The first half of the Sutta [§§3-9] explains the meaning of ***pariyāya***, which is vital in helping us see how the “spirit” (***attha***) and the “letter” (***vyañjana***) [§3 *passim*] are related. In simple terms, “**the letter**” is what preserves the teaching in a manner so that “**the spirit**,” that is, the meaning, can be realized through our practice. The unawakened tends to see merely “the letter,” that is, the texts or teachings, as *fixed and external*, even as dead artefacts applying only to the past and to a special group of peo-

¹ M 43,30-37/1:297,9-298,27 (SD 30.2).

ple, the way some academics see Buddhism. The wise and the awakened, especially the arhats, see the letter (the texts and teachings) as tools and signs pointing to our experience of the true reality, and taste the joy of its freedom (liberation).

When we lack wisdom, we see the teachings and methods as “different in meaning, different in phrasing” (*nān’atthā c’eva nānā,vyañjanā ca*). In a positive sense, it means that when we look carefully, even by trial and error, we will learn which method helps us to progress in our understanding of the teaching. As a rule, we need to start with the letter (the text and teaching)—like reading the instructions and signs—in order to get the method and practice right. We may even have to adjust ourselves to the method or even adjust the method, or use more than one method. This is the meaning of the Buddha’s admonition: “There’s more to be done here” (*atthi c’ev’ettha uttariṃ karaṇīyam*)² by the unawakened.

1.2.1.4 In the closing half of the Sutta [§§10-16], it explains how, upon awakening, we see that the different liberations are the same, though the methods *differ*. We are then told what causes the differences in us (our minds). The Sutta speaks of 3 kinds of “differentiators”:

The 1st kind of differentiator is the **measuring** (*pamāṇa*) created or projected by the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*)—greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) [§11]. Greed measures by way of “have” and “have not”: we tend to want or lust for things we think we do *not* have. The most powerful force in this lusting is self-view: “I must have; I want my own; this is mine” Hatred measures by way of “same” and “different” in terms of *equal, inferior and superior*. We tend to feel safe with those we see (measure) as “equals”; we want the attention and approval of those we see as “superior”; and we tend to reject and hate those we see as “inferior.” Delusion has the wrong view that when something is measurable, we can control and have it: it is “something” (*kiñcana*). In these ways, the roots are the “**makers of measures.**” [§13]

Thus, the 2nd kind of differentiator is the notion that there is “**something**” (*kiñcana*). According to the Sutta, “lust creates *something*, hatred creates *something*, delusion creates *something*.” [§13]. When we are lustful, we want *something*; when we are hateful, we reject *something*; when we are deluded, we imagine *something*. Here “something” is our own mental projection *rooted* in lust, hatred or delusion.

1.2.1.5 We can also say that “something” is any or the sum of formations (*saṅkhārā*) that is the virtual reality that is our world; or that “something” is any of, or the sum of, our karmic formations (*abhi-saṅkhārā*): bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions. We have made “something” of all these that are of the nature *to change, become other, to cease*, and are *without any essence*. More simply, we have made *something* out of nothing, and failed to see **the not-thing** (*akiñcana*).³

The more familiar term for this is the well known, **not-thatness** (*atammayatā*): basically, it means not making something out of nothing (as ironically in theistic dogma!). When we do not identify with anything, then we have mastered “everything.” Paul Williams, a professional Mahāyāna specialist of 30 years, gave up Mahāyāna and returned to Christianity. He actually started off with Anglicanism; then studied Mahāyāna, took refuge with the Tibetans, claimed to give up “Buddhism,” and then turned to

² (**Ānanda**) **Subha S** (D 10,1.31 + passim), SD 40a.13; **Assa,pura S** (M 39,3.5/1:271), SD 10.13; (**Gaha,pati**) **Potaliya S** (M 54,14), SD 43.8; **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114); SD 39.8 (1.1.1.8); SD 51.17 (3.4.2.5).

³ Paul Williams, a professional Mahāyāna specialist of 30 years, gave up Mahāyāna and returned to Christianity. He actually started off with Anglicanism; then studied Mahāyāna, took refuge with the Tibetans, claimed to give up “Buddhism,” and then turned to Catholicism. In his book, *The Unexpected Way: on converting from Buddhism to Catholicism* (T & T Clark, 2002), Williams argues ontologically for his God-belief asking: *why is there something rather than nothing?* (27-40). You have actually made “something” of Mahāyāna, but have not tasted the “not-thing” (*akiñcana*) of early Buddhism, the “not-thatness,” **atam,mayatā**: SD 19.13. How can you ever give up something that you have not?

Catholicism. In his book, *The Unexpected Way: on converting from Buddhism to Catholicism* (T & T Clark, 2002), Williams argues ontologically for his God-belief asking: *why is there something rather than nothing?* (27-40). One suspects that he tried to make “something” of Mahāyāna but could not. The next best option must surely be The Great Bug Something, a childhood companion, now grown more formidable with age. Not having seen or tasted the “not-thing” (*akiñcana*) of early Buddhism, the “not-thatness,” *atam,mayatā* (SD 19.13), we must thus fall back on that *Something* we were raised on yet unweaned. How then can we ever give up something that we have not?

1.2.1.5 The 3rd kind of differentiator is the idea of **signs** (*nimitta*). Again, lust creates *a sign*, hatred creates *a sign*, delusion creates *a sign* [§15]. Here a “sign” refers to *something* that we have made out of nothing. In fact, wherever our mind rests, that spot is *a sign*: the mind does not really “rest” there (it is not still). It is really an anchor for lust, hatred or delusion. Hence, in meditation, we must ensure that its sign is not an anchor for any of these roots. In fact, when the mind is truly and fully still, concentrated (as in dhyana), it is without any sign.

Now **voidness** (*suññatā*) is a broad term for the absence of measures, something and signs; hence, it is not taken separately. It is found in all the 3 liberations—the immeasurable, the “thingless,” and the signless: it is empty of lust, hatred and delusion. This is a way of talking about the liberated mind, when the mind is fully awakened or when it is merely having a taste of that awakening.

1.2.2 The 4 immeasurables (brahma,vihara)

1.2.2.1 The whole of §4, on the immeasurable liberation of mind (*appamāṇa ceto,vimutti*), is a stock passage on the 4 divine abodes. It is a pericope found in, for example, the following suttas:

- **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26,31/3:78), SD 36.10, says that it is “the wealth for a monk (*bhikkhuno bhogasmiṃ*).”
- **Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33,1.11(6)/3:223) calls it “the immeasurables” (*appamañña*).
- **Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43,31/1:297), SD 35.1, (**Ceto,vimutti**) **Anuruddha Sutta** (M 127,4-7/3:146 f), SD 54.10 & **Go,datta Sutta** (S 41.7,5/4:296), SD 60.4, call it “the immeasurable freedom of mind” (*appamāṇa ceto,vimutti*).
- **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara Sutta** (M 52,8-11/1:351 f) = **Dasama Gaha,pati Sutta** (A 11.17/5:344), SD 41.2, state that when one stabilizes these states, reflecting on its impermanence, etc, one attains arhathood; if not, one attains non-returning.
- (**Majjhima**) **Jīvaka Sutta** (M 55,6/1:369), SD 43.4, presents the Buddha as Brahmā, who exemplifies the 4 immeasurables: lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity.
- **Dhānañjāni Sutta** (M 97,32-33/2:195), SD 4.9, and (**Brahma,vihāra**) **Subha Sutta** (M 99,24-27/2:207 f), SD 38.6, call it the path to companionship with Brahmā (“communion with God”). This teaching neither affirms the supreme God-idea nor supports any theistic God-belief but serves as a “bridging Dharma” for erstwhile God-believers to work with to attain mental calm and clarity, and use that to gain insight (*vipassanā*) into true reality (as taught in §4).
- (**Saṅgha**) **Uposatha Sutta** (A 4.190,4/2:184), SD 15.10b, concerns one “attained to Godliness,” *brahma-p,patta*. This is the bridging Dharma that Mahā Kaccāna uses to inspire the brahmin Lohicca to go for refuge in the 3 jewels: (**Mahā Kaccāna**) **Lohicca Sutta** (S 35.132,4.6), SD 60.5.
- **The Abhidhamma**—in **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** and **the Vibhaṅga**—call it the “freedom focused on only the beautiful,” *subhan t’eva adhimutto hoti ti* vimokkho: **Pm** 5.20/2:39; **Vbh** 13/272-276 (*sutta,-niddesa*), 276-282 (*abhidhamma,niddesa*), 282-284 (comy).

For a table of references, see SD 38.5 (2.1.3.2).

2 People and places

2.1 THE LAY DISCIPLE CITTA GAHA,PATI

Citta Gaha,pati (“the houselord”),⁴ a seth⁵ of the town of Macchikā,saṇḍa⁶—hence, also called Macchikā,saṇḍika—is declared by the Buddha as the foremost of Dharma speakers amongst the laymen disciples (A 1:26). It is said that on the day he was born, the whole city was filled knee-deep with flowers of various hues; hence, his name, Citta (Skt *citra*, “variegated”).⁷

His pre-eminence as a lay disciple is attested to by the presence of a whole section on teachings connected with him—the **Citta Saṃyutta**—in the Saṃyutta Nikāya.⁸ He is also said to be a layman non-returner (SA 3:100).⁹

2.2 THE ELDER GO,DATTA

2.2.1 The arhat Go,datta

The monk Go,datta is the only arhat in the suttas by that name. He belonged to a family of caravan-leaders and, on the death of his father, himself travelled about with 500 carts, engaged in trade. One day, one of his oxen fell on the road, and seeing that his men could not get it up, Godatta went up to it and smote it. The ox, it is said, angered by the cruelty, spoke in a human voice, chiding him for his base ingratitude, and cursed him. The shocked Godatta decided to renounce all his property and join the sangha. In due course, he became an arhat (ThaA 1:555 f).

2.2.2 Go,datta Thera,gāthā

659 *yathā’pi bhaddo ājañño
dhure yutto dhurāsaho*¹⁰

Just as a noble thoroughbred,
yoked with a load, enduring the load,

⁴ For a biography, see Nyanaponika & Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, Somerville, MA, 1007:365-372.

⁵ “Seth,” *setthi* (Skt *śreṣṭhin*) (V 1:15 f, 271 f, 2: 110 f, 157; S 1:89; J 1:122, 3:367). A *setthi* was, in today’s terminology, “a financier, banker or entrepreneur.” I have rendered it by the common modern Indian word, “**seth**” (or “sett”) (which the Webster’s 3rd New International Dictionary defines as “a rich merchant”). According to **I Fiser**, “the *setthi* lent money, and ... lent considerable sums ... to people living by trade; the *setthi* was a man who had (considerable) wealth and therefore was a valuable connection for all those people who wished to make their living by trade and who needed some initial capital, or maybe had a run into debt and sought a way out by changing their way of living” (“The problem of the *Setthi* in Buddhist Jātakas,” *Archiv Orientalni* 24, 1954: 263). See also **U Chakravarti**, *The Social Dimension of Early Buddhism*, 1987:76-79). **Chettiar** (Newari of Kathmandu, *shresta*; Gujarati & Khatri (Khetri of Punjab), *seth*; Malayālam, *cheṭṭi*; Tamil *sheṭṭi*; Kannada & Tulu, *shetty*, *shettar*, *shettigar*; Telugu, *seṭṭi*; Sinhala, *seḍḍi*, *heddi*) is a title, commonly used by people of South Indian origin in India and abroad, probably comes from Skt *śreṣṭha* or *śreṣṭhī*. They are a subset of the Vaishya class. *Chitty* is an ancient family name found today in my home-town of Melaka [Malacca], Malaysia, where “Chettiar” is often synonymous with “money lender.” For refs, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chettiar>.

⁶ Macchika,saṇḍa, lit “fishers’ clump,” a grove belonging to Citta, and a town in Kāsī, 30 yojanas [338 km = 210 mi] from Sāvathī (DhA 2:79), the home of Citta the houselord. Located nearby is **Ambāṭaka,vana**, presented by Citta as a monastery to the monks headed by Mahānāma.

⁷ Citta, vl *citra* (P & Skt), variegated, manifold, beautiful. Its other meaning is “mind consciousness,” since they are also variegated and manifold. See PED: *citta*¹ & *citta*².

⁸ S 41.1-10/4:281-304.

⁹ **Citta Gaha,pati**: SD 8.6 (8.3); SD 16.16 (1); his accomplishments SD 40a.7 (1); Acela Kassapa, SD 8.5 (8.1); “not by faith” in the Buddha, SD 40a.8 (5.6.3); his humour, **Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta S** (S 41.8), SD 40a.7; death, **Gilāna Dassana S** (S 41.10), SD 16.16.

¹⁰ Ce *dhurassaho*. This prob should be read as *dhuraṃ saha* (Tha:N xlix (§40)).

	<i>mathito atibhārena saṃ yugam¹¹ nātivattati</i>	oppressed by the massive burden, forsakes not his yoke,
660	<i>evaṃ paññāya ye tittā¹² samuddo vārinā yathā na pare atimaññanti ariya,dhammo'va pāṇinaṃ [68]</i>	even so those satiated with wisdom, just like the ocean with water, despise not others— this is the noble truth towards the living.
661	<i>kāle kāla,vasaṃ pattā bhavābhava,vasaṃ gatā,¹³ narā dukkhaṃ nigacchanti te'dha socanti mānavā</i>	Caught in time, we're under time's power, fallen under the yoke of being and non-being, people come to grief, here (even) the young sorrow, too.
662	<i>unnatā sukha,dhammena dukkha,dhammena c'onatā¹⁴ dvayena bālā haññanti yathā,bhūtaṃ adassino</i>	Elated by states of joy, and depressed by states of pain, fools are smitten by both, not seeing things as they really are.
663	<i>ye ca dukkhe sukhasmiṃ ca majjhe sibbanim accagū¹⁵ ṭhitā te inda,khīlo'va¹⁸ na te unnata,onatā</i>	Those, when in the midst of suffering and happiness, having crossed over the seamstress, ¹⁶ stay in the middle: ¹⁷ they stand like the city pillar; they are neither elated nor depressed.

¹¹ Comy reads "one's yoke" with a reflexive pronominal adj thus: *saṃ yugan ti attano khandhe ṭhitam yugam*, "one remains yoked to one's own aggregates" (ThaA 2:277,30 f); cf *saṃ cittam paṭiladdhāna* (Thī 136), explained as *attano pakati,cittam* (ThaA 126); *sehi kammehi tappati* (Dh 136); *himsati atta,sambhūtā taca,sāraṇa saṃ phalaṃ* (S 1:70, 98), explained as *attano phalaṃ* (SA 1:137); *saṃ nirankitvā* (J 3:402), as *sakaṃ porānaṃ ajjhattikaṃ janam nīharitvā* (JA 3:402,20 f). See Tha:N 220 n659, 289 n1211.

¹² "Filled (with)," *tittā* (Skt *trptā*) (past part of *tappati*,"is satiated, is satisfied, filled"); *tittā, dhātā paripuṇṇā* (ThaA 2:277,35 f).

¹³ Comy: *bhavābhava,vasaṃ gatā ti, bhavassa abhavassa ca vasaṃ upagatā vuḍḍhi,hāniyo anuvattantā* (ThaA 2:278,8 f); thus *bhavābhava* is *bhava + abhava*, as tr. At **671**, however, Comy glosses: *bhavābhava, khuddake c'eva mahantake ca bhava*, ie, as *bhava + bhava*, existences small and large (ThaA 2:280,18 f).

¹⁴ Be so; Ee ThaA *v'onatā. Uṇnata,onatā (663d)* dictates that we either read *c'onatā* or *v'onatā* (with emphatic *va*). Tha:N: in either case *vonata* should be deleted from PED since there is no such word.

¹⁵ Ee *sibbanim ajjhagu*. Comy: *accagu, atikkamimsu* (crossed over) (ThaA 2:278,29). Cf *so'dha sibbanim accagā* (A 3:401; Sn 1040 1042). On the confusion of *acc-* and *ajjh-*, cf *jāti,marāṇam ajjhagā* (It 69).

¹⁶ "The seamstress" refers to craving (*sibbanim taṇhaṃ*, ThaA 2:278,28), explained at DhsA 363 (on Dhs 189): *ghaṭan'aṭṭhena sibbanī, ayaṃ hi pilotikāya pilotikaṃ, tasmā ghaṭan'aṭṭhena sibbanī ti vuttā* (just as a seamstress stitches together pieces of rags). Cf *taṇhā hi naṃ sibbati tassa tass'eva bhavassa abhinibbattiyā* (A 3:400).

¹⁷ *Majjha* refers to being equanimous in the face of suffering and happiness; this firm equanimity is like the deeply sunk city pillar. Comy is not wrong as thought by Tha:N 221 n663.

¹⁸ *Inda,khīla* (BHSD *indra,kīla*), "Indra's pillar, bolt or wedge," a wooden post securing a city gate (exact shape and function uncertain). CPD: Most prob, orig, a pointed wooden post (syn *esikā, thambha*) rammed deep into the ground and projecting out about a cubit (Skt *aratnir indra,kīlah*), against which the wings of the city-gate were closed (KhpA 1:185,21 ad Khp 6.8 = Sn 229; Tha 663). See D 20/2:254,17* = S 1.37/1:27,4*; **Pāsādika S**, D 29/3:133,6 ≈ **Inda,khīla S**, S 56.39/5:444,17. Metaphorically, a symbol of firmness, unshakability, immobility; also of an obstacle, a hindrance. See PED; CPD; BHSD: *indrakīla*; J J Meyer, *Arthaśāstra des Kauṭilya*, Leipzig, 1926:689 f; D Schlingloff, WZKSOA 11 1962: 71; A Ray, *Villages, Towns and Secular Buildings in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1964:87 f.

- 664** *na h'eva lābhe nālābhe
ayase¹⁹ na ca kittiyā
na nindāyaṃ pasaṃsāya
na te dukkhe sukhamhi ca* Neither to profit nor to loss,
neither to obscurity nor to fame,
neither to praise nor to blame,
neither to suffering nor to happiness—
- 665** *sabbattha te na lippanti
uda,bindūva pokkhare
sabbattha sukhitā dhīrā
sabbattha aparājitā* he clings to them not at all
like a water-drop on a lotus.
The wise are happy everywhere,
everywhere invincible.
- 666** *dhammena ca alābho yo
yo ca lābho adhammiko
alābho dhammiko seyye
yaṃ ve lābho adhammiko* There is no profit with the righteous,
nor is there gain with the unrighteous.
Non-profit that is righteous is better
than profit that is unrighteous.
- 667** *yaso ca appabuddhīnaṃ
viññūnaṃ ayaso ca yo
qyaso'va seyyo viññūnaṃ
na yaso appabuddhīnaṃ* There is fame without wisdom [with little wisdom],
and there is obscurity with wisdom:
better is obscurity with wisdom—
there is no fame for those without wisdom.
- 668** *dummedhehi pasaṃsā ca
viññūhi garahā ca yā
garahā'va seyyo viññūhi
yaṃ ce bāla,pasaṃsanā.* There is the praise by fools,
and there is the blame by the wise:
better is blame by the wise
Than the praise of the foolish.
- 669** *sukhaṃ ca kāma,mayikaṃ
dukkhaṃ ca pavivekiyaṃ
paviveka²⁰ dukkhaṃ seyyo
yaṃ ce kāma,mayaṃ sukhaṃ* There is happiness arising from sensual pleasures,
and there is pain from solitude:
the pain of solitude is better
than sense-made happiness.
- 670** *jīvitaṃ ca adhammena
dhammena maraṇaṃ ca yaṃ,
maraṇaṃ dhammikaṃ seyyo
yaṃ ce jīve adhammikaṃ* There is a life that is unrighteous,
and there is death that is righteous:
the death that is righteous is better
than to live unrighteously.
- 671** *kāma,kopa-p,pahīnā
ye santa,cittā bhavābhava²¹
caranti loke asitā n'atthi
tesaṃ piyāppiyaṃ* For those who have abandoned pleasures and anger,
whose mind is stilled in terms of existences:²²
they move unattached in the world;
nothing is pleasant or unpleasant to them.
- 672** *bhāvayitvāna bojjaṅge
indriyāni balāni ca* Having cultivated the awakening-factors,
the faculties and the powers,

¹⁹ Be *nayase*.

²⁰ Se *pavivekiyaṃ*.

²¹ Comy glosses as *bhavābhava* as *bhava + bhava*, ie existences small and great [§661b n].

²² The arhat is no more caught up in rebirth (*bhavābhava*). Norman, “whose minds are calm in various existences” (Tha:N 671) suggest those beings are still undergoing rebirth; hence, they are not arhats.

*pappuyya paramam̐ santiṃ
parinibbanti anāsavā ti.*²³

having attained the highest peace,
they are quenched, influx-free.

2.3 AMBĀṬAKA,VANA

2.3.1 Citta and the monks

2.3.1.1 The wild mango grove (*ambāṭaka,vana* or *ambāla,vana*) was a grove at Macchikā,saṇḍa²⁴ belonging to Citta Gaha,pati. Pleased with the elder **Mahānāma**—one of the first 5 monks (J 1:82)—Citta invited him to a meal, and after listening to his teaching, he became a **streamwinner** (*sotāpatti*). (DhA 5.14/2:74)

Citta then donated the grove to the sangha. At the dedication of the gift, as Citta uttered, “The Buddha’s teaching has been established!” it is said that the earth trembled (AA 1:387,1-11). Later, Citta built a splendid monastery there, **the Ambāṭak’ārāma**, for the use of monks of the 4 quarters (DhA 5.15-/2:74).

Behind Ambāṭaka was Miga,pathaka, which was Citta’s tributary village. (SA 3:91,9 f)

2.3.1.2 On another occasion, the 2 chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, hearing of the virtues of Citta, decided to pay him a visit. Upon arriving, Citta invited Sāriputta to give a teaching. Sāriputta, explaining that he was tired from the journey, said that he would give just a short discourse. Yet, merely listening to it, Citta became a **once-returner** (*sakadāgāmi*). Bowing to the chief disciples, Citta then invited the monks for a meal-offering at his house the next morning. (DhA 5.15/2:74 f)

2.3.1.3 On another occasion, Sāriputta and Moggallāna again visited Citta. Seeing that Citta was ready for deeper Dharma, Sāriputta taught him “a classification of the 6 sense-bases” (*sa/āyatana vibhatti*). After listening to this teaching, Citta became a **non-returner**.²⁵

2.3.2 Monks connected with the Ambāṭak’ārāma

The Ambāṭak’ārāma became the residence of a large number of monks, and discussions often took place there between Citta Gaha,pati and the resident monks (S 4:281-297). Among eminent elders who resided at or visited this monastery were:

- **Isidatta** of Avantī, who answered Citta’s questions regarding the reason for the existence of various views in the world (S 4:283-288)
- **Mahaka**, who, by his psychic powers, produced rain and thunderstorms, and later showed a special miracle to Citta, as recorded in **the Mahaka Sutta** (S 4:288-291),
- **Kāmabhū** who discoursed to Citta on various topics (S 4:291-295), and
- **Go,datta** who asks Citta about the 4 types of liberations (S 41.7/4:295-297).
- **Lakunṭaka Bhaddiya** also lived there in solitude, wrapt in meditation (Tha 466).
- **Sudhamma**, an indisciplined monk who had to seek Citta’s forgiveness. (V 2:18), SD 59.15 (1.1.4)

— — —

²³ Ee *parinibbanti anāsavā ti*.

²⁴ <http://www.aimwell.org/DPPN/macchikasanda.html>. Accessed 16 Oct 2023.

²⁵ AA 1:387,10 f; DhA 2:80. See SD 8.6 (8.3).

Go,datta Sutta

THE DISCOURSE TO GO,DATTA

S 41.7

1 At one time, the venerable Go,datta was staying in a wild mango grove.²⁶ [296]
Then Citta the houselord approached the venerable Go,datta, saluted him and sat down at one side.

Go,datta's questions and Citta's answers

2 Then to Citta the houselord sitting on one side, the venerable Go,datta said this:
“Houselord,

the immeasurable liberation of mind,	<i>appamāṇā ceto,vimutti</i>
the liberation of mind by nothingness,	<i>ākiñcaññā ceto,vimutti</i>
the liberation of mind by voidness,	<i>suññatā ceto,vimutti</i>
the signless liberation of mind,	<i>animittā ceto,vimutti</i>

are these states different in meaning, and different in phrasing, or are they the same in meaning, but different only in phrasing?”

3 “Bhante, there is **a reason** [a way]²⁷ by which these states are *different in meaning and different in phrasing*, and there is way by which these states are *the same in meaning but different only in phrasing*.”

Different in meaning, different in phrasing

4 And what, bhante, is the reason that these states are **different in meaning and different in phrasing** (*nān’atthā c’eva nānā,vyañjanā ca*)?

THE 4 IMMEASURABLES.²⁸

5 “Here, bhante, a monk,²⁹

(1) with a heart of **lovingkindness**, dwells suffusing one quarter;
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,

²⁶ “A wild mango grove,” *ambāṭaka,vane*. *Ambāṭaka* (Skt *amrtāka, ām-*), the hog-plum, wild mango, *Spondias mangifera*; a tree or its fruit.

²⁷ “Reason,” *pariyāyo*, “basis, ground; interpretation, metaphor; way, method”; Comys gloss as *kāraṇa*, “cause, reason, ground, motive” (VA 132,5, 133,16; DA 3:809,12; SA 3:169,20; AA 3:293,18, 4:78,4; JA 3:211,22). See **Pariyāya nippariyāya**, SD 68.2 (Forthcoming).

²⁸ On the 4 immeasurables or divine abodes, see **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5; **Tevijja S** (D 13,76-79), SD 1.8; SD 51.14 (3.2.2.3).

²⁹ Comys: “Monk” (*bhikkhu*) here may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (DA 3:756; MĀ 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251). Even a lay person, properly meditating, attains the state of monkhood (*bhikkhu,bhāva*): **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) +n, SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5); SD 16.7 (1.1.1.2). For similes, see **Te,vijja S** (D 13,76-79/1:251), SD 1.8; see also: **D 2**:185, 250, **3**:49, 78, 223; **M 1**:38, 283, 297, 335×2, 351, 369, **2**:76, 77, 78, 81, 195, 207, **3**:146; **S 4**:296, 322, 351, 352×2, **5**:115, 116, 117, 118; **A 1**:183, 192, **2**:172, 175, 184, **3**:225, **4**:390, **5**:299, 343, 344.

he dwells suffusing all the world with lovingkindness
that is vast, grown great [exalted],³⁰ immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.³¹

- (2) With a heart of **compassion**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwells suffusing all the world with compassion that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.
- (3) With a heart of **gladness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwells suffusing all the world with gladness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.
- (4) With a heart of **equanimity**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwells suffusing all the world with equanimity that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

This, bhante, is called **the immeasurable liberation of mind**.³²

6 And what, bhante, is **the liberation of mind by nothingness**?

Here, bhante, by completely transcending the base of boundless consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing,’ a monk enters and dwells in the base of nothingness.

This, bhante, is called **the liberation of mind by nothingness**.³³

7 And what, bhante, is **the liberation of mind by voidness [emptiness]**?

Here, bhante, a monk, going to a forest or going to the foot of a tree or to an empty hut, reflects thus: “Empty is this of self [297] or of what belongs to the self.”

This, bhante, is called **the liberation of mind by voidness**.³⁴

³⁰ The mind “grown great” (*maha-g,gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

³¹ The recurrence of these last two phrases—“without hate, without ill will”—attests to the fact that lovingkindness is the basis for all the other three abodes, ie, they are actually a refinement of lovingkindness applied on deeper and broader levels.

³² Comy: There are 12 kinds of measureless liberation of mind (*appamāṇa ceto,vimutti*): the 4 divine abodes, the 4 paths and the 4 fruits. The divine abodes are called “immeasurable” because of their measureless radiation (towards all beings), the paths and fruits are “immeasurable” because they remove the defilements, the causes of measuring (conceit). Nirvana is said to be “immeasurable.” (SA 3:98,25-30)

³³ Comy: There are 9 kinds of liberation of mind by nothingness (*akiñcañña ceto,vimutti*): the base of nothingness, and the 4 paths and the 4 fruits. The first is called “nothingness” because it does not have any “something” (*kiñcana*) [n below], ie, an impediment as object; the paths and fruits are so called because of the non-existence of painful and obstructive defilements in them. (SA 3:99,6-10)

³⁴ Comys does not gloss this, but identifies “liberation of mind by voidness” (*suññata ceto,vimutti*) with insight into the nonself of persons and things, and also the supramundane paths and fruits. (MA 2:353,32-34; SA 3:98,11)

8 And what, bhante, is **the signless liberation of mind**?

Here, bhante, a monk, by way of not attending to all mental signs, enters and dwells in the signless concentration of mind.

This, bhante, is called **the signless liberation of mind**.³⁵

9 This, bhante, is the reason by which these states are **different in meaning and also different in phrasing**.³⁶

Same in meaning, different in phrasing

10 And what, bhante, is the reason that these states are **the same in meaning, but different only in phrasing**?

THE UNWHOLESOME ROOTS ARE MAKERS OF MEASURES

11 Lust, bhante, is **a maker of measures**. Hatred is *a maker of measures*. Delusion is *a maker of measures*.³⁷

For a monk whose influxes have been destroyed, abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, they are no more subject to future arising,

12 to that extent there is **immeasurable liberation of mind**: the unshakeable liberation of mind is declared the foremost of them.³⁸

12.2 Now that *unshakeable liberation of mind* is **empty of lust**, empty of hatred, empty of delusion.

THE UNWHOLESOME ROOTS ARE "SOMETHING"

13 Lust, bhante, is **something**. Hatred is *something*. Delusion is *something*.³⁹

For a monk whose influxes have been destroyed, abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump so that they are no more subject to future arising,

14 to that extent there is **liberation of mind by nothingness**: the unshakeable liberation of mind is declared the foremost of them.

14.2 Now that *unshakeable liberation of mind* is **empty of lust**, empty of hatred, empty of delusion.

³⁵ Comys: There are 13 kinds of signless liberation of mind (*animitta ceto, vimutti*): insight (*vipassanā*)—because it removes the “signs” of permanence, pleasure, and self; the 4 formless attainments—because the sign of form is absent in them; and the 4 paths and fruits—because the defilements, “makers of signs,” are absent from them. The “signless element” is nirvana, in which there are no signs of conditionality (MA 2:355,6-15; SA 3:99,6-11).

³⁶ On this interpretation, the immeasurable liberation of mind is the 4 divine abodes; the liberation of mind by nothingness, the 3rd formless attainment; and the liberation of mind by voidness, concentration based on insight into the *selfless* nature of phenomena. (SA 3:99,22-30)

³⁷ *Rāgo kho bhante pamāṇa, karaṇo doso pamāṇa, karaṇo moho pamāṇa, karaṇo.*

³⁸ *Akuppā ceto, vimutti* is the liberation of mind that is the fruition of arhathood. This is the foremost liberation. (MA 2:354,17 f; SA 3:98,30)

³⁹ *Rāgo kho bhante kiñcanaṃ doso kiñcanaṃ moho kiñcanaṃ.* Comy explains *kiñcana* as if it were derived from a verb *kiñcati* glossed with *maddati palibundhati*, “crushes, impedes,” thus as meaning “obstruction or impediment.” (MA 2:354,34-39; SA 3:99,2). *Kiñcana* is properly der from *kiṃ* + *cana*, meaning simply “something”; see SED sv (2) *ka, kas, ka, kim*. Here, the Pali word is used idiomatically to mean having something that becomes an impediment; see **Aneñja, sappāya S** (M 106,8/2:263,34-264,1 (SD 95.13); **Brāhmaṇa Sacca S** (A 4.185/2:177); **(Tad-ah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70,3.2/1:206), SD 4.18. *Kiñcana* is here a didactic construction used as a skillful means. See PED (*kiñcana*) for refs that help clarify its meaning.

THE UNWHOLESOME ROOTS ARE MAKERS OF SIGNS

15 Lust, bhante, is a **maker of signs**. Hatred is a *maker of signs*. Delusion is a *maker of signs*.⁴⁰

For a monk *whose influxes have been destroyed, have been abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump so that they are no more subject to future arising,*

16 to that extent there is **signless liberation of mind**:

the unshakeable liberation of mind is declared the foremost of them.

16.2 Now that *unshakeable liberation of mind* is **empty**⁴¹ of lust, empty of hatred, empty of delusion.

17 This, bhante, is the reason by which these states are **the same in meaning but different only in phrasing.**"

18 "It is a gain for you, houselord, it is well gained by you, houselord, in that you have the wisdom eye that ranges over the profound Buddha Word."⁴²

— evaṃ —

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⁴⁰ *Rāgo kho bhante nimitta, karaṇo doso nimitta, karaṇo moho nimitta, karaṇo*. Comy explains that lust, etc, are called "sign-makers" (*nimitta, karaṇa*) because they mark a person as being lustful, hating, or deluded. The meaning is that lust projects the "sign of beauty" (*subha, nimitta*) onto the mind, hatred the "sign of the repulsive" (*patigha, nimitta*), and delusion the signs of permanence, pleasure and self. (MA 2:354,30-355,5; SA 3:99,19-21)

⁴¹ Comy: Though the emptiness liberation of mind is not mentioned separately, it is incl throughout by the phrase "empty of lust," etc [§§12.2, 14.2, 16.2]. (MA 2:355,13-15; SA 3:99,28-30)

⁴² Be Ce Se *Lābhā te gahapati suladdhaṃ te gahapati, yassa te gambhīre buddhavacane paññā, cakkhu kamatī ti*. Missing from Ee.

60.5 (Mahā Kaccāna) Lohicca Sutta

The Discourse (by Mahā Kaccāna) to Lohicca | S 35.132

Theme: Recalling goodness in the past

Translated & annotated by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2010, 2023

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The (Mahā Kaccāna) Lohicca Sutta (S 35.132) records teachings by Mahā Kaccāna first given to Lohicca’s young students (*māṇavā*, “boys”), and then to Lohicca himself at Mahā Kaccāna’s forest dwelling at Makkara, kata in Avantī country.¹ Once when Mahā Kaccāna is living there in a forest hut, a number of Lohicca’s boys, out collecting firewood, gather before his hut and begin abusing the elder with brahminical terms of abuse, insinuating that monks are “degenerate.”

Kaccāna talks to them, explaining that the “degenerate” are really the brahmins of their own day: they differ from brahmins of old. The brahmins of their days are backsliders, mere reciters, doing things for worldly gains. The boys, angered by Kaccāna’s remarks, go back to Lohicca and report to him about this. Lohicca, too, is angered but decides to investigate it for himself.

Lohicca visits Kaccāna and questions him about his statements. Kaccāna explains as he has done before to the boys. Impressed by Kaccāna’s explanations, Lohicca declares his family, students and himself as followers.²

1.2 THE SUTTA’S SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 Mahā Kaccāna’s criticisms of the brahmins

1.2.1.1 According to Mahā Kaccāna—as he tells the brahmin Lohicca and his students [1.1]—the ancient brahmins were morally virtuous, well-restrained, and had no anger. They delighted in practising good and meditation: they remembered the ancient teachings.

The brahmins “today” (of Kaccāna’s time onwards) are mere reciters who are class-conscious, unrestrained in their senses, often showing anger and violence towards others, bad or good. They live false lives and practise the wrong way: rituals, scriptures, even austerities. Basically, they are immoral and use religion and caste (“colour,” *vaṇṇa*) to gain worldly power and things.

1.2.1.2 Ironically, we can also apply the same criticism Kaccāna makes of the brahmins of his days also just as well to most of the Buddhist monastics today, and of the centuries before our time. These so called “renunciants” have become “degenerate” priests for profit, performing rituals for the dead and teaching that merits are like funds that can be “transferred” to the dead. The funds are actually donations to these priests themselves.

¹ During the Buddha’s time, **Avantī** was one of the 16 great states (*mahā janapada*) of N India [SD 4.18 App; map, 16.3] [Map]. It was located in central western India (roughly the region of Malwa) divided into 2 parts by the Vindhya mountains, the northern capital was at Ujjenī (Skt *ujjayinī*) and the southern capital at Mahissati (*māhiṣ-matī*). In Kaccāna’s time, the unified kingdom centred around Ujjenbī and the Narmadā river valley between Mahissatī and Maheshwar, and nearby areas (H Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1953: 114-116).

² Further on Mahā Kaccāna, see SD 10.12 (2).

Most of the Buddhist priests today live very much like the laity, often are better off and more worldly than the laity. Although some of them are versed in reciting prayers, they neither study the suttas nor teach Dharma. They often take up academic training for the title, earn salaries, and live in their own houses. Some even own many properties and businesses. In short, they have rejected the Vinaya.

Hence, instead of making an academic exercise of directing Kaccāna's criticisms to the worldly brahmins, we should be examining our own dysfunctional family situation with the monastics and improve the situation. Let us see how we can apply Kaccāna's teachings to our own "degenerate" monastic situation today.

1.2.2 "The path for attaining the highest" (*brahma,patti*)

1.2.2.1 Rejecting brahminical priestcraft, Mahā Kaccāna declares, that the highest attainment (*brahma,patti*) is to have a focused mind, being "free from blemish" (*anāvila*), and "without harshness (*akhila*) towards all beings"—"this is the path for attaining the highest" (*so maggo brahma,pattiyā*) [§4(6)]. Kaccāna uses 3 religious terms familiar to the brahmins, that is: *avila*, *khila* and *brahma*—which are also well known in Pali.

Where there are monastic centres and retreats that exemplify these qualities. we should happily learn from them. If we are unable to find such centres, we should look for **lay groups** or form one with the purpose of studying, practising and realizing the Buddha's teachings. Let us now see what these key words mean and how we can ourselves put them into practice, to have a taste of the "holy life" (*brahma,patti*), even for just a moment, like a key-hole to the door of awakening. The following practices are the key to this door.

1.2.2.2 The term *anāvila* [§4(6)b] comes from *an-āvila* (*ts*), "neither turbid nor muddy, clear; undisturbed (usually said of water, also of the mind, *citta*).³ The allusion here is to the mind that has just emerged from dhyana and is profoundly calm and clear, which is then applied to see directly into the true nature of reality: *impermanence*, *suffering* and *nonself*.

In practice, this means we should keep our minds calm with mindfulness and clear with awareness. To help sustain such a mind, we should diligently live morally virtuous lives keeping to at least the 5 precepts, empowered by the practice of lovingkindness, with positive attitudes towards ourselves and to others.

For each of us as lay practitioners, we should educate ourselves in the best way possible for the study and practice of the suttas. A good broad-based education will help us live a rich life of learning and teaching that can benefit from the truth and beauty of the suttas and our contemplative lives. *Anāvila* thus is a word reminding us to prepare our minds and hearts to be calm and clear to embrace the Buddha's teachings and to disseminate it by our own example and diligence.

1.2.2.3 As used here, *akhila* [§4(6)c] is a well-known Pali term, which means "free from 'barrenness or hardness (of soil)' (*khila*), referring to hard barren soil between fields, where at best only weeds grow.

³ *Anāvila*: Sn 160 f (*cittam*); 483 (*cittam yassa ~am*), 515 (*tiṇṇo samaṇo*), 637 (*candaṃ va vimalaṃ ... vippasanaṃ ~am*, SnA: Dh 413 (see Comy); Sn 1039 (*manasā ~osiyā*); Dh 82 (*rahado*); Thī 369 (acc f ~am); Vv 20 (*bhikkhuṃ vippasanaṃ ~am*); Ap 111,27 (*pava-an-āvilasannaṃ ~am*), 379,3 (*cittam*); D 1:76,22 (*maṇi veḷuriyo*), 84,14 (*udaka,rahado*; = *nikkaddamo*, DA). M 2:22,5 = A 1:9,18; D 2:129,22 (*nadikā*); S 1:169,29* (*rahado*; SA) = 183,29*; 3:83,20* (*cittam tesam ~am*); 4:118,10* (*cittam ca susamā- hitam vippasanaṃ ~am*); 5:125,24 (*uda,patto accho vippasanno ~o*) = A 3:236,6; JA 1:339,24 (*udakaṃ ... accharṃ vippasanaṃ ~am*); 3:157,11* (*vīta,soko ~o*); 4:351,28* (*accharṃ vāriṃ ~am*); Pm 1:49,21 (*°aṭṭhena samādhi*); Miln 35,1 (*cittam*), 35,13 (*udakaṃ*).

The application here is, in a literal sense, (a) (of the soil) “with no barren spots.”⁴ (b) Metaphorically, it means “free from the hardness or harshness of mind, arising from defilements (*rāga, dosa, moha*), or by the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāni = pañca ceto, khilā, ‘mental barrenness’*).”⁵

Akhila, then, refers to a mind that is free from the mental hindrances—*sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt*—so that it is able to easily attain dhyana for the same purpose as stated above [1.2.2.2]: a profoundly calm and clear mind which is applied to see directly into the true nature of reality: *impermanence, suffering and nonself*.

As lay practitioners, we should instill **akhila** in our lives by deep love for learning how to apply the teaching to as much of our lives as possible, as individuals and as a community. As individuals, we should keep our minds calm, clear and creative to resolve negative emotions and challenges, and in that way to cultivate spiritual friendship rooted in love, ruth,⁶ joy and peace [1.2.2.4]. In this way, our minds and hearts are ever rich and ready with skillful ways to work towards the path of awakening with our very breaths.

1.2.2.4 In the closing verse, Kaccāna makes an important statement: this calm and clear mind is “one free from all harshness (*akhila*) to all beings” [§4(6)c]. This is the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*). Instead of worshipping Brahmā as a deity, we cultivate Brahmā-like qualities, “Godliness” (*brahma, vihāra*) that is, of **immeasurable lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity** towards all beings. This profoundly calm and clear mind is then applied to see directly into the true nature of reality: *impermanence, suffering and nonself*, so that we attain the path, even nirvana.

Thus 3rd quality, **akhila** refers to working the 4 divine abodes mentioned, especially, the first divine abode, **love** (*mettā*), which we should cultivate on as many levels as possible, and use it as a reminder of our own spiritual state and progress. We must first learn to:

- **love oneself**, that is, to accept oneself as we are, forgive oneself for the unwholesome we have done, and aspire to better oneself daily and periodically;
- **love others** with the love they need, accepting them as they are, forgiving them for the unwholesome they have done, and to be a support to them as they work to better themselves;
- **love joyfully**, showing love gently, firmly and purely, recalling how spiritual friendship is so vital for a wholesome life and Dharma practice; and
- **love peace**, that is, to always see how impermanence level us in our differences, and to allow this wisdom to sort things out when we face great difficulties.

May we be free from harshness to all beings (*akhilam sabba, bhūtesu*).

1.2.2.5 Finally a reflection on “**attaining the highest**” (*brahma, patti*) in a practical way. On a simplest level, this means we should dedicate some time, possibly daily, to simply be at peace with oneself, reminding oneself that ultimately we have to assert oneself to gain the freedom of awakening (Dh 165).⁷ We have to open the door of freedom oneself and walk through it.

As lay practitioners, we must each constantly remind oneself of the moral responsibility we have for our own actions of body, speech and mind. Just as we care for our body, so do others: we need to respect this body by having good health, proper diet, selfless joy and inner peace. “Respecting the body of

⁴ D 3:146,20 (DA) = 177,12.

⁵ Sn 212 (SnA = *pañca, cetokhila, abhāwna ~o*), 477 (*anejo ~o akaṅkho*; SnA), 1059 (*~o akaṅkho*), 1147; S 1:188, 1* (SA); A 2:23,17* (AA = *raga, khilādi, virahito*); D 2:261,10* (DA = *raga, dosa, moha, kh[i/i]lānam abhāvā~am*); S 4:118,11* (*~am (cittam)*, = *muḍu athaddham*, SA 2:399,19); B 5:4 (BA).

⁶ On tr *karuṇā* as “compassion,” a divine abode (*brahma, vihāra*), SD 38.5 (2.3.2.1); SD 48.1 (5.2.1.3); SD 60.2 (5.4.2.2 n).

⁷ SD 49.10 (1.2.2).

others” thus means taking responsibility for sexuality and restraint regarding the body and space of others.

While we celebrate the joys of our bodies, we must be mindful of the joint karma we are creating. There will be moments when we must mourn the pains that this very same body gives. We must also be aware that our body does not always obey us: we fall sick, we get hurt; so do others, too. We must then respect the body to let it heal itself.

1.2.2.6 Not everyone feels the drive of sex. For various reasons, we may simply not have any sexual relations, especially because we simply do not have a feeling for it. We are contented to remain **celibate** (*brahma, cāri*). There are precepts that can accommodate us, so that we can direct all our energies to mental cultivation.⁸ This is a great blessing when we have a natural feeling for celibacy. We must have done something good in the past that now gives us this strength. Let us now use it wisely and joyfully.

If we do not have this inclination or blessing for a celibate life, then we should learn to celebrate the joys of love and friendship as if we are getting to know the other anew each time. A time may come when we feel ready to share our lives. When this sharing is guided by something higher—the love for Dharma—it is likely to be a bountiful life for accomplishing the good that cannot be done alone (such as full-time Dharma work). We must let this happen as a natural blessing.

The Dharma-spirited lay life is thus rich and beautiful. Even in our aloneness, we are never lonely. In our togetherness, we become better individuals, our minds and hearts singularly seeking truth and spreading beauty. Even if we are unable to attain the highest truth in this life itself, we aspire at least never to fall below the path of streamwinning. For this is assured by the Lord himself, that we can reach the path in this very life.⁹

1.2.3 The ancient brahmins

1.2.3.1 Kaccāna’s verses in **the (Mahā Kaccāna) Lohicca Sutta** (S 35.132) are like a tight summary of the teachings of **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27). Although the Aggañña Sutta is a parody of the origin or, better, re-arising, of the cyclic universe, it is really a lesson explaining, probably parodying, the ancient origins of the social classes. The Sutta narrates at great length how humans and society evolved since the present universe re-arose. What should interest us here is the Buddha’s description of how social classes first arose. The theme of the Sutta is that our society evolved through humans working together, and then sharing tasks, and go on to specialise in various duties as that society progresses.¹⁰

1.2.3.2 According to **the Aggañña Sutta**, before society (specifically ancient India; broadly, the ancient world in south Asia) was urbanized, “religious” people were those who renounced social life to live by themselves to enjoy the peace of solitude and use it for spiritual cultivation. Over time, they learned to calm and clear their minds, to meditate (*jhāyati*), and to gain various levels of mental concentration (*samādhi*). Some gained mental absorption or dhyana (*jhāna*), with which they gained wisdom, mental skill that put them in harmony with life, goodness and nature, and they taught meditation, even the dhyana, to those who came to them.

In fact, like Mahā Kaccāna, these ancient renunciants, too, lived in leaf-huts in the forests. Since “they keep out” (*bāhenti*) the bad, unwholesome things, they were called **brāhmaṇa**, “brahmins.” This

⁸ That is, the 8 precepts (*aṭṭha* or *aṭṭh’āṅga sīla*), of which the 3rd is “abstinence from incelibacy” (*abrahma, cariyā veramaṇī*): **(Tad-ah)uposatha S** (A 3.70,9-16), SD 4.18; **Vitthat’uposatha S** (A 8.42), SD 89.11; **Nav’aṅg’uposatha S** (A 9.18), SD 59.4.

⁹ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) or any of the other 9 suttas of S 25. (SD 16.7)

¹⁰ D 27/3:80-97 (SD 2.19).

is, in fact, what many Buddhist monks do in the Buddha’s time. For this reason, too, the Buddha often calls his monks and nuns “brahmins,” since they keep out the unwholesome.

However, as agriculture grew and became more organized, society became more urbanized and people began to have surpluses—wealth. Labour began to be exchanged for goods, services or promises of such. There was specialization of labour. Some renunciants began to accept such “exchanges” for their teachings and instructions, and so became more worldly.

As they became busier with wealth and worldliness, they lost their ability to meditate and could not attain dhyana: according to the Aggañña Sutta, they were called “non-meditators” (**ajjhāyaka**) which was the word for “reciters” (Skt *ādhyāyika*)¹¹—such as Veda-reciters—in the Buddha’s time!¹²

For this reason, those good renunciants of the past were spoken of by Mahā Kaccāna as “those brahmins who recalled the ancient lore” (*te brāhmaṇā ye purāṇam saranti*) [S4(1)b].

2 Mahā Kaccāna

Mahā Kaccāna is one of the 80 great disciples of the Buddha; he is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of those monks “who elaborate the meaning of what is spoken in brief” (*saṅkhittena bhāsita-tassa vitthārena attham vibhajantānam*) (A.1:23).¹³ Kaccāna was born in the capital of **Avantī**, Ujjenī,¹⁴ into the family of the chaplain (*purohita*; anglicized “purohit”) of Rajah Caṇḍa [the fierce] Pajjota. Both the chaplain, Tiriti, vaccha, and his wife, Candimā,¹⁵ were of the Kaccāyana clan, one of the oldest and most highly respected lines of brahmins.

Kaccāna himself succeeds his father as the rajah’s purohit. In due course, rajah Caṇḍa Pajjota sends Kaccāna and 7 others to invite the Buddha to Ujjenī. After listening to the Buddha’s Dharma teaching, they all become arhats, and join the sangha. When they then inform the Buddha of rajah Pajjota’s invitation to Ujjenī, the Buddha replies that in the meantime it suffices that they themselves return to Ujjenī in place of him.

In Ujjenī, the arhat Kaccāna and the 7 other arhats live in the royal park, where they teach the Dharma and convert so many people that the city is one blaze of orange robes. After establishing the teaching in Avantī, Kaccāna returns to the Buddha. His best-known teaching are preserved in **the Madhu, piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18),¹⁶ which he teaches in Kapila, vatthu. Kaccāna’s verses are found in **the Thera, gāthā** (Tha 494-501).

— — —

¹¹ SED: “occupied or employed in reading or studying” (139d).

¹² D 27,22 f (SD 1.19).

¹³ The accounts of his lives are mainly found in **Apadāna** (Ap 33/1:84 f & 54/2:463-465) & Comys: AA 1:204-207, ThaA 2:206-210 (on Tha 494-501) & Ap 1:204-209.

¹⁴ On Avantī, see [1.1 n].

¹⁵ According to the Apadāna, Kaccāna’s father was called Tiriti, vaccha (or Tidiva, vaccha), and his mother Canda, padumā (Ap 54.21/2:465).

¹⁶ M 18/1:108-114 (SD 6.14).

(Mahā Kaccāna) Lohicca Sutta

The Discourse (by Mahā Kaccāna) to Lohicca
S 35.132

1 At one time the venerable **Mahā Kaccāna** was dwelling in a forest hut at Makkarakāṭa in Avanti country. [117]

The boisterous brahmin boys

2 Then a number of brahmin boys, students of the brahmin Lohicca, while collecting firewood, approached the venerable Mahā Kaccāna's forest hut.

Having approached, they were wandering around the hut shouting noisily and loudly, thus:¹⁷

“These baldheaded wretched recluses, swarthy menials,¹⁸ born of our Kinsman's [Brahmā's] feet, are honoured, respected, esteemed, worshipped, venerated by the lowly householders!”¹⁹

3 Then the venerable Mahā Kaccāna came out of his dwelling and said this to those brahmin boys: “Do not make any noise, boys. I will speak Dharma to you.”

When this was said, the brahmin boys became silent.

4 Then the venerable Mahā Kaccāna uttered these verses to the brahmin boys:

(1) *sil'uttamā²⁰ pubbatarā ahesum
te brāhmaṇā ye purāṇam²¹ sarantī
guttāni dvārāni surakkhitāni
ahesum tesam abhibhuyya kodham*

Supreme in virtue were they of old,
those brahmins who recalled the past,²²
with sense-doors well guarded,
they had overcome their anger.

¹⁷ *upasaṅkamitvā parito parito kuṭikāya anucaṅkamanti anuvaranti uccā,saddā mahā,saddā kānici kānici selisakāni* [Ce Ee; Be Se *seleyyakāni*; Comy *keḷissakāni*] *karontā* [Ce; Be Ee Se *karontī*]. Comy: The boys were running here and there leapfrogging over each other (SA 2:397,12 f).

¹⁸ “Menials,” *ibbha* (Ved/Skt *ibhya*) (D 1:90, 91; M 1:334; J 6:214), an obscure word: “menial, retainer” (PED); “exact meaning(s) uncertain, designation of persons standing below the *brāhmaṇa* and *khattiya* classes, perhaps (almost) the same as *vessa*: a householder, merchant or farmer, layman (as opposed to *brāhmaṇa*) (CPD); “a member of a king's entourage; a vassal; dependent; wealthy” (DP). See **Aggañña S** (D 27,3 nn), SD 2.19.

¹⁹ *ime pana muṇḍakā samaṇakā ibhā kiṇhā* [Ce; Be Se *ibbhā kaṇhā*; Ee *ibbhā kiṇhā*] *bandhu,pād'āpaccā, imesaṃ bharatakānaṃ* [Be Ce; Se *bhāratākānaṃ*] *sakkatā garukatā mānitā pūjitā apacitāni*. The first 4 words—*muṇḍaka*, *samaṇakam* *ibhā kaṇhā*—are stock brahminical terms denigrating the recluses. Ṛg.veda 10.90 (Puruṣa Śūkta); DAṬ 3:46. The brahmins also claimed recluses arose from Brahma's soles (DA 254 = MA 2:418).

²⁰ Only Ce2 *sil'uttarā*. Comy: “Moral virtue was highest to them, neither birth nor clan” (*silam hi tesam uttamaṃ, na jati,gottam*, SA 2:398,9).

²¹ Comy glosses *purāṇa* as “the ancient Brahminical lore” (*porāṇikam brāhmaṇa,dhammam*) (SA 2:298,10).

²² On the significance of “recalling the past” or its opposite, “forgetting the past,” see **Aggañña S** (D 27, 4) nn, SD 2.19.

- (2) *dhamme ca jhāne ca ratā ahesurā
te brāhmaṇā ye purāṇaṃ saranti
ime ca²⁴ vokkamma japāmase tī²⁵
gottena mattā visamaṃ caranti* They delighted in Dharma²³ and meditation:
these brahmins who recalled the ancient lore.
But those (today) have strayed, crying “Recite!”
Intoxicated with clan, they fare wrongly;
- (3) *kodhābhibhūtā puthu atta, daṇḍā²⁶
virajjhamānā tasa, thāvaresu²⁷
agutta, dvārassa bhavanti moghā
supine’va²⁹ laddhaṃ purisassa vittam³⁰* overcome with anger, armed with many rods,
molesting both the moving and the still;²⁸
with sense-doors unguarded—they are empty,
like wealth a person finds in a dream. **[118]**
- (4) *anāsakā thaṇḍila, sāyikā ca
pāto sitānaṃ ca tayo ca vedā
kharājinaṃ jaṭā paṅko
mantā sīla-b, batam tapo* Fasting and sleeping on the ground,
bathing in the morning, (studying) the 3 Vedas, too;
(wearing) rough hides, matted hair, and dirt;
hymns, vows and rituals, austerities;
- (5) *kuhakā vaṅka, daṇḍā³¹ ca
udakā ca manāni ca
vaṇṇā ete brāhmaṇānaṃ
kata, kiñcikkha, bhāvanā³³* and purification of the mouth by water:³² *b*
—but deceit and crooks (they are)— *a*
these are the brahmins’ colours,
used for seeking worldly gains.
- (6) *cittaṃ ca³⁴ susamāhitaṃ
vipassannaṃ anāvilam
akhilaṃ sabba, bhutesu
so maggo brahma, pattiyā ti.* But a mind well concentrated,
clear, free from blemish,
without harshness towards all beings—
this is the path for attaining the highest (*brahma*).³⁵

²³ Here “Dharma” (*dhamma*) has a restricted sense of “moral duties” to the brahmins, and of “moral conduct” (*sīla*) to Buddhists.

²⁴ Se *ime va*.

²⁵ Be Se *japāmeseti*; Ee *jappāmesati*; Se *jhāmbhaseti*. *Japati* (also *jappati*), “to mumble, whisper, utter, recite”: *jappati*, “to hunger for, desire, yearn, long for.”

²⁶ Se *suputhu’ttadaṇḍā*. On *atta, daṇḍa*, see SD 5.5 (2.2).

²⁷ Only Be *virajjmānā sataṇhā taṇhesu*.

²⁸ On *tasa, thāvāra* as “the moving and the still,” ie, respectively those with craving and those without craving (*sa, taṇhā, nittaṇhesu*, SA 2:398,23 f). See **Karaṇiya Metta S** (Khp 9,4b = Sn 146b) + SD 38.3 (5.3); **Nālaka S** (Sn 704b), SD 49.18; SD 12.4 (6.7.2).

²⁹ Be Ee Se *supine’va*; Ce *supino’va*.

³⁰ Be Ee *vittam* (preferred); Ce Se *cittam*

³¹ Be Se; Ee *vaṅkaṃ daṇḍam*; Ce *caṅka, daṇḍā* (wr). The brahmin’s crooked staff of wood from the fig-tree, Judas tree or bilva tree (*udumbara, palāsa, bejuva, rukkhānaṃ*, SA 2:399,8 f).

³² Comy explains *udakā ca manāni ca* as “wiping [cleaning] their mouths or faces with water” (*udakena mukha, -parimajjanāni*, SA 2:399,10).

³³ *Kata* (“done”) + *kiñcikkha* (“something, whatever, (worldly) thing, a possession”) + *bhāvanā* (“for cultivating, gaining”).

³⁴ Only Ce *ce*.

³⁵ *So maggo brahmā, pattiyā* (Comy: *so seṭṭha, pattiya, maggo*, SA 1399,19 f). A wordplay here. While the brahmins use *Brahmā* as a noun, meaning “great Brahmā, supreme God,” Kaccāna uses it as an adj, “the highest,” ie, the path of awakening, ending in nirvana.

5 Then, the brahmin boys, angry and displeased, approached the brahmin Lohicca and said this:
“Do you know, sir, that the recluse Mahā Kaccāna completely scorns and denounces the brahminical hymns?”

When this was said, the brahmin Lohicca was angry and displeased.

6 But then it occurred to the brahmin Lohicca,
“It is not proper for me to scold and abuse Mahā Kaccāna merely based on what I’ve heard from the boys. Let me approach and ask him about this.”

Lohicca meets Mahā Kaccāna

7 Then the brahmin Lohicca, along with the brahmin boys, approached the elder Mahā Kaccāna. [119] He exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with the elder Mahā Kaccāna. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side.

8 Seated at one side, the brahmin Lohicca said this to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna:
“Master Kaccāna, did a number of brahmin boys, students of mine, out collecting firewood, come this way?”

“A number of brahmin boys, students of yours, out collecting firewood, did come this way, brahmin.”

“Did master Kaccāna have any conversation with these brahmin boys?”

“I did have a conversation with those brahmin boys, brahmin.”

“What kind of conversation did you have with them, master Kaccāna?”

“Brahmin, the conversation that I had with the brahmin boys was this:

- (1) Supreme in virtue were they of old, | those brahmins who recalled the ancient lore,
with sense-doors well guarded, | they had overcome their anger.
- (2) They delighted in Dharma and meditation, | these brahmins who recalled the ancient lore;
but those (today) have strayed, crying “Recite!” | Intoxicated with clan, they fare wrongly;
- (3) overcome with anger, armed with many rods, | molesting both the moving and the still;
with sense-doors unguarded—they are empty, | like wealth a person finds in a dream.
- (4) Fasting and sleeping on the ground, | bathing in the morning, (studying) the 3 Vedas, too;
(wearing) rough hides, matted hair, and dirt, | hymns, vows and rituals, austerities;
- (5) deceit and crooks, | and purification of the mouth by water:
these are the brahmins’ colours, | used to gain their worldly gains.
- (6) But a mind well concentrated, | clear, free from blemish,
with kindness towards all beings, | that is the path for attaining the highest (*brahmā*).

“With the sense-doors unguarded”: the narrow mind

9 “Master Kaccāna said, ‘**With sense-doors unguarded**’ [§4(3d)]. In what way, master Kaccāna, is one ‘with sense-doors unguarded?’”

10 “Here, brahmin, someone,
having seen a **form** with the eye,
is caught up with a pleasing *form* and repelled by a displeasing *form*.³⁶
One dwells without having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has a **narrow mind**,³⁷ [120]
and one does not understand, according to reality,
that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.³⁸

11 Having heard a **sound** with the ear,
one is caught up with a pleasing *sound* and repelled by a displeasing *sound*.
One dwells without having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has a narrow mind,
and one does not understand, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

12 Having smelled a **smell** with the nose,
one is caught up with a pleasing *smell* and repelled by a displeasing *smell*.
One dwells without having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has a narrow mind,
and one does not understand, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

13 Having tasted a **taste** with the tongue,
one is caught up with a pleasing *taste* and repelled by a displeasing *taste*.
One dwells without having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has a narrow mind,
and one does not understand, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

14 Having felt a **touch** with the body,
one is caught up with a pleasing *touch* and repelled by a displeasing *touch*.
One dwells without having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has a narrow mind,
and one does not understand, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

15 Having known a **state** with the mind,
one is caught up with a pleasing *state* and repelled by a displeasing *state*.
One dwells without having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has a narrow mind,
and one does not understand, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

16 In this way, brahmin, one is ‘with sense-doors unguarded.’”

³⁶ *Idha brāhmaṇa ekacco cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piyarūpe rūpe adhimuccati, appiyarūpe rūpe vyāpajjati.* One is caught up (*adhimuccati*) by an object by way of lust, and repelled by it (*vyāpajjati*) by way of aversion. **Adhimuccati** *ti kilesa,vasena adhimutto giddho hoti. Vyāpajjati* *ti byāpāda,vasena pūti,cittaṃ hoti.* (SA:Be 2:390; truncated at SA:Ee 2:399,23-25); similar at Comy on **Avassuta Pariyāya S** (S 35.202,11/4:184 f), SD 60.6 (SA 3:53,6-9).

³⁷ Comy: A narrow mind is one that is distracted, filled with defilements (**paritta,cetaso** *ti anupathita,satitāya, saṅkilesa,cittena paritta,citto*, SA 2:399,23-25).

³⁸ *Anupaṭṭhitāya satiyā’va* [Ee Se; Be *anupaṭṭhita,kāya-s.sati*; Ce *-kāya,sati ca*] *viharati paritta,cetaso, tañ ca ceto,vimuttiṃ paññā,vimuttiṃ yathā,bhūtaṃ na-p,pajānāti yatthassa te uppanā pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā na nirujjhanti.*

17 “Marvellous, master Kaccāna! Marvellous, master Kaccāna!
How master Kaccāna has explained *the one with sense-doors unguarded*.”

“With the sense-doors guarded”: the immeasurable mind

17.2 Master Kaccāna said, ‘**With sense-doors guarded**’ [§4(1c)]. In what way, master Kaccāna, is one ‘with sense-doors guarded’?”

18 “Here, brahmin, someone,
having seen a **form** with the eye,
is neither caught up with a pleasing *form* nor repelled by a displeasing *form*.
He dwells having set up mindfulness (of the body). He has **an immeasurable mind**,³⁹
and he understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.⁴⁰

19 Having heard a **sound** with the ear,
one is neither caught up with a pleasing *sound* nor repelled by a displeasing *sound*.
One dwells having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has an immeasurable mind,
and one understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

20 Having smelled a **smell** with the nose,
one is neither caught up with a pleasing *smell* nor repelled by a displeasing *smell*.
One dwells having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has an immeasurable mind,
and one understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

21 Having tasted a **taste** with the tongue,
one is neither caught up with a pleasing *taste* nor repelled by a displeasing *taste*.
One dwells having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has an immeasurable mind,
and one understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

22 Having felt a **touch** with the body,
one is neither caught up with a pleasing *touch* nor repelled by a displeasing *touch*.
One dwells having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has an immeasurable mind,
and one understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.

³⁹ Comy (this & foll): **ceto, vimuttin** ti phala, samādhim; **paññā, vimuttin** ti phala, paññam. **Appamāṇa, cetaso** ti upaṭṭhita, satitāya nikkilesa, cittena appamāṇa, citto (SA 2:399,25-27). An “immeasurable mind” is one that is freed from all hindrances, thus concentrated (*phala, samādhi*), or freed (from defilements) by wisdom (*phala, paññam*).

⁴⁰ *Upaṭṭhitāya satiyā’va* [Ee Se; Be *upatiṭṭhita, kāya-s, sati*; Ce *-kāya, sati ca*] viharati appamāṇa, cetaso, tañ ca ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānāti yatthassa te uppannā pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti.

23 Having known a **state** with the mind,
one is neither caught up with a pleasing *state* nor repelled by a displeasing *state*.
*One dwells having set up mindfulness (of the body). One has **an immeasurable mind**,
and one understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,
by which those bad unwholesome states end without remains.*

24 In this way, brahmin, one is 'with sense-doors guarded.'

25 "Marvellous, master Kaccāna! Marvellous, master Kaccāna! **[121]** How master Kaccāna has explained *the one with sense-doors guarded*.

26 Excellent, master Kaccāna! Excellent, master Kaccāna!
Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or
were to reveal what was hidden, or
were to show the way to one who was lost, or
were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,
in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by master Kaccāna.

27 Master Kaccāna, I go for refuge to the Blessed One,
and to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.
From this day forth let Master Kaccāna remember me as a lay follower
who has gone forth for refuge for life.

28 Just as the master Kaccāna approaches the families of lay followers in Makkara,kaṭa,
let him approach the Lohicca family.
The brahmin boys and brahmin girls there will bow reverently before master Kaccāna,
rise in respect to him, they will offer him a seat and water,
and that will be for their welfare and happiness for a long time."

— evaṃ —

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60.6

Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta

The Discourse on the Leaking Metaphor | S 35.202 [S:Be 35.243]

Theme: An arhat is a master of his senses and mind

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2023

1 Sutta summary and synopsis

1.2 SUTTA SUMMARY

The Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta (S 35.202) records Moggallāna’s teaching on **the metaphor** (*pariyāya*) of “one with leaks” (*avassuta*), referring to one who is unrestrained in the 6 sense-faculties, and is thus flooded with leaks in the form of defiled *forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches* and *mental states*. The one who is mindfully and wholesomely restrained is free from the “leaks”—Māra (embodiment of evil) has no power over such a person.

1.2 SUTTA SYNOPSIS

(§§1-6) In Kapilavatthu, the Buddha is invited to grace the new Sakya assembly hall with an alms offering for the sangha. The Buddha, while teaching, around the middle of the night, excuses himself to have a rest on account of his bad back.

(§§7-9) Before retiring, the Buddha instructs Moggallāna to give the assembly a Dharma teaching.

(§10) Moggallāna announces that he will teach regarding **the metaphors of “leaks” and “without leaks,”** that is, on one who is not mindfully restrained in the senses, and one who is.

(§§11 f) The one who is unrestrained in the sense-faculties is said to be **one who “leaks”** (*avassuta*), that is, by being overwhelmed by *liking* pleasant sense-experiences and mental states, and *disliking* unpleasant ones. Such a one is said to have a “narrow mind” since one’s mind is neither focused nor liberated. Lacking mental mastery, one is overcome by the power of sensual and mental experiences.

(§13) Māra takes over control of one’s life, one’s sense-experiences and mental states. One is then like a hut of tinder-dry reeds or grass that easily catches fire.

(§14) One is then “overcome” by the 6 sense-objects, caught in the suffering cycle of deaths and rebirths, due to one’s “leaking” or being “drenched” in defilements (*avassuta*).

(§15) On the other hand, the one who **“leaks not”** is caught up neither with liking pleasant experiences nor with disliking unpleasant experiences. One keeps an “open” mind of one’s experiences so that one is free from mental defilements. In this way, one is said to be **“unleaking”** (*anavassuta*) in the midst of the sense-experiences and mental states.

(§16) Such a person is like a pinnacled house or hall “built of thick clay and freshly plastered.” People can bring blazing grass torches to it or into it without it ever catching fire.

(§17) In this way, Māra has no access at all to one through one’s sense-faculties; one is **“a master”** (*adhibhū*) of sense-experiences and mental states. This mastery of one’s being leads to awakening and freedom from suffering.

(§§18 f) Upon emerging from his rest, the Buddha (who has been listening to the teaching) approves of Moggallāna’s teaching, as does the assembly.

2 Sutta teachings

2.1 THE MIND: THE NARROW AND THE IMMEASURABLE

2.1.1 A narrow mind (*paritta citta*) [§11]

2.1.1.1 Moggallāna’s teaching in **the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.202) centres on the metaphor of the “water” element, whose characteristic is said to be “cohesive,” that is “sticky,” in the sense of holding matter together—like the electromagnetic force keeping the electrons attached to the atom, and the strong nuclear force keeping the protons and neutrons together in the nucleus. This is a literal meaning of “water.”

In the Sutta, Moggallāna uses **water** in a metaphorical sense to refer to sensuality—when we are caught up with seeing the pleasant (pulling in) and unpleasant (pushing away) aspect in sense-based experiences. In other words, our sense-based habits keep us gravitating onto the body, limiting our experiences only to what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched. We are merely a body-bound being: very much like an animal existence.

2.1.1.2 The term **avassuta**, “leaking, flowing, being drenched (with sensuality),” refers to the effects of being a sensual person, that is, one fixated on the body and caught up with enjoying sensual pleasures. In Buddhist psychology, when sensuality is fully *body-bound* and self-centred, it is called **sexuality** (*kāma*). Such a person may not *act* sexually (commit *methuna*, “pairing,” ie, meeting of bodies) or not appear to do so, but the sexuality can subtly play itself in one’s acts or speech.

A sexual act (*methuna*), on the other hand, may be sensual or merely physical; the latter, in the sense, for example, that animals “do it” without thinking about it (not the way humans do it), biologically, with neither love nor emotions. Technically, according to **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7), a “sexual act” is between a male and a female. One is said to “have affairs” (*cārittaṃ āpajjeyya*)¹ with another.

The conduct (that is, the affair) is wrong (*micchācāra*) when one is already married, betrothed, or “protected” in any way (by the state, relatives, etc; including the underaged, ie, those under the care of a family member), or is unwilling. In the last case, when the spouse is unwilling, a forced sexual act is regarded as *micchācāra*.²

The sexual act is “proper” (not breaking the 3rd precept) when it is between a husband and wife (that is, they are married or committed to one another), and both are willing partners done at a proper time in private. Hence, even between such a couple, it is wrong when one of them is taking the celibacy precept (to abstain from incelibacy). Understandably, it is also improper and wrong to commit sex acts during a meditation retreat, especially when the celibacy precept is being practised.

2.1.1.3 A monastic or avowed celibate who commits a sexual act breaks the precept. In the case of a monastic, he/she automatically falls from the state of being a monk or a nun. In other words, it is both of karmic and legal breach; it is an offence entailing “defeat” (*pārājika*).³

The Vinaya defines a sexual act (when committed entailing “defeat,” *pārājika*) as follows:

¹ This implies sexual acts (D 3:69,21; DA 853,3 *micchācāraṃ*, “misconduct”).

² **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7) @ SD 1.5 (1); **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,8/1:286 & 41.12/1:287 f), SD 5.7. This interpretation is updated to reflect current social conventions and realities.

³ SD 52.12 (1.2.1.1); SD 58.4 (2.1.1.3).

“When a monk, having entered upon the monks’ training and way of life, without first renouncing the training and disclosing his weakness,⁴ has sexual intercourse [genital, oral or anal],⁵ even with an animal, he is defeated [expelled]⁶ and not in communion.” (Pār 1, V 3:23,33-36; for nuns, V 4:213)

The Vinaya defines a sexual act as letting the male organ into another, even an animal, to the depth of a sesame seed (V 3:28). The rule is discussed in great legal detail in the Sutta, vibhaṅga of the Vinaya.⁷

It can only be briefly stated here that early Buddhism has very little to say about homosexuality and the various ideas of sexuality or gender today. The main reasons for the teachings and rules regarding sex are to protect the life of **renunciation and celibate practice** of dhyana meditation, as well as to **protect the family** as a wholesome institution that is able to support and nourish lay Buddhist living and practice. The rule of thumb then is respect for the person (the body and the being) and personal freedom, which are the values underlying the 3rd precept and precepts governing sexuality.

2.1.1.4 While “sexual act” refers to the actual indulging in sexual intercourse or some form of sexual activity, sexuality (*kāma*) refers to one’s attitude to the sexual act or to sex (maleness, femaleness, transgender, etc). Biologically, we cannot really separate “sexual act” and “sexuality”; broadly, the former is what we do and the latter is what we think of it. However, psychologically, we can study, define and accept sexuality for a better understanding and respect for the person, that is, our body and our being.

The sexual act, as a rule—some might say **aesthetically**—promises pleasure, that is, to totally enjoy the body for oneself, even when it involves others. Aesthetically, wholesome sexuality encourages communication and respect for self and others. **Biologically**, it is an act to procreate, to have children. However, **socially**, sexuality is often an expression or projection of one’s high social status, wealth or power, especially through having numerous partners, offspring, or for diversion.

With better education (especially medical and psychological insights) and weakening dominance of religion, gender-related issues are accepted, discussed and even resolved for individuals or groups. The Buddhist principal here is respect not only for the body but also the mind. Hence, Buddhists should work to provide the best wholesome conditions for the full development of those who consider themselves as being different from the dominant idea of sexuality.

2.1.1.5 We should therefore be especially aware of the psychological nature of sexuality (especially the act, but often enough also the attitude) when it is used as an expression of **power** over others, such as in molestation and rape. Strictly speaking, such a physical act is *bestial* (animal-like), an abuse of power against others (asura-like), or symptoms of unfulfilled life (preta-like), especially in religions or systems that structure themselves on a power hierarchy or religious authority.⁸

Considering such situations related to sexual conduct, we can say that sex is the most selfish of human acts. With some wry humour, it can be said that sex is time-consuming, whereas the practice of Dharma is to free time for bettering ourselves. A wise lay practitioner than knows the time for sex and the time to abstain from sex to taste a pleasure that is even better than sex, “the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome states.”⁹

⁴ Basically, declaring he is sexually inclined and wants to leave the order (Pār 1.8.2-4 @ V 3:24-28).

⁵ The “3 orifices,” viz, the anus, the vagina or the mouth (Pār 1.9.2 @ V 3:29; V:B 1:121-124). The offence is committed when the male organ enters any of these orifices to the depth of a sesame seed (Pār 1.8.5 @ V 3:28).

⁶ Brahmali’s tr of *pārājika* (V:B 1:125).

⁷ Vinaya Eng tr: Brahmali (ed) & I B Horner (tr), *The Book of Discipline*, SuttaCentral, 2014:100-183, [V:B].

⁸ On the problem of abuse of minors by the Church (esp Catholic), see SD 60.1f (5.4.9.5 (2.2)).

⁹ *Na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatt’ eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi* (M:Ee 1:247,3; M:Ce 1: 584,4 and M:Se 1:458,5: *yantaṃ*, after which Se continues directly with *aññatr’eva*, omitting *sukhaṃ*). On the 2 kinds of pleasures—sensual pleasure and the joy of renunciation—see **Laṭukikôpama S** (M

To prevent sexual misconduct and sexual abuse of others, there is **the 3rd precept**, the training rule against sexual misconduct. In spirit, this precept is to respect the person and freedom of others, that they have the right to say no to any sexual act or intimacy. Since any violation of this precept is rooted in *lust, hatred or delusion*, it has dire karmic consequences.

The Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta describes such an unwholesome act as that of one who is “leaking, flowing, or drenched” (*assuta*) with defilements (lust, hate or delusion), that is, of one who is unmindful and has a “**narrow mind**” (*paritta citta*; adj *paritta cetaso*). It is said to be “narrow” because the perpetrators are only concerned with themselves. They do not understand according to reality, how the mind is free and what true wisdom is. As a result, unwholesome states grow, bringing on suffering. [§11]

2.1.1.6 It should be noted that early Buddhism teaches us to see **sensuality** in the proper context of our life and humanity. Sexual misconduct is the misuse of our sense-based being—our human body—against others. Of course, the body (the 5 senses) cannot work by itself in sexuality; it is motivated and driven by the mind (rooted in lust, hatred or delusion).

Hence, there is **the 1st precept**, the respect for life, that is, to live and let live. This means that we should show love, compassion, gladness and equanimity. **Love** is respecting others as they *are* (according to their abilities and disabilities) and *for* what they are (according to their request or condition).

Compassion is to act on that love when those others fail, fail us or fall short of helping themselves so that they are able to regain their health, happiness and dignity.

Gladness is rejoicing in the goodness and successes that others deserve (and when they seem not to deserve it, we show compassion).

Equanimity is when we keep our mind and heart at peace, free from emotional reactivity, even when all the best of our efforts have not brought the results we expected or that the other party deserves. We have sowed the karmic seeds and we should allow time to work on the rest. Psychosocially, this is the meaning of having “an immeasurable mind.” [2.1.2.3]

2.1.2 An immeasurable mind (*appamāṇa citta*)

2.1.2.1 The opposite of a “narrow mind” is **an immeasurable mind** (*appamāṇa citta*; adj *appamāṇa cetaso*). **The Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** describes one “with an immeasurable mind” as one who is neither caught up with a pleasing sense-experience nor repelled by an unpleasant experience. Such a one “dwells having set up mindfulness of the body” (*upaṭṭhita, kāya, sati ca viharati*) [§15].

“Immeasurable” often describes a mind that is free from *conceit* (*māna*), that is, a measuring of others in a selfish way; it is a mind that accepts others and things as they are and going from there, especially by way of the divine abodes [2.1.2.3]. When a divine abode is attained to the level of dhyana, we are said to have attained an “immeasurable [boundless] liberation of mind” (*appamāṇa ceto, vimutti*). In **the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta**, the term “immeasurable liberation of mind” has a broader sense than just the divine abodes: it refers to a mind that is *joyfully free from thoughts*. [2.2.1.2]

2.1.2.2 This passage recurs as the conclusion of the **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38) explained by the Buddha in the context of dependent arising for each of the 6 sense-objects, thus:

[On experiencing a sense-object, he neither lusts after it if it is pleasurable nor dislikes it if it is unpleasurable.]

66,21/1:455), SD 28.11; **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9.3/3:233), SD 7.8. On pleasure felt by the awakened mind, see **Uṇṇābha S** (S 51.15), SD 10.10.

He dwells with **mindfulness of the body established and with an immeasurable mind**,¹⁰
 and he understands it, as it really is, the freedom of mind and the freedom by wisdom
 wherein those bad, unwholesome states cease without remainder.
 Having thus abandoned liking and disliking, whatever feeling he feels—
 whether pleasant or painful or neutral—
 he delights not in that feeling, does not welcome it, and does not remain holding on to it.¹¹
 As he does not do so, delight in feelings does not arise and remain in him.
 With the non-arising of this delight, clinging ends [does not arise];
 with the ending of clinging, existence ends;
 with the ending of existence, birth ends;
 with the ending of birth: decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and
 despair end.
 —Such is the ending [non-arising] of this whole mass of suffering. (M 38,40/4:270), SD 7.10

Both the **Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** and the **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** passages here refer to the attainment of arhatood. Thus, the “immeasurable mind” refers to the attainment of the path (attaining at least streamwinning). The idea is that Dharma training, especially that of a renunciant, is to attain arhatood.

2.1.2.3 The proper cultivation of **the 4 divine abodes** (*brahma, vihāra*)—*lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity* [2.1.1.6]—is also called “the immeasurables” (*appamāṇa*) because our wholesome emotions are now directed to *all* beings. We understand that our minds are not merely body-based, much less *self-centred*: our minds are all interconnected and affected by one another over time (the past, present and future).

In other words, living beings are **all extended minds**—human, divine, animal, asura, preta and hell-being—that affect one another. In fact, we also shift amongst these states depending on our karma so long as we are unawakened. Bad karma can drag us down to subhuman states (as suffering humans, animals, asuras, pretas or hell-beings); good karma can raise us to happier human or divine levels. However, as unawakened beings, all these states are impermanent and flow into one another, shaping and influencing one another.

In a sense, the whole of **samsara** (*saṃsāra*)—living beings—keeps on evolving and devolving as different states so long as we keep creating new karma, which works with “good” and “bad.” Bad deeds bring bad fruits, good deeds bring good fruits. But the problem with good is that it keeps us in samsara, which means that we are still capable and liable to creating bad karma, since our **unconscious defilements** (*anusaya*)—like karmic genes—are always with us.

Only by being fully awakened do we uproot all unconscious tendencies, so that we are always **mindful** (*sati*) and **aware** (*sampajañña*): we know what is going on before us, we remember how actions (karma) work, and we are able “to avoid all bad, cultivate good and purify the mind” (Dh 183) and “guard the arisen wholesome state” (A 4.13): this tetrad is called **the 4 right strivings** (*sammā padhāna*).¹²

¹⁰ Comy: An immeasurable mind (*appamāṇa, cetaso*) is a supramundane mind, that is to say, one has gained the path (MA 2:311). This passage recurs in **Avassuta Pariyāya S** (S 35.202,15 *passim*) + SD 60.6 (2.1.2). Cf *aparitto mah’attā appamāṇa, vihārī* (A 1:249).

¹¹ Bodhi: “This statement reveals that the chain of dependent origination is broken at the link between feeling and craving. Feeling arises necessarily because the body acquired through past craving is subject to the maturation of past kamma. However, if one does not delight in feeling, craving will not have the opportunity to arise and set off reactions of like and dislike that provide further fuel for the round, and thus the round will come to an end.” (M:ÑB 1234 n141)

¹² A 4.13/2:15 (SD 51.21).

With these 4 right strivings, we are not only mindful and aware, but we are able to free our minds from defilements (greed, hatred and delusion) and have truly immeasurable minds: we become **arhats** (like the Buddha). We are then free from these *narrow* samsaric shifts, the existential paradigm. The awakened mind enjoys the immeasurable space of awakening that is beyond time and space.

2.2 LIBERATION OF MIND, LIBERATION BY WISDOM

2.2.1 Liberation of mind (*ceto,vimutti*)

2.2.1.1 The Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta describes the “leaky” (*avassuta*) or worldly person as one who is unmindful, has a narrow mind, and “does *not* understand according to true reality” **the liberation of mind** (*ceto,vimutti*) and **the liberation by wisdom** (*paññā,vimutti*)” Hence, such a one is caught up with a pleasant sense-object and repelled by an unpleasant sense-object [§11].

A wise “unleaking” (free from sensual desires) person, on the other hand, is mindful, has an immeasurable mind, and “understands, according to true reality, liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom.” Hence, one is neither caught up with a pleasant object nor repelled by an unpleasant object [§15]. His mind is said to be “immeasurable” because it is open to things as they really are, seeing the moment as arising and passing like the breath we take.

2.2.1.2 We have mentioned that in **the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta**, the term “immeasurable liberation of mind” has a broader sense than just the divine abodes [2.1.2.1]. This more embracing sense of the immeasurable mind means that it is joyfully *free from thoughts* (since it is dhyana-based): it is pervaded by *space, joy, light* and *peace*. Technically, it is called **the exalted freedom of mind** (*maha-g-gatā ceto,-vimutti*), and this is the sense as used in the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta.

The term **exalted freedom of mind** applies to the mental state of one in dhyana: one is free from *all thoughts*: the mind, as it were, embraces the whole universe itself—we *are* everything without any measure. This is only a metaphor because there is really *no* universe to hug, neither soul nor essence to unify with—otherwise, we are still caught up in ideas and views.¹³

The Commentaries explain that no thought occurs at all during dhyana; it is thus called “exalted” (*pan’assa ābhogo n’atthi kevalam mahaggata-j,jhāna-p,pavatti,vasen’etaṃ vuttam*, MA 4:200,18 f). The mind is totally peaceful and blissful: hence, the mental freedom is *total*—it is free of all mental processes—hence, it is said to be “great.”¹⁴

Besides attaining freedom of mind (dhyana) through the divine abodes, especially lovingkindness (the root divine abode), it can also be attained through ***kasīna*** meditation, where concentration is gained through focusing on an external object such as one of the elements (earth, water, fire and wind),¹⁵ a colour (blue, yellow, red and white),¹⁶ and so on.¹⁷

In short, freedom of mind arises from dhyana. Hence, it is conditioned and impermanent. In itself, dhyana will not bring us to the path of awakening. It provides us with the mental calm and clarity (upon emerging from dhyana) which we then properly direct to seeing into true reality, beginning with impermanence. When insight wisdom arises, we then attain awakening. In reality, both the “mind” and “wis-

¹³ See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (6.0.3-6.2.2); SD 54.10 (2.1).

¹⁴ On no thought arising during dhyana, see SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

¹⁵ On element-based kasinas, see SD 49.5b (1.1-1.4).

¹⁶ On colour kasinas, D 16,3.29-32 (SD 9); SD 15.1 (9.2).

¹⁷ SD 25.1 (9.2).

dom” work together, helping one another,¹⁸ like flying on the two wings of a bird,¹⁹ to bring the liberation that is awakening.

The difference between the immeasurable [boundless] freedom of mind (*appamāṇā ceto, vimutti*) and the exalted freedom of mind (*maha-g, gata ceto, vimutti*) is elaborated in **the (Ceto, vimutti) Anuruddha Sutta** (M 127).²⁰

2.2.2 Liberation by wisdom (*paññā, vimutti*)

2.2.2.1 A simple way to understand the term “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*) is that it refers to how a disciple attains the path. **The (Navaka) Paññā, vimutta Sutta** (A 9.44) distinguishes 9 different types of “wisdom-freed” disciples “in a provisional or relative sense” (*pariyāyena*), that is, in terms of their ability to attain dhyana. Beginning with the 1st or “lowest” level of freedom (that is, in ascending sequence), we have those who have attained the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless dhyanas and the cessation of perception and feeling—and understood that attainment “with wisdom” (that it is mentally constructed, impermanent, and so on).

Only the 9th and last individual is said to be fully and truly liberated (*nippariyāyena*), that is, as an arhat, by attaining the cessation of perception and feeling.²¹ It is possible to interpret the other 8 individuals as those who have attained any of the “learner” stages—as a streamwinner, a once-returned, or a non-returned—by way of attaining the dhyanas. Having attained dhyana, they emerge and reflect on it as being constructed and impermanent, and so on. The last action is what seems to qualify this attainment as “wisdom-freed,” relatively speaking (*pariyāyena*), since they still have to work for arhathood.²²

2.2.2.2 To complicate matters, the term *paññā, vimutti* is also applied to any of the 4 noble individuals—the arhat, the non-returned, the once-returned and the streamwinner—who attains that state by mastering **the 4 noble truths** but without attaining even the first dhyana.²³ Such an attainment is not very commonly reported in the suttas, where most disciples are reported as going into a solitary meditation retreat and emerging as arhats.

2.2.2.3 The suttas often speak of 2 kinds of arhats: **the “wisdom-freed”** (*paññā, vimutta*)²⁴ and **the one freed both ways** or “dual-freed” (*ubhato. bhāga, vimutta*). Technically, both are freed through wisdom—which is always the best tool for cutting off the ignorance that holds back and feeds the defilements. Hence, such arhats are also said to be “one freed in mind, freed by wisdom” (*ceto, vimutta paññā, vimutta*).²⁵

Both kinds of arhats have the same kind of liberating wisdom, that is, the understanding of the 4 noble truths. For both, too, the defilements are fully uprooted and rebirth has ceased. It is important to note here that they *neither* go on to become Buddhas *nor* need to, as they have attained the very same

¹⁸ SD 41.1 (1.4.2, 3, 4.2.4, 6.2.3.5, 7.4).

¹⁹ This famous imagery actually describes the life of a true renunciant: D 2,66/1:71 = M 51,15/1:346 = 112,14/3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f.

²⁰ M 127/3:244-152 (SD 54.10).

²¹ A 9.44/4:452 f (SD 50.31).

²² See A 9.44/4:452 f, SD 50.31 (1.2),

²³ See DAṬ 2:152 at DA 512,21+22. SD 10.16 (14.2).

²⁴ This adj form (esp as *paññā, vimutto*) is common [SD 4.25 (2.2.1) n].

²⁵ **Jhānābhiññā S** (S 16.9,29+30), SD 50.7.

awakening as the Buddha himself. The only difference is that the Buddha is the first to arise and that his wisdom is unsurpassed.²⁶

The “wisdom-freed” arhat cultivates only the form-dhyanas, and, using the calm and clarity that the dhyana provides, he directs his attention to see true reality with right view. He does not go on to cultivate the 4 formless attainments.²⁷ It is likely that the view that arhathood can be attained without any dhyana is a later view.²⁸

3 Sutta expressions used in the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta

3.1 AVASSUTA AND ANAVASSUTA

3.1.1 Avassuta

3.1.1.1 The term **ava-ssuta** (mfn) in the Sutta title is the past participle of *avassavati*, resolved as: *ava* (prefix meaning “down”) + *savati*, “to flow” (a verb derived from Skt √SRU (P √SU), “to flow” (BHSD *avaśruta*, *avasruta*)). Literally, *avassuta* means “wet, especially dripping (wet), moist, drenched, leaking, leaky.”

For example:

(1) **the Arakkhita Sutta** (A 3.109) says: “the roof-peak ... of a poorly thatched pinnacled house is unprotected ... the roof-peak is drenched moist, the roof-peak becomes rotten” (*kūṭāgāre ducchanne kūṭam pi arakkhitam hoti ... kūṭam pi avassutam hoti, kūṭam pi pūtikam hoti ...*, A 3.109/1:261,32). The opposite of *avassuta* is **an-avassuta** [3.1.2].

3.1.1.2 The following related Pali words,

the nouns,

avassuta	(n) “leak, flow,”
āsava	(n) “influx, fermentation,” and

the verbs,

anvāssavati or anvāsavati	(v) “flows after, flows continuously over,”
anu(s)savati	(v) “flow in, overpower,”

all come from the same root √SRU, “to flow.” [3.1.1.1]

While **avassuta** and its various forms depict defilements as “leaking out” of one’s own sense-faculties, flooding one’s life, **āsava** depicts defilements (or their sources) as “flowing through” the sense-

²⁶ On arhats not needing to become Buddhas, see **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39,21.3), SD 10.13 (arhathood as the highest goal); **Mahā,nidāna S** (M 15,36.3/2:71,26), SD 5.17; also SD 30.8 (6.4.4), On dealing with the Buddha’s death, see SD 27.6b (4.1.1).

²⁷ On the form dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5). On the formless attainments, see SD 24.11 (5).

²⁸ In cases where no meditation or retreats seem to be mentioned—such as **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1, it should be understood that the disciples went into meditation retreat or were good meditators. The fact that monastics meditated or were taught meditation could, in later times, it may turn out to be a kind of “status” requirement monastics (meditators or not) claim to have that laity do not; hence the pretended “superiority” of the former over the latter. The proper criterion here should rather be that the monastics keep to the Dharma-Vinaya.

faculties into one's being, flooding and fermenting it, causing one to be drunk with sensuality, existence and ignorance (and the views generated by them).²⁹

Avassuta as “leaking” also suggests that the leaks—through the 6 sense-bases—also draw in the floodwaters of sensuality, existence and ignorance from outside, as it were. The reality of it all is that it is our mind that is projecting all these defilements within and without us, creating a virtual reality that we inhabit, drowned in our own *sensuality, existence and ignorance*; these are called the mental “influxes” (*āsava*).

3.1.1.3 The most important usages of *avassuta* and its various forms are **metaphorical**, referring to our state of mind. Metaphorically, **avassuta** means “foul, rotten, lustful, sexually excited (during rut); overwhelmed by defilements.” Here are some examples from the suttas and texts:

(2) “Whatever nun, filled with lust, should consent to rubbing, ... with a male person, below the collar-bone, above the kneecap, if he is filled with desire, she is defeated” (*yā pana bhikkhuni avassutā avassutassa purisa, puggalassa adhakkhakam ubbha, jānu, mandalam āmasanam ... sādiyeyya ... pārājikā* (V 4:213,34). The Commentary explains: “filled with lust’ (*avassuta*) means lust for bodily contact; *avassuta* means “leaking, wet or moist” (*avassutā ti kāya, samsagga, rāgena avassutā, tintā kilinnā ti attho*, VA 901,5). Note the wordplay on *avassuta* here.

(3) **Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** records Moggallāna teaching on the nature of *avassuta* and of *avassuta*. He begins thus:

“And how, avuso, is one ‘leaking’? ... having seen a form with the eye, a monk is caught up with a pleasant form” *kathañ c’āvuso avassuto hoti ... bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpam disvā piya, rūpe rūpe adhimucati* (S 35.202,11/4:184,25 f), SD 60.6. [3.1.2.3(3)].

Other usages of *avassuta* include the following:

(4) **Arakkhita Sutta** (A 3.105): “the pinnacle becomes leaky [drenched]” (*kūtam pi avassutaṃ hoti*, A 1:261,32), SD 48.8a. [3.1.2.2(6)]

(5) **Kāraṇḍava Sutta** (A 8.10): “the trees inwardly rotten are drenched and filthy by nature” (*rukkhāni anto, pūṭini avassutāni kasambu, jātāni*, A 4:171,9).

(6) **Uposatha Sutta** (U 5.5): “the venerable Mahā Moggallāna saw that immoral person ... not celibate, pretending to be celibate, inwardly rotten, leaking, filthy by nature” (*addasā kho āyasmā mahā, moggallāno taṃ puggalam dussīlam ... abrahmacāriṃ brahma.cāri, patinñam anto, pūṭim avassutaṃ kasambu, jātam*, U 52,12-16).

(7) **Nandaka Thera, gāthā**: “a curse upon bodies, bad-smelling, on Māra’s side, leaky” (*dhi-r-atthu pūre duggandhe māra, pakkhe avassute*, Tha 279).

(8) **Aññatarā Bhikkhūṇī Therī, gāthā**: “not having gained peace of mind, drenched with lust for sensual pleasure” (*aladdhā cetaso santim kāma, rāgen’ avassutā*, Thī 68).

(9) **Mahā Niddesa**: “lustful, impassioned, drenched (in lust) (both ways, ie, for both sexes),” *rattānam sārattānam avassutānam*, Nm 1:139,9 f etc;

(10) Vinaya: ““(one) drenched in desire ... (from) a man drenched in desire ... ’ means ‘moist (with desire)’” (*avassutā avassutassa purisa, puggalassā ti ādisu tintassā ti attho*, VVn 1970; UttVn 166; Sadd 492,2 f).³⁰

²⁹ On the 3 influxes, see D 2,99.1 n (SD 8.10); M 11,9 n (SD 7.13); SD 30.3 (1.3.2); SD 56.4 (3.8). On the 4 influxes, see SD 30.3 (1.4.2); SD 56.4 (3.8).

³⁰ VVn = Vinaya Vinicchaya; UttVn = Uttara Vinicchaya; Sadd = Satta, nīti. For details, see SD Guide.

3.1.2 *anavassuta*

3.1.2.1 Its opposite is an-avassuta, “not leaking”; for example:

(1) The noun **anavassuta** occurs in, for example, “unleaking pinnacle” (*anavassutaṃ kūṭaṃ*, A 3.109/1:262,15).

(2) **The Saṅkha Jātaka** (J 442) gives the parable of the unleaking boat: “a boat made of planks is sped on by driving winds, unflooded by the water” (*sā hotu nāvā phalakūpapannā | anavassutā eraka, -vāta, yuttā*, J 4:20,22*). Its Commentary explains *anavassuta* as “the state of non-influx of water” (*udaka, pavesanābhāvena anavassutā*, JA 4:20,27).

3.1.2.2 The most important usages of *anavassuta* and its various forms are **metaphorical**, referring to the state of the mind. Metaphorically, **anavassuta** means “not leaking, that is, not rotten; free from lust and defilement.”

(3) A well known usage of **anavassuta** is found in the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta (S 35.202,15-17/4:186 f) [3.1.1.3(3)], whose teaching is quoted in the Culla Niddesa (Nc 85,3–86,11); its Commentary explains avassuta pariyāyā as “made wet with defilements” (*kilesehi tinta, kāraṇaṇī ca*, NcA 143,9 f).

(4) **Vinaya**: “It is not an offence when both parties are not leaking” (*anāpatti ubhato anavassutā honti*, V 4:234,1).

(5) In the **Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), SD 29.5: “one dwells ‘unleaking’ with mindfulness and awareness” (*anavassuto ca viharati sato sampajāno*), says its Commentary, is used in 2 senses: the former, “undrenched by repulsion” (*paṭigha, avassavena anavassuto*) (M 137,22/221,11) and “undrenched by lust” (*rāgāvassavena anavassuto*) (M 137,23/3:221,31). (MA 5:27)

(6) **Arakkhita Sutta** (A 3.105): “(when 3 doors are guarded) bodily karma is undrenched, verbal karma is undrenched, mental karma is undrenched” (*kāya, kammam pi vacī, kammam pi mano, kammam pi anavassutam hoti*, A 3.105,20/1:262,5-7), SD 48.8(8a). [3.1.1.3(4)]

(7) **Tissa Thera, vatthu**: “a monk should go forth, receiving little gain, undrenched (by defilements), mindful” (*appa, lābho anavassuto sato bhikkhu paribbaje*, Tha 154).

(8) **Niddesa Commentary** gives the abstract noun, “leakingness, drenched state” (*anavassutatā*, NmA 1:49,16).

3.1.3 Avassava and anussuta

3.1.3.1 We also see the forms **avassava** (“flowing; lust, sexual excitement”) and **avassavana** (“flowing, streaming”), especially the former. *Ava-ssava* functions both as a verb and a noun of *ava* (“down”) + Skt √SRU, “to flow” [3.1.1.1]. Literally, it refers to the flow of fluids or a fluid-like movement; metaphorically, it alludes to sexual emotions and activities (as we have noted) [3.1.1.3].

3.1.3.2 *Anavassuta* is sometimes said to occur as **an-ussuta** (mfn),³¹ literally, “not flowing under, undrenched through” that is, “free from passions or lust.” **The Dhammapada** has this verse:

<i>akkodhanaṃ vatavantam sīlavantam anussutam dantaṃ antima, sāriraṃ tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam</i>	One who is without anger, keeps to the vows, morally virtuous, undrenched (with defilements), tamed, bearing the last body— him I call a brahmin. ³²	(Dh 400)
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³¹ Cf CPD: uññā: avaññā; attuññā.

³² Here “brahmin” is used in a Buddhist sense, meaning “one who pushes away evil, unwholesome states” (*papa-ke akusale dhamme bāhentī ti brāhmaṇo*) (D 27,22.2), SD 2.19. See SD 18.7 (9.1.5.7).

The Dhammapada Commentary explains *unussuta* as “unflowing, without the outflow (*ussāva*) of craving” (*taṇhā,ussāvābhāvena anussutaṃ*, DhA 16521 f).³³

3.2 PARIYĀYA

The Pali term, *pariyāya*, in terms of teaching means “presentation, interpretation”; and in terms of practice means “way, method, reason.” In the Sutta title, *pariyāya* means “metaphor, figure of speech.” As an adverb, *pariyāyena* has the sense of “relatively, figuratively, contextually.” In other words, it is richly polysemic and its proper usage should be teased out from the context. *Pariyāyena* thus overlaps in some ways with “skillful means” (*upāya*). *Pariyāya* and *upāya* share the sense of using or practising the Dharma in a manner that suits and helps our personality and resolves our difficulties.³⁴

3.3 YASSA DĀNI BHAGAVĀ KĀLAṆ MAÑÑATI³⁵

3.3.1 Occurrences of the formula

The phrase *yassa dāni bhagavā kālaṆ maññatī ti*, “It’s time, let the Blessed One do as he deems fit,” occurs in **the Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.202), SD 60.6. The Sakyas have prepared a meal offering for the Buddha and the sangha; when it is ready, they approach the Buddha to invite him (and the sangha) for the meal offering [§5.2].

The phrase is “stock,” which means that it appears in other situations (with other people), with some syntactical variations to reflect the social context. Here it serves simply as a polite announcement that the meal-offering is ready, and that the Buddha may arrive at the meal-hall at his convenience.

There are well over 50 occurrences of the *yassa dāni pericope* in the Pali canon (almost all in the suttas, a few in the Vinaya), used in various situations—this is discussed in a separate essay [SD 60.7].

3.3.2 The main uses of the formula

3.3.2.1 We will here look at only the main uses of the *yassa dāni* formula for an idea of its purpose. The stock phrase used by the Sakyas to invite the Buddha in the **Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** [3.3.1], goes like this:

“It’s time, let the Blessed One do as he deems fit” (*yassa dāni bhagavā kālaṆ maññatī ti*).

The formula here serves as a **polite invitation**, usually used for the Buddha or some other persons of high social position, such as the king. [SD 60.7]

3.3.2.2 The next common form of the *yassa dāni* formula is also as a polite invitation addressed to a respected person, such as a monk, a brahmin or the king. It is also used by the Buddha to address such people. **The Samañña,phala Sutta** (M 2), for example, records that king Ajāta,sattu takes leave of the Buddha by saying:

“Well, then, bhante, we must now depart. We have much work, many duties.”
handā ca dāni mayaṃ bhante gacchāma bahu,kiccā mayaṃ bahu,karaṇīyā ti [§5.2]

³³ Also at M 98 (*an-ussudam* Ck) (CPD sv an-ussuta). A related term, *ussada* (“protuberance”) is discussed in Sn:N 167 n515 + 288 n624.

³⁴ For further details on *pariyāya*, see SD 60.4 (1.2.1).

³⁵ For a separate study, see SD 60.7.

and the Buddha politely replies:

“Maharajah, please do as you now deem fit.”

Yassa dāni tvaṃ mahārāja kālaṃ maññasī ti (D 2,103/1:86), SD 8.10)

3.3.2.3 The *yassa dāni* formula is also used as a **gentle dismissal** of the audience by the Buddha. In the **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), when the Buddha explains to Ānanda that the Tathagata is able to live out the full extent of a human lifespan, Ānanda is said to be so distracted by Māra that he (Ānanda) is unable to understand or appreciate what the Buddha has said. At the end of the conversation, the Buddha dismisses Ānanda:

“You may go, Ānanda! Now is the time for you to do as you think fit.”

gaccha tvaṃ ānanda, yassa dāni kālaṃ maññasī ti (D 16,3.6/2:104), SD 9

— —

Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta

The Discourse on the Leaking Metaphor

S 35.202

1 At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in Nigrodha’s park outside **Kapila,vatthu** amongst the Sakyas.

The Buddha and the Sakya assembly hall

2 Now at that time, a **new assembly hall** had just been built for the Sakyas of Kapila,vatthu, and it had not been inhabited by any recluse, brahmin or any human being.

3 Then the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

4 Seated at one side, the Sakyas of Kapila,vatthu said this to the Blessed One:

“Here, bhante, a new assembly hall of the Sakyas has just been built for the Sakyas of Kapila,vatthu, and it has not been inhabited by any recluse, brahmin or any human being.”³⁶ **[183]**

Bhante, may the Blessed One be the first to use it. When the Blessed One has used it, the Sakyas of Kapila,vatthu will then use it. That will be for the good and happiness of the Sakyas for a long time.”³⁷

The Blessed One consented by his silence.

³⁶ *Samañena vā brāhmañena vā kenaci manussa,bhūtena vā*. Comy to **Sekha S** (M 53) [foll n] says that devas are not mentioned as they have taken up residence in the building and the land (the vicinity) (MA 3:17).

³⁷ Since the Buddha was a kinsman of the Sakyas, they felt especially honoured to have him as the first occupant of the building. This same event is reported at the opening of **Sekha S** (M 53,2 f/1:353 f), SD 21.14. **Bodhi Rāja,-kumāra S** (M 85) opens with the prince inviting the Buddha to grace his newly built palace, Kokanuda (or Koka-nada), near Bhesakaḷā forest in Bhaggā country (M 85,2-4, SD 55.2); also **Cela,pattikā V** (V 2:127,15-129,37), SD 55.3; DhA 12.1/3:134; also Sekh 55 (V 4:198). A similar arrangement seems to be reported regarding a rest-house in Pāṭali,gāma, in **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.19-22/2:84 f) = U 8.4/85 f (SD 9); and of Ubbhaṭaka, the assembly-hall of the Mallas at Pāva, at the opening of **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1,2/3:207).

5 Then, the Sakyas, having understood that the Buddha had consented, rose from their seats, saluted the Blessed One, and, keeping their right side to the Blessed One, approached the new assembly hall to make all the preparations in the assembly hall.³⁸

5.2 They spread out the seats, set up the large water-pot and hung up an oil-lamp.³⁹

Then they approached the Blessed One and announced to him:

“Bhante, everything is ready: the seats have been spread out, the large water-pot set up and the oil-lamp hung.⁴⁰ It’s time, let the Blessed One do as he deems fit.”⁴¹

6 Then the Blessed One, having dressed himself, taking robe and bowl with him, along with the community of monks, approached the new assembly hall.

Having washed his feet, the Blessed One entered the new assembly hall and sat down, resting against the west wall, facing east.

The community of monks, too, after washing their feet, entered the new assembly hall with their back to the west wall facing the east with the Blessed One before them.⁴²

7 The Blessed One then instructed, inspired, roused, and gladdened⁴³ the Sakyas of Kapila, vatthu with a Dharma talk through much of the night. Then, he dismissed them, saying:

“The night has passed, Gotamas.⁴⁴ Please do as you think fit.”⁴⁵ [184]

“Yes, bhante,” the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu replied to the Blessed One.

Having risen from their seat, they saluted the Blessed One, and keeping their right side to him, they departed.

8 Then, not long after the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu had left, the Blessed One addressed the venerable **Mahā Moggallāna**:

“Moggallāna, the sangha of monks is free from sloth and torpor. Would you like to give a Dharma talk to the monks? My back aches, I need to stretch it.”⁴⁶

“Yes, bhante,” the venerable Mahā Moggallāna replied to the Blessed One.

³⁸ *Yena navam santhāgāram ten’upasaṅkamiṃsu, upasaṅkamitvā sabba, santharim santh’āgāram santharāpetvā.*

³⁹ *Āsanāni paññāpetvā udaka, maṇikam patitthāpetvā tela-p, padīpam āropetvā.*

⁴⁰ “The oil-lamp hung,” *tela-p, padīpam āropetvā.* This seemed to be the main or central light of the hall. Comy adds that the hall had golden and silver handled torches (*daṇḍa, dīpika*), oil-lamps in golden and silver bowls held up by images of Greeks (*yonaka*) and dwarves (*kirāta*) (SA 3:45,32-35).

⁴¹ *Sabba, santhari, santhataṃ bhante santh’āgāram, āsanāni paññattāni udaka, maṇiko patitthāpito, tela-p, padīpo āropito yassa dāni bhagavā kālam maññatī ti* [only Be maññasi]. On the *yassa dāni formula*, see (3)

⁴² From this seating arrangement, we can imagine that the assembly hall is “oriented” (facing the east). The monks would be sitting along the west wall with their back to it. The Buddha sits “before them” (*purakkhatvā*), ie, right in the centre of this single line of monks.

⁴³ “Instructed ... gladdened,” *dhammiyā kathāya sandassetvā samādapetvā samuttejetvā sampahamsetvā.* See **Pārileyya S** (S 22.81,9+n), SD 6.1.

⁴⁴ This expression prob refers to the 2nd watch, ie, 10 pm–2 am.

⁴⁵ *Abhikkantā kho gotamā ratti yassa dāni kālam maññathā ti.* [3.3]

⁴⁶ *Vigata, thīna, middho kho moggallāna bhikkhu, saṅgho, paṭibhātu taṃ moggallāna bhikkhūnaṃ dhammī kathā, piṭṭhi me āgilāyati tamhaṃ āyamissāmī ti.* Comy notes that during the 6 years of striving and austerities, the Blessed One had experienced great bodily pain. Hence, in his old age, he suffered from “back winds” (*piṭṭhi, vāta*) (back-ache or rheumatism). The immediate cause of the Buddha’s backache was from his sitting upright through a week or fortnight. He had also been giving teachings for 2 watches (from 6 pm-2 am). Moreover, adds Comy, he lay down because he wanted to use the assembly hall in all 4 postures, since he had already been walking, standing and sitting. (SA 3:52,9-24). For a description of ailments due to “winds,” see VbhA 1:5 f.

9 Then, the Blessed One spread his upper robe fourfold.⁴⁷ Lying down on his right, lion-like, resting foot on foot, mindful and fully aware, mentally noting the time for rising.⁴⁸

Moggallāna’s teaching

10 Thereupon the venerable Mahā Moggallāna addressed the monks:

“Avuso! Bhikshus!”

“Avuso,” the monks replied to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna.

The venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this:

“I will teach you, friends, on **the ‘leaking’ metaphor**⁴⁹ **and the ‘unleaking’ metaphor** (*avassuta, pari-yāyañ ca anavassuta, pari-yāyañ ca*). Listen to it, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”⁵⁰

“Yes, avuso,” the monks replied to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna.

The one who leaks (*avassuta*)

The venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this:

11 “And how, avuso, is one ‘leaking’?⁵¹

Here, avuso,

(1) having seen **a form** with the eye,

a monk is caught up with a pleasing *form* and repelled by a displeasing *form*.⁵²

One dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body. One has **a narrow mind**,⁵³

and one does not understand, according to reality,

that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom⁵⁴

by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.⁵⁵ [185]

⁴⁷ “Upper robe,” *saṅghāṭi*. The robe is about 2.1 m by 2.7 m (7 ft by 9 ft). The robe folded twice (“made fourfold, *catu-g, guṇaṃ*”) this way would nicely fit the Buddha’s height and serve as a padding on the cold hard ground. For details, see D 16,4.39 n (SD 9). On the monastic robes, see Vajirañāvararoros, *The Entrance to the Vinaya: Vinaya-mukha vol II*, [1921], Bangkok, 1973:11-31.

⁴⁸ *Atha kho bhagavā catu-g, guṇaṃ saṅghāṭim paññāpetvā dakkhiṇena passena sīha, seyyaṃ kappesi pāde pād-āṃ accādhāya sato sampajāno uṭṭhāna, saññaṃ manasi karitvā*. “Mentally noting the time for rising” when one is going to sleep is an example of “sleeping mindfully,” mentioned in **Sati, paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,8(7)/1:57). In **Pacalā S** (A 7.58), the Buddha exhorts, “Moggallāna, mindful and fully aware, you should lie down lion-like on your right side, placing foot on foot, keeping in mind the thought that on awakening, you would get up quickly, thinking, ‘I will dwell without indulging in the pleasure of sleep, or in the pleasure of reclining, or in the pleasure of drowsiness’” (*na seyya, dukhaṃ na passa, sukhaṃ na middha, sukhaṃ anuyutto*) (A 7.58/4:87), SD 4.11. See D 16,4.3.9 f nn (SD 9)

⁴⁹ On **pariyāya** as “metaphor,” see (3.2).

⁵⁰ Be Ee Se *taṃ sunatha, sādhuṃ manasi karoṭha bhāssissāmi ti*. Ce only has *taṃ sunatha*, “Listen to it.”

⁵¹ On *avassuta*, see (3.1); on “leaking,” see (2.1.1.2 f).

⁵² *Idh’āvuso bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piya, rūpe rūpe adhimuccati, appiya, rūpe rūpe vyāpajjati*. As at S 35.132,10/4:119,27-120,11 etc (SD 60.5). Comy: One is caught up by or fixated on (*adhimuccati*) an object by way of lust, or repelled by it (*vyāpajjati*) by way of aversion. **Adhimuccatī ti kiles’adhimuccanena adhimuccatī giddho hoti. Vyāpajjati ti byāpāda, vasena pūti, cittaṃ hoti** (SA 3:53,6-9). The labial *by-* (in *byāpāda*, etc) is common in Be; other MSS often spell it as *vy-*.

⁵³ Comy: **Paritta, cetaso ti anupaṭṭhita, satitāya, saṅkilesa, cittena paritta, citto** (SA 2:399,23-25). On “narrow mind,” see (2.1.1).

⁵⁴ On “liberation of mind,” see (2.2.1). On “liberation by wisdom,” see (2.2.2).

⁵⁵ *Anupaṭṭhita, kāya, sati ca viharati paritta, cetaso, tañ ca ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ yathā, bhūtaṃ na-p, -pajānāti yatthassa te uppannā pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti*.

- (2) Having heard a **sound** with the ear,
 one is caught up with a pleasing *sound* and repelled by a displeasing *sound*.
*One dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body. One has a narrow mind,
 and one does not understand, according to reality,
 that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.*
- (3) Having smelled a **smell** with the nose,
 one is caught up with a pleasing *smell* and repelled by a displeasing *smell*.
*One dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body. One has a narrow mind,
 and one does not understand, according to reality,
 that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.*
- (4) Having tasted a **taste** with the tongue,
 one is caught up with a pleasing *taste* and repelled by a displeasing *taste*.
*One dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body. One has a narrow mind,
 and one does not understand, according to reality,
 that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.*
- (5) Having touched a **touch** with the body,
 one is caught up with a pleasing *touch* and repelled by a displeasing *touch*.
*One dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body. One has a narrow mind,
 and one does not understand, according to reality,
 that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.*
- (6) Having known a **state** with the mind,
 one is caught up with a pleasing *state* and repelled by a displeasing *state*.
*One dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body. One has a narrow mind,
 and one does not understand, according to reality,
 that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.*

12 This monk, avuso, is said to be		<i>ayaṃ vuccat'āvuso bhikkhu</i>
'leaking' with forms known with	the eye;	<i>avassuto cakkhu,viññeyyesu rūpesu</i>
'leaking' with sounds known with	the ear;	<i>avassuto sota,viññeyyesu saddesu</i>
'leaking' with smells known with	the nose;	<i>avassuto ghānaviññeyyesu gandhesu</i>
'leaking' with tastes known with	the tongue;	<i>avassuto jivhā,viññeyyesu rasesu</i>
'leaking' with touches known with	the body;	<i>avassuto kāya,viññeyyesu phoṭṭhabbesu</i>
'leaking' with states known with	the mind.	<i>avassuto mano,viññeyyesu dhammesu</i>

12.2 When, avuso, a monk dwells thus,
 if Māra approaches him through **the eye**, Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Cakkhuto ce'pi naṃ māro upasaṅkamati, labhat'eva māro otāraṃ labhati māro ārammaṇaṃ.*

if Māra approaches him through	the ear,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
if Māra approaches him through	the nose,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
if Māra approaches him through	the tongue,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
if Māra approaches him through	the body,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
if Māra approaches him through	the mind,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>

13 Suppose, avuso, there were a **hut of reeds** or a hut of grass, dried up, tinder-dry, well past a year.⁵⁷

If a man were to approach it from	<u>the east</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
the fire gets to it, it catches fire; ⁵⁸		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>the west</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets to it, it catches fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>the north</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets to it, it catches fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>the south</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets to it, it catches fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>below</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets to it, it catches fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>above</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets to it, it catches fire.</i>		

13.2 So, too, avuso, a monk who dwells in this way,

if Māra approaches him through	the eye,	Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him. ⁵⁹
If Māra approaches him through	the ear,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the nose,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the tongue,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the body,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the mind,	<i>Māra gets to him, Māra gets a hold of him.</i>

14 And so, avuso, when a monk dwells in this way,

forms overcome the monk,	the monk does not overcome	<i>forms;</i> ⁶⁰
sounds overcome the monk, [186]	the monk does not overcome	<i>sounds;</i>
smells overcome the monk,	the monk does not overcome	<i>smells;</i>
tastes overcome the monk,	the monk does not overcome	<i>tastes;</i>
touches overcome the monk,	the monk does not overcome	<i>touches;</i>
mental states overcome the monk,	the monk does not overcome	<i>mental states.</i>

14.2 This, avuso, is called a monk who is	overcome by <u>forms</u> ,	<i>rūpādhibhūta</i>
	overcome by <u>sounds</u> ,	<i>saddādhibhūta</i>
	overcome by <u>smells</u> ,	<i>gandhādhibhūta</i>
	overcome by <u>tastes</u> ,	<i>rasādhibhūta</i>
	overcome by <u>touches</u> ,	<i>phoṭṭhabbādhibhūta</i>
	overcome by <u>states</u> .	<i>dhammādhibhūta</i>

⁵⁷ *Seyyathā'pi āvuso na'āgāraṃ vā tiṇ'āgāraṃ vā sukkhaṃ kolāpaṃ tero, vassikaṃ.*

⁵⁸ *Labheth'eva aggi otāraṃ, labhetha aggi ārammaṇaṃ*, lit, "fire gets a descent (an opportunity), fire get a support."

⁵⁹ *Cakkhuto ce'pi naṃ māro upasaṅkamati, labhat'eva māro otāraṃ labhati māro ārammaṇaṃ.*

⁶⁰ *Rūpā adhibhaṃsu, na bhikkhu rūpe adhibhosi.* *Adhibhaṃsu* is aor 3 pl of *adhibhavati* (or *adhibhoti*), "to overcome, overpower; surpasses;" *adhobhosi* is aor 3 sg.

14.3 Lacking mastery over the bad unwholesome states, they overpower and overcome him; states that defile, that lead to renewed existence, that are troubling, that fruit in suffering, that lead to further birth, decay and death.⁶¹

14.4 In this way, avuso, one is ‘leaking’ [drenched with defilements] (*avassuta*).

The one who leaks not (*anavassuta*)

15 And how, avuso, is one who ‘leaks not’ (*anavassuta*)?⁶²

Here, avuso,

(1) having seen **a form** with the eye,

one is neither caught up with a pleasing *form* nor repelled by a displeasing *form*.⁶³

One dwells having set up mindfulness of the body.⁶⁴

One has **an immeasurable mind**,⁶⁵

and one understands, according to reality, that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.⁶⁶

(2) Having heard **a sound** with the ear,

one is neither caught up with a pleasing *sound* nor repelled by a displeasing *sound*.

One dwells having set up mindfulness of the body.

One has an immeasurable mind,

and one understands, according to reality, *that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom* by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.

(3) Having smelled **a smell** with the nose,

one is neither caught up with a pleasing *smell* nor repelled by a displeasing *smell*.

One dwells having set up mindfulness of the body.

One has an immeasurable mind,

and one understands, according to reality, *that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom* by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.

(4) Having tasted **a taste** with the tongue,

one is neither caught up with a pleasing *taste* nor repelled by a displeasing *taste*.

One dwells having set up mindfulness of the body. One has an immeasurable mind,

and one understands, according to reality, *that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom* by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.

⁶¹ *Adhibhūto anadhibhū adhibhaṃsu nam pāpakā akusalā dhammā saṅkilesikā pono, bhavikā sadarā dukkha, vipākā āyatim jāti jarā, marañiyā.*

⁶² On *anavassuta*, see (3.1.2).

⁶³ *Idh’āvuso bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piya, rūpe rūpe nādhimuccati, appiya, rūpe rūpe vyāpajjati.* See nn at §11(1) ad loc.

⁶⁴ *Upaṭṭhita, kāya, sati ca viharati, appamāṇa, cetaso ...* as at **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 38,40/1:270,25 f), SD 7.10.

⁶⁵ Comy: “An immeasurable mind is one that is established in mindfulness, one that is free from defilements,” *appamāṇa, cetaso ti upaṭṭhita, satitāya, nikkilesa, cittena appamāṇa, citto* (SA 2:399,26 f). Hence, *appamāṇa* is broader than a mind of lovingkindness and includes all the divine abodes. On “immeasurable mind,” see (2.1.2).

⁶⁶ *Upaṭṭhita, kāya, sati ca viharati paritta, cetaso, tañ ca ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānāti yathassa te uppannā pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti.*

- (5) Having touched **a touch** with the body,
 one is neither caught up with a pleasing *touch* nor repelled by a displeasing *touch*.
 One dwells having set up mindfulness of the body.
 One has an immeasurable mind,
 and one understands, according to reality, *that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom*
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.
- (6) Having known **a mental state** with the mind,
 one is neither caught up with a pleasing *state* nor repelled by a displeasing *state*.
 One dwells having set up mindfulness of the body.
 One has an immeasurable mind,
 and one understands, according to reality, *that liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom*
 by which those bad, unwholesome states end without remains.

15.2 This, avuso, is called a monk who is

'unleaking' amid	forms	known with the eye,	<i>anavassuto cakkhu,viññeyyesu rūpesu</i>
'unleaking' amid	sounds	known with the ear,	<i>anavassuto sota,viññeyyesu saddesu</i>
'unleaking' amid	smells	known with the nose,	<i>anavassuto ghāna,viññeyyesu gandhesu</i>
'unleaking' amid	tastes	known with the tongue,	<i>anavassuto jivhā,viññeyyesu rasesu</i>
'unleaking' amid	touches	known with the body,	<i>anavassuto kāya,viññeyyesu phoṭṭhabbesu</i>
'unleaking' amid	states	known with the mind.	<i>anavassuto mano,viññeyyesu dhammesu</i>

15.3 When, avuso, a monk dwells thus, [§12.2]

if Māra approaches him through	the eye,	Māra gets <u>not</u> to him, Māra gets <u>no</u> hold of him.
If Māra approaches him through	the ear,	<i>Māra gets <u>not</u> to him, Māra gets <u>no</u> hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the nose,	<i>Māra gets <u>not</u> to him, Māra gets <u>no</u> hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the tongue,	<i>Māra gets <u>not</u> to him, Māra gets <u>no</u> hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the body,	<i>Māra gets <u>not</u> to him, Māra gets <u>no</u> hold of him.</i>
If Māra approaches him through	the mind,	<i>Māra gets <u>not</u> to him, Māra gets <u>no</u> hold of him.</i>

16 Suppose, avuso, there were **a pinnacled house** or a pinnacled hall [**187**] built of thick clay and freshly plastered.⁶⁷

If a man were to approach it from	<u>the east</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
the fire gets not to it, it does not catch fire; ⁶⁸		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>the west</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets not to it, it does not catch fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>the north</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets not to it, it does not catch fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>the south</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets not to it, it does not catch fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>below</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets not to it, it does not catch fire;</i>		
If a man were to approach it from	<u>above</u>	with a blazing grass torch,
<i>the fire gets not to it, it does not catch fire.</i>		

⁶⁷ E2 (pref) *Seyyathā pi āvuso kuṭ'āgāraṃ vā kuṭ'āgāra,sālā vā bahala,mattikā add'āvalepanā*; Be ... *kūtāgāraṃ vā sālā vā ...*; Ce *kūtāgārakā vā kūtāgārasālā vā ... -limpanā*; Se *kūtāgārasālāṃ bahala,mattikāṃ-add'āvilepanā*.

⁶⁸ *Labheth'eva aggi otāraṃ, labhetha aggi ārammaṇaṃ*, lit, "fire gets a descent (an opportunity), fire gets a support."

17 So, too, avuso, a monk who dwells in this way,
 if Māra approaches him through the eye, Māra gets not to him, Māra gets no hold of him.⁶⁹
 if Māra approaches him through the ear, Māra gets not to him, Māra gets no hold of him.
 if Māra approaches him through the nose, Māra gets not to him, Māra gets no hold of him.
 if Māra approaches him through the tongue, Māra gets not to him, Māra gets no hold of him.
 if Māra approaches him through the body, Māra gets not to him, Māra gets no hold of him.
 if Māra approaches him through the mind, Māra gets not to him, Māra gets no hold of him.

17.2 And so, avuso, when a monk dwells in this way,
forms overcome not the monk, the monk overcomes [masters] *forms*;⁷⁰
sounds overcome not the monk, the monk overcomes *sounds*;
smells overcome not the monk, the monk overcomes *smells*;
tastes overcome not the monk, the monk overcomes *tastes*;
touches overcome not the monk, the monk overcomes *touches*;
mental states overcome not the monk, the monk overcomes *mental states*.

17.3 This, avuso, is called a monk who is
 a master of forms, *rūpādhibhū*
 a master of sounds, *saddādhibhū*
 a master of smells, *gandhādhibhū*
 a master of tastes, *rasādhibhū*
 a master of touches, *phoṭṭhabbādhibhū*
 a master of states, *Dhammādhibhū*

17.4 With mastery over bad, unwholesome states, one overpowers and overcomes them; states that defile, that lead to renewed existence, that are troubling, that fruit in suffering, that lead to further birth, decay and death.

17.5 In this way, avuso, one ‘leaks not’ [undrenched with defilements] (*anavassuta*).”

18 Then the Blessed One, having risen, addressed the venerable Mahā Moggallāna:
 “Sadhu, sadhu Moggallāna! You, Moggallāna, have indeed spoken well to the monks on **the metaphor of leaking and the metaphor of not leaking.**”

19 This is what the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said. [188] The teacher approved of it. The monks, approving, delighted in the venerable Maha Moggallāna’s word.

— evaṃ —

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⁶⁹ *Cakkhuto ce’pi naṃ māro upasaṅkamati, labhat’eva māro otāraṃ labhati māro ārammaṇaṃ.*

⁷⁰ *Rūpā adhibhaṃsu, na bhikkhu rūpe adhibhosi.* Adhibhaṃsu is aor 3 pl of adhibhavati (or adhibhoti), “to overcome, overpower; surpasses;” adhibhosi is aor 3 sg.

60.7

Yassa dani ... kālaṃ maññati

Formula for departure or invitation?

A brief study by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2023

1 *Yassa dāni bhagavā kālaṃ maññati*

1.1 OCCURRENCES OF THE FORMULA

1.1.1 SD 60.6 (3.3)

We did a brief study of the above formula in **SD 60.6 (3.3)**. This is a more elaborate examination of it.

The phrase *yassa dāni bhagavā kālaṃ maññati ti*, “It’s time, let the Blessed One do as he deems fit,” is stock. It appears in other situations (with other people), with some syntactical variations to reflect the social context. Here it serves simply as a polite announcement that the meal-offering is ready and that the Buddha may arrive at the meal-hall at his convenience.

There are well over 50 occurrences of the *yassa dāni* pericope in the Pali canon (almost all in the suttas, a few in the Vinaya), used in various situations, as will be seen below.

1.1.2 Joy Manné’s paper (1993)

1.1.2.1 As a young student of early Buddhism, scholar Joy Manné, wrote a paper about the *yassa dāni* stock phrase entitled “On a departure formula and its translation.”¹ To be clear, Manné did not actually discuss the *yassa dāni* formula in general, but a special occurrence of it, which she identified as a “departure formula,” of which there are many instances in the suttas. This was research she did as part of her doctoral dissertation in 1991.²

As the text for **the departure formula**, Manné quotes this pair of sentences:

(a) *Handa ca dāni mayāṃ (bhante) gacchāma, bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti;*

“Well, (bhante,) I must go now. I have many duties and much work.”

(b) *Yassa dāni tvaṃ (mahā, rāja) kālaṃ maññasī ti.*

“It’s time, (maharajah,) do as you deem fit.”

This departure formula (Pali) is often found in the narrative passages of the suttas. Manné has numbered them as (1) and (2), but I have used (a) and (b) respectively so as not to be confused with the numbering in my list below, which is romanized. The speaker of (a) is the “great king” (*mahā, rāja*), while is the Buddha as respondent. Hence, (a) the actual departure formula, and (b) the formal response.³

1.1.2.2 Manné’s paper is an example of how a scholar would approach sutta as literature by trying to figure out the various possible nuances, situations or contexts of the dialogue in which the stock phrase occurs. According to Manné:

The question is[:] do the various translations of this formula reflect the different situations in which it occurs, and are they therefore sensitively responding to the sense and atmosphere of

¹ J Manné, “On a departure formula and its translation,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 10,1 1993:27-44.

² Manné’s paper constitutes ch III of her doctoral dissertation, “Debates and case histories in the Pali canon” (Utrecht 1991).

³ Curiously, Manné qu N Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966: ch III. But there is no such discussion at all in Wagle’s book. Moreover, the book is poorly written, sketchy and repetitive.

the texts when they vary their terminology? Or is there one consistent translation that would fit all cases?

This is not simply a matter of words. The suttas are not only religious documents: they are also narrative literature. The choice of words in a sutta is intended to influence us, and the words we choose (or accept) in translation both reflect and influence our understanding and interpretation of the sutta.

Formulas play an important part in this (as in other) oral literature. They function, whatever their length, not only to indicate the type of literature⁴ but also as a short-hand for setting an atmosphere, for indicating a particular state of affairs, for summarising a character, for showing social status⁵ and for creating expectations on the part of the listener, as well as to render the communication of the Teaching consistent and easily memorable.⁶

If we correctly and fully grasp what its formulas imply, we are aided in our appreciation of this literature.⁷ If we misunderstand them we may also miss important points, make false interpretations and generally be led astray.

(Manné 1993:29, paragraphed)

Manné's suggestions are clearly applicable when we study the suttas as literature; she is aware that suttas are "not simply a matter of words." She even accepts the fact that they "are not only religious documents; they are also narrative literature" but she tells us no more; she stops right there.

1.1.2.3 Understandably, too, her paper, interesting and intuitive as it is, is limited by her notion that it is "narrative." She misses a vital quality that thinking Buddhists see in the suttas—that the early texts are authentic spiritual records of the awakening experiences of the Buddha and the early saints, and thus a guide for Buddhist seekers today.

When we study the suttas carefully, especially as an integral whole, and work the trajectories of the various texts and contexts of the suttas, these will guide us to the kind of practice and path of freedom as envisioned in early Buddhism. When we fail to do this or see the suttas in worldly ways, then we have misunderstood the nature and purpose of the suttas. Then, as Manné concludes, "If we misunderstand them we may also miss important points, make false interpretations and generally be led astray."

1.1.2.4 The suttas often contain "**narratives**" that contextualize and connect the events related to their teachings, and sometimes give related details of the lives or acts of the Buddha, his early disciples and other actors of the times. And, yes, the *yassa dāni* formula is a well-known part of this common social narrative of the day. In this case, this *yassa dāni* stock plays quite a direct role in the sutta narratives; it is simply an **invitation** formula—as we shall clearly see in the cases we have listed below [1.2].

Manné's paper, as we have noted, discusses and speculates on only one aspect of the *yassa dāni* formula, that is, as a departure formula—as the title, "On a departure formula and its translation" suggests—that is when the visitor or audience politely takes leave of the Buddha. Here, it should be noted that the Buddha himself is never recorded as using the *bahu,kicca* dismissal formula. [1.2.0]

⁴ See Manné, "Categories of sutta in the Pali literature and their implications for our appreciation of the Buddhist teaching and literature," *J of the Pali Text Soc* 15 1990:29–87.

⁵ On this point, see Wagle 1955: ch III.

⁶ On this point, see L S Cousins, "Pali oral literature," in (edd) P Denwood & A Piatigorsky, *Buddhist Studies: Ancient and Modern*, London: Curzon Press, 1983.

⁷ See eg J Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 1986; where, among other methods, the study of particular formulas has been used to show the character of and early influence upon Buddhist meditation.

1.1.3 The departure formula in the suttas

1.1.3.1 Here is a list of sutta references for the occurrences of **the departure formula**—*handā ca dāni ... yassa dāni ...* [1.1.2.1]—along with their respective contexts: [S = Sutta]

- (1) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bhante, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, mahārāja, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,103/1:85),⁸ SD 8.10: King Ajāta, sattu takes leave of the Buddha,
 - **Kaṇṇa, katthala S** (M 90,18/2:133), SD 10.8: King Pasenadi takes leave of the Buddha.
- (2) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bho gotama, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, ambaṭṭha, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,2.12/1:106), SD 21.3: Ambaṭṭha takes leave of the Buddha.
- (3) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bho gotama, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, brāhmaṇa, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.6/2:76), SD 9: chief minister Vassa, kāra takes leave of the Buddha.
 - **(Sattaka) Vassakāra S** (A 7.20,15/4:21), SD 55.10b: *same as preceding.*
- (4) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ marisa, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, mahā, rājāno, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Āṭāṇāṭiya S** (D 32,11/3:205), SD 101.1: the 4 great kings take leave of the Buddha.
 - *Same* (D 32,12/3:206), SD 101.1: *the Buddha relates the whole incident to the monks.*
- (5) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bho gotama, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“Yassa dāni tvam, aggivessana, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,55/1:251), SD 49.4: Mahā Saccaka (Aggi, vessana) takes leave of the Buddha.
- (6) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bhante, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, pessa, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Kandaraka S** (M 51,6.3/1:342), SD 32.9: elephant driver’s son Pessa takes leave of the Buddha.
- (7) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bhante ānanda, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, mahā, rāja, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Bahiṭika S** (M 88,20/2:117), SD 49.12: King Pasenadi takes leave of the elder Ānanda.
- (8) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bhante, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, gaha, pati, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Upāli (Gaha, pati) S** (M 56,18.5/1:380), SD 27.1: the houselord Upāli takes leave of the Buddha.
- (9) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bhante, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni, mahā, rāja, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti (Buddha to King Pasenadi) 3rd person
 - **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86,14.13/2:102), SD 5.11: King Pasenadi takes leave of the Buddha.
 - **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89,20/2:125), SD 64.10 (forthcoming): King Pasenadi takes leave of the Buddha.
- (10) *“handā ca dāni mayāṃ bhante, gacchāma bahu, kiccā mayāṃ bahu, karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvam, mahā, rāja, kālaṃ maññaṭi ti
 - **Kosala S 2** (A 10.30/5:69), SD 64.15: King Pasenadi takes leave of the Buddha.

⁸ Where the PTS *paragraph* refs differ from those of the SD, please use the PTS *vol:page* refs to locate the quote.

- (11) “*handa ca dāni mayam̐ bho gotama, gacchāma bahu,kiccā mayam̐ bahu,karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvar̐, māṇava, kālaṃ maññasī ti
 • (Brahma,vihāra) Subha S (M 99,29/2:208), SD 38.6: brahmin youth Subha takes leave of the Buddha.
- (12) “*handa ca dāni mayam̐ bho ānanda, gacchāma bahu,kiccā mayam̐ bahu,karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvar̐, brāhmaṇa, kālaṃ maññasī ti
 • Gopaka Moggallāna S (M 108,28/3:14), SD 33.5: chief minister Vassa,kāra takes leave of Ānanda.
- (13) “*handa ca dāni mayam̐ bho gotama, gacchāma bahu,kiccā mayam̐ bahu,karaṇīyā ti.*
“yassa dāni tvar̐, vassakāro, kālaṃ maññasī ti
 • (Catukka) Vassakāra S (A 4.187,7.2/2:181), SD 45.6: chief minister Vassa,kāra takes leave of the Buddha.

1.1.3.2 Manné (1993:30-32) discusses how the departure formula has been rendered by various leading translators (Dīgha translations T W Rhys Davids & C A F Rhys Davids, and Majjhima translations by I B Horner) and a scholarly essay (G MacQueen’s study of the Sāmaññaphala Sutta, D 2). After some discussions on the departure formula as used by the following people:

King Ajāta,sattu in the Sāmañña,phala Sutta (D 2),	[1.1.3.1 (1)]
Mahā Saccaka in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36),	[1.1.3.1 (5)]
the elephant driver’s son Pessa in the Kandaraka Sutta (M 51),	[1.1.3.1 (6)]
the chief minister Vassa,kāra in the Gopaka Moggallāna Sutta (M 108),	[1.1.3.1 (12)]

Manné concludes that there is no differentiation of special social ranking (such as the king speaking to the Buddha) but that it is simply a polite form of leave-taking used by others towards the Buddha or by the Buddha himself towards others⁹ [1.2]. Manné criticizes the scholars mentioned above for suggesting that the departure formula suggests anything other than being a formal polite departure formula (Manné 1993:30-36).

In fact, Manne analyzes the *yassa dāni* stock only as a “departure formula.” She seems to be aware that it has other usages but does not go into them.

We shall now examine the other usages of the *yassa dāni* formula as it appears in the suttas.

1.2 THE YASSA DĀNI FORMULA

1.2.0 Occurrences of the formula

The stock phrase *yassa dāni tvar̐ kālaṃ maññatī ti* appears in the suttas, with some syntactical variations to reflect the social context. It translates literally as “for which now one thinks of the time” or “for which this now may one think it the time.” There are well over 50 occurrences of the ***yassa dāni* stock phrase** in the Pali canon (almost all in the suttas, a few in the Vinaya), used in various situations, as we have listed below.¹⁰

In the lists below [1.2.1-1.2.5], the **following asterisk (*) convention** designates the usages of the *yassa dāni* formula, in at least 3 ways, as follows:

- * as departure formula [1.1.3]
- ** as invitation/announcement formula
- *** as dismissal/taking leave formula

⁹ Manné 1993:33-42.

¹⁰ This list is not comprehensive; other occasions are further listed below.

1.2.1 ...11 yassa dāni kālaṃ maññasi

(1)	Sāmañña,phala Sutta**	Jīvaka to King Ajāta,sattu	D 2,9/1:49	SD 8.10;
(2)	Mahā,parinibbāna S***	the Buddha dismisses Ānanda	D 16,3.6/2:104 ¹²	SD 9;
¹³ [3]	Āyu,saṅkhār'ossajjana S***	– ditto –	U 6.1/63	(SD 9);
(4)	Mahā Sudassana Sutta	army is ready for Queen Subhaddā	D 17,2.7/2:189	SD 36.12
(5)	Upāli Sutta**	doorkeeper to Nāta,putta	M 56,22/1:382	SD 27.1;
(6)	Dhamma,cetiya Sutta**	Dīgha Kārāyaṇa to King Pasenadi	M 89,5/2:119	SD 64.10;
(7)	Vinaya (Cv 6.1.3)**	monks to a Rājagaha seth	V 2:147,3;	

1.2.2 yassa dāni tvaṃ ... kālaṃ maññasi

(8)	Sāmañña,phala S*	the Buddha to King Ajāta,sattu	D 2,103/1:85	SD 8.10;
(9)	Ambaṭṭha Sutta*	the Buddha to brahmin Ambaṭṭha	D 3,2.12/1:106	SD 21.3;
(10)	Mahā,parinibbāna S*	the Buddha to brahmin Vassa,kāra	D 16,1.5.3/2:76	SD 9;
(11)	Mahā Saccaka Sutta*	the Buddha to brahmin Aggivessana	M 36,55/1:251	SD 49.4;
(12)	Kandaraka Sutta*	the Buddha to Pessa, a mahout's son	M 51,6.3/1:342	SD 32.9;
(13)	Upāli Sutta*	the Buddha to the houselord Upāli	M 56,18.4/1:380	SD 27.1;
(14)	Raṭṭha,pāla Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses Raṭṭha,pāla	M 82,16/2:61	SD 92.5;
(15)	Aṅguli,māla Sutta*	The Buddha to King Pasenadi	M 86,14.3/2:102	SD 5.11;
(16)	Bāhitika Sutta*	Ānanda to King Pasenadi	M 88,20/2:117	SD 49.12;
(17)	Dhamma,cetiya Sutta*	the Buddha to King Pasenadi	M 89,20/2:124	SD 64.10;
(18)	Kaṇṇakatthala Sutta**	servant to King Pasenadi	M 90,17.1/2:133	SD 10.8;
(19)	Kaṇṇaka-t,thala Sutta*	the Buddha to King Pasenadi	M 90,17.7/2:133	SD 10.8;
(20)	(Brahma,vihara) Subha S*	the Buddha to māṇava Subha	M 99,29/1:208	SD 38.6;
(21)	Saṅgārava Sutta**	brahminee Dhananjani to Saṅgārava	M 100,5/2:210	SD 10.9;
(22)	Gopaka Moggallāna S*	Ānanda to brahmin Vassa,kāra	M 108,28/3:14	SD 33.5;
(23)	Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses Puṇṇa	M 145,6/3:269	SD 20.15;
[24]	= Puṇṇa Sutta***	– ditto –	S 35.88/4:62,31	(SD 20.15);
(25)	Khemā Therī Sutta*	the Buddha to King Pasenadi	S 44.1/4:379,29;	
(26)	(Catukka) Vassakāra S*	the Buddha to Vassa,kāra	A 4.187,7.2/2:181	SD 45.6;
(27)	(Sattaka) Vassakāra S*	the Buddha to Vassa,kāra	A 7.20,15/4:21	SD 55.10b;
(28)	(Navaka) Sīha,nāda S*	Sāriputta takes leave of the Buddha	A 9.11,1.3/4:373	SD 28.2a;
(29)	Meghiya Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses Meghiya	A 9.3,5.2/4:356 = U 4.1	SD 34.2;
(30)	Kosala Sutta 2*	the Buddha to King Pasenadi	A 10.30/5:69	SD 64.15;
(31)	Meghiya Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses Meghiya	U 4.1,5.2/34 = A 9.3	SD 34.2;
(32)	Dabba Sutta 1***	the Buddha dismisses Dabba	U 8.9/92;	

1.2.3 yassa dāni ... kālaṃ maññatha (pl)

(33)	Mahā,parinibbāna S*	informing the Kusināra followers	D 16,6.12.2/2:159	SD 9;
(34)	Āṭṭhānāya Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses the 4 great kings	D 32,11+12/3:205 f	SD 101.1;
(35)	Thapatayā Sutta**	announcing the Buddha's arrival	S 55.6,5/5:348,27	SD 42.7;

¹¹ Here, the ellipsis (...) means that sentences below precedes the formula; "... bhante bhagavā ..." means this phrase occurs in place of the ellipsis in the header.

¹² Buddha to distracted Ānanda.

¹³ Square brackets here refer to a reprise of the prec title.

1.2.4 ... yassa dāni kālaṃ maññatha (pl)

(36)	Mahā,parinibbāna S**	Vāsetṭhas told about the parinirvana	D 16,6.12.1/2:158 ¹⁴	SD 9;
[37]	– ditto –**	– ditto –	D 16,6.12.2/2:158 ¹⁵	SD 9;
(38)	Saṅgīti Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses the audience	D 33,1.4/3:209;	
(39)	Avassuta Sutta***	the Buddha takes leave	S 35.202,7/4:183,30	SD 60.6;
(40)	(Pañcaka) Sārandada S**	to Licchavīs, about Buddha’s arrival	A 5.143/3:168,7;	
(41)	Pāṭaligāmiya Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses the audience ¹⁶	U 8.6/87;	
(42)	Vinaya (Mv 6.28.6)***	the Buddha dismisses the audience	V 1:228;	

1.2.5 yassa dani ... kālaṃ maññati (3 sg, polite):

(43)	Poṭṭhapāda Sutta***	Poṭṭhapāda dismisses the Buddha	D 9,30.3/1:189	SD 7.14;
(44)	Mahā,parinibbāna S***	Vassa,kāra takes leave of the Buddha	D 16,1.5/2:76	SD 9;
(45)	Mahā,parinibbāna S*	brahmin Vassa,kāra to the Buddha	D 16,1.21/2:84	SD 9;
(46)	– ditto –**	Ānanda invites the Buddha	D 16,3.49/2:119	SD 9;
(47)	Saṅgīti Sutta**	inviting the Buddha to the new hall	D 33,1.3/3:208;	
(48)	Mahā Govinda Sutta***	Govinda takes leave of King Reṇu	D 19,39/2:237	SD 63.4;
[49]	– ditto –***	Govinda takes leave of 6 kshatriyas	D 19,40/2:238	SD 63.4;
[50]	– ditto –***	Govinda takes leave of 7 brahmins	D 19,41/2:243	SD 63.4;
[51]	– ditto –***	Govinda takes leave to renounce	D 19,46/2:243	SD 63.4;
(52)	Sekha Sutta**	inviting the Buddha for a meal	M 53,3.2/1:354	SD 21.14;
(53)	Raṭṭha,pāla Sutta***	the Buddha dismisses Raṭṭhapāla	M 82,15/2:61	SD 92.5;
(54)	Brahmāyu Sutta**	the Buddha consents to meet Brahmāyu	M 91,26/2:142	SD 63.8;
[55]	– ditto –**	consent relayed to Brahmāyu	M 91,27/2:142	SD 63.8;
(56)	Avassuta Sutta***	the Buddha takes leave (backache)	S 35.202,5/4:183,15	SD 60.6;
(57)	Vesālī Sutta**	Ānanda invites the Buddha	S 54.9/5:321,16 f;	
(58)	Bharaṇḍu Sutta**	the Buddha invited to a hermitage	A 3.126/1:277,18;	
(59)	Nārada Sutta**	Piyaka is told to invite King Muṇḍa	A 5.50/3.59;	
[60]	– ditto –**	Piyaka invites King Muṇḍa	A 5.50/3.59;	
(61)	Pāṭaligāmiya Sutta**	Pāṭali followers to the Buddha	U 8.6/86;	
(62)	Vinaya (Mv 6.28.3)**	Pāṭaligāma followers invite the Buddha	V 1:227	SD 55.3.

1.3 CONCLUSION**1.3.1 Variations of the yassa dāni formula**

We should note that phrase (1) of the departure formula—*bahu,kicca ... bahu,karaṇīya* [1.1.2.1]—is simply a statement that one is busy with worldly affairs, just as we would say: “Please excuse me, I have some business to attend to.” Any other significance of the occasion is not reflected in this formula, but in the circumstance itself.

For example, in the case of the **Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51), if Pessa the elephant driver’s son does not depart but stays on “for a moment” to listen to more of the Buddha’s teaching, he, being a wise person, would have understood it to his great benefit.¹⁷

¹⁴ Anuruddha’s instruction to Ānanda.

¹⁵ Ānanda’s instruction to the Mallas.

¹⁶ Cf *kālo bhante* (D 9,4.17), SD 9; cf *yāno kālo mahārāja* (M 90,17.1), SD 10.8.

¹⁷ M 51,7/1:342 (SD 32.9).

In the **Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), after King Ajāta,sattu has left, the Buddha states that if the king had not killed his own father, he would have attained at least streamwinning from listening to the teaching that had been given to him. His departure has nothing to do with his not attaining streamwinning. Interestingly, it should also be noted that one does not become a streamwinner (or any of the path saints) by merely listening to a sutta teaching; one has to be spiritually right and ready for it, too.

1.3.2 The *yassa dāni* sentence itself

In the departure formula [1.1.2.1], phrase

(1) *handā ca dāni* the opening of the leave-taking formula (followed by the rest of the formula).

(2) the polite acknowledgement (often by the Buddha but not always).

Phrase (2) is the actual ***yassa dāni*** formula, and it may function as a departure formula, as an invitation or announcement formula, or as a dismissal or leave-taking formula. In other words, phrase (2) may function independently as a formal and polite meaning phrase, basically, “It’s time, sir!”

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60.8

Makhā,deva Sutta

The Discourse on Makhadeva

Be Magha,deva Sutta **The Magha,deva Discourse** | M 83¹

Theme: A good tradition that is worth perpetuating

Translated & annotated by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2011, 2023

SD 60.8 Contents

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<u>The Makhā,deva Sutta</u>	
§§1-2	The Buddha in Mithilā; smiles at Makhā,deva's mango grove.
§3	The Buddha tells the story of King Makhā,deva , a good king who keeps the <u>precept day</u> (<i>uposatha</i>).
§4	Makhā,deva renounces the world when grey hairs appear on his head, and instructs the crown prince to do the same.
§§5-6	Makhā,deva cultivates the 4 divine abodes and is reborn in <u>the brahma world</u> . He lives for 84,000 years x 4 = 336,000 years.
§§7-10	Makhā,deva's son keeps to Makhā,deva's tradition.
§§11-12	84,000 generations of Makhā,deva's descendants renounce and cultivate the divine abodes in the same manner. They each live for 336,000 years.
§13	King Nimi lives in keeping to Makhā,deva's tradition.
§§14.2-16	Sakra invites Nimi to Tāvatiṃsa since the devas there wish to see him. Mātali takes Nimi in the divine chariot, and Nimi sees the hells and the heaven, and visits Tāvatiṃsa.
§§18-20	Nimi renounces the world, practises the divine abodes, and is reborn in the brahma world.
§21	Nimi's successor, King Kalāra,janaka , does not renounce the world; he breaks Makhā,deva's tradition.
§23	The Buddha says that such a tradition (keeping the uposatha) only brings one to the brahma world.
§24	Only the "good tradition" of the noble eightfold path frees one to gain nirvana.
§25	The Buddha exhorts Ānanda to continue the "good tradition" instituted by him.

¹ <https://www.digitalpalireader.online/dprhtml/index.html?loc=m.1.0.0.3.2.0.m&analysis=samucchindi>.

1 Sutta introduction

1.1 A FEW KEY IDEAS AND WORDS

1.1.1 Sutta highlights

1.1.1.1 The Makhā,deva Sutta is a mythical lesson in early Buddhism, or a lesson on mythical time [1.1.2] in spiritual life. This is *not* the kind of story to be taken on faith, but one that we should carefully read or listen to, and to reflect on its meaning or let the vision of truth underlying the story appear before us—like a good story does. If you have any difficulty accepting or understanding the story, just leave it aside for the moment, and examine those suttas and teachings that help you know yourself better, and also become more familiar with the story-telling style of Dharma-spirited literature.

The Sutta starts with an account of the life of **King Makhā,deva** who lives in Mithilā in prehistoric times, in an ancient, fabulous city of Indian legends and epics. Makhā,deva is the ideal king who rules his kingdom well and wisely, and is a model of a morally virtuous person who keeps the precepts, and in old age renounces the world to cultivate the divine abodes. He instructs his descendants to do the same.

1.1.1.2 Maghā,deva’s son and descendants keep to his instructions by ruling well and wisely, keeping the precepts, and renouncing in old age. Maghā,deva’s dynasty climaxes with King Nimi, whom even Sakra and the devas of Tāvātimsa admire so much so that they bring him to visit their heaven. On his way from earth to Tāvātimsa (the 2nd of the earthbound heavens),² he has a “tourist view” of the hells and the earthbound heavens [§14.2 n].

Nimi, however, is the “last person” (*antima, purisa*) in Makhā,deva’s lineage, since his successor, King Kalāra, janaka does not keep to Makhā,deva’s instruction and does not renounce the world. Makhā,deva’s noble lineage thus ends with him.

Near the Sutta’s closing, the Buddha explains that even such a noble tradition that Makhā,deva has instituted—with its *precept-keeping, renunciation and cultivation of the divine abodes*—at best leads to rebirth in the brahma world. Only **the noble eightfold path**, as taught by the buddhas, properly practised, brings one to the path of awakening and to nirvana [§23].

The Sutta’s message then is that we should properly practise the noble eightfold path—whether we use the breath meditation or the divine abodes, whether it is *samatha, vipassanā* or *kammaṭṭhāna*³—we should do so for the cultivation of liberating wisdom. This entails the 3 trainings in moral virtue, mental concentration and insight wisdom.⁴

1.1.1.3 Another interesting point to note is that the Makhā,deva Sutta actually comprises 2 Jātaka stories [1.2.1], that is, **the Makhā,deva Jātaka** (J 9) [1.2.2] and **the Nimi Jātaka** (J 541) [1.2.3]. Makhā,deva, the first king of the Sutta, and Nimi, the last good king mentioned in the Sutta, are both past births of the Buddha himself.

In **the Makhā,deva Jātaka** (J 9), the Buddha actually states that “I was Makhā,deva at that time” [§22]. This statement highlights the ancient religious ways or the “good tradition”: the way of merit (*puñña*) (keeping the precepts or *uposatha*), renunciation and cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*): *lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity*. However, such a practice at best brings one only rebirth in the brahma-world [§22].

² See §14.2 n. On the earth-bound heavens, see SD 54.3a (3.5.1).

³ See SD 60.1b.

⁴ On the 3 trainings, see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6; SD 1.11 (5).

The purpose of the Makhā,deva Sutta is to show just this: that the best religious practice even of those times, advanced in religious ways and wisdom, leads to the heavens of this world, and keeps us within samsara (the cycle of death and rebirth). Only the proper practice of **the noble eightfold path** frees us from cyclic life to gain nirvana [§23].

1.1.2 Mythical time

1.1.2.1 The Makhā,deva Sutta is a story about a prehistoric king, Makhā,deva, said to be living in **the “first age”** (*paṭhama kappa*),⁵ that is, the beginning of an aeon or world-cycle [1.1.2.2]. The term “the first age” appears in **the Cetiya Jātaka** (J 422) in reference to the first human king, Mahā Sammatta, whose lifespan was said to be an “incalculable” (*asaṅkheyya*). This mythical and didactic conception of time in the suttas is best understood through how time—cosmic and biological—is depicted in such texts as **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27) and **the Cakka,vatti Sutta** (D 26) [1.1.2.4].⁶ [1.1.3]

1.1.2.2 In **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), for example, an aeon (*kappa*) or world cycle is said to comprise 4 stages, that is:⁷

(1) a collapsing (contracting) universe	<i>samvaṭṭa</i>	matter disintegrates
(2) a collapsed (steady-state) universe	<i>samvaṭṭa tiṭṭhati</i>	the “big crunch” ⁸
(3) an expanding universe	<i>vivaṭṭa</i>	the universe re-evolves
(4) an expanded (steady-state) universe	<i>vivaṭṭa tiṭṭhati</i>	a stable universe: life and humans

(1) A collapsing or contracting universe is one where matter is disintegrating and everything is a physical chaos. The 5 elements (earth, water, fire, wind and space) merge into some kind of amorphous “unity.” Without the physical universe, the sense-based worlds (including our human world) cannot arise or exist. However, interestingly, the higher form worlds and formless worlds (whose beings are composed of pure light or pure energy) continue as before, unaffected by this physical chaos.

(2) A collapsed or contracted universe is a steady state where time and space as we know them do not arise. Interestingly, this cycle may affect only our universe, or any one universe, as there are many other universes or **multiverses** similar to ours. These different multiverses, each goes through their own cosmic cycle in their own time. The existence (or possibility) of such multiverses is mentioned in, for example, **the Kosala Sutta 1** (A 10.29).⁹

(3) An expanding universe is one that begins to evolve physically and to support the evolution of vegetation and then of life. It is unclear, from the texts alone, when exactly human life arises. It may be at some later stage in this expanding universe, but certainly by the beginning of the following “expanded steady-state” universe.

⁵ **Nacca J** (J 32/1:207,1). **Mandhātu J** (J 258/2:311,8) says that “In the past, during the 1st age, there was a king named Mahā,sammatta” (*atite paṭhama,kappe mahā,sammatto nāma rājā āhosi*) (J 258/2:311,8). **Cetiya J** (J 422) says that King Mahā,sammatta “lived for an incalculable period,” ie, a quarter aeon (*asaṅkheyya*) (*atite paṭhama,-kappe mahā,sammato nāma rājā asaṅkheyy’āyuko ahosi*, J 422/3:454,13). [1.1.3]

⁶ **D 27**,10-21/3:84-93 relates the re-evolution of the universe and the election of Mahā Sammatta (SD 2.19), & **D 26**,14-23/34:67-75 shows how the human lifespan fluctuated according to social conditions (SD 36.10).

⁷ **D 27**,10-21/3:84-93 (SD 2.19). This is merely a hypothetical or imaginative explanation of early Buddhist cosmology, not a scientific description.

⁸ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Crunch.

⁹ A 10.29,2 (SD 16.15). For an interesting discussion on the possible interactions amongst these multiverses, see SD 2.19 (2.6).

(4) An expanded steady-state universe is a liveable world. By this time, humans, or prehumans, have learned to live together in some kind of family or social system. They learn to build houses, gather food and keep themselves safe from various dangers. Then they learn agriculture and husbandry. When ideas of ownership of their produce and land evolve, they have to deal with dangers to such situations—called “crimes.” Some kind of codes or laws come into being, and also the idea of kingship.

Over time, humans begin to specialize in labour and “occupations” come into being. Through such labour and organization, the idea of right and wrong (for example, stealing is wrong) and morality arise. In fact, in ancient India, even before the Buddha’s time, the idea of “work” and “moral action” were seen as overlapping, as evident from the ancient term “**karma**” (P *kamma*). This 4th stage in the cosmic evolution (that of human and social realities) is described in interesting (sometime humorous) detail in **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27).¹⁰

1.1.2.3 The 4 stages of the universe’s evolution are also listed in **the (Catukka) Kappa Sutta** (A 4.156) and other Buddhist texts.¹¹ The Sutta also calls each of these 4 stages an “incalculable” (*asaṅkheyya*).¹² Simply put, even an *asaṅkheyya* is an “uncalculably” and unimaginably long period, to speak in characteristic ancient Indian hyperbole.

John Garrett Jones, in his study of the Jātakas, *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha*, gives a helpful summary of the early Buddhist conception of time (1979:190). He mentions “**the first age**” [1.1.2.1] as clearly referring to stage 4 depicted above [1.1.2.2]. It is a time when the stable universe supported life and humans, and human society began to evolve and flourish.

The first human king, Mahā Sammatta, who lived in this “first age,” had a lifespan of a whole “incalculable” (*asaṅkheyya*), as do most of the humans then. Makhā,deva, Nimi and the 84,000 generations of kings of **the Makhā,deva Sutta** (M 83) lived during such a time. These stories show that the Buddha (or the Buddhist sutta compilers) then had a vision of time and human social evolution quite advanced for their time.

1.1.2.4 The Cakka,vatti Sutta (D 26) develops the early Buddhist vision of cosmic time and social evolution to highlight the nature of human behaviour and the necessity of **dhmma** as social code, religious teaching and spiritual evolution. The Sutta describes how the human lifespan fluctuates according to personal conduct and social conditions, that is, to the extent to which political power and social justice play vital roles in keeping society wholesome or actually contributing to social failure and chaos.

The role of **the Buddha**—and every buddha who arises in such a society—is to point out:

- (1) how moral conduct (*sīla*) is the vital foundation of a human and humanizing society that supports a sustainable world;¹³
- (2) how mental cultivation (*samādhi*) is the basis for individual goodness and excellence to serve as the pillars of a productive and creative society—very simply, a “good society”; and
- (3) how insight wisdom (*paññā*) is the root of liberating knowledge that frees us from living in suffering, from inflicting suffering upon others, and the from contributing to the deterioration and destruction of the environment.

When these 3 trainings (*sikkhas*) are cultivated as an integral path of personal development, it leads to spiritual awakening that frees us from the deficiencies and unsatisfactoriness of the world. While biologi-

¹⁰ **Aggañña S** (D 27), SD 2.19.

¹¹ A 4.156/2:142 & SD 2.19 (9.4.1); Vism 13.28-30/414-422; cf D 1:14, 3:109; It 15, 99; Pug 60; Kvu 11.5/455 f; Miln 232. On other universes, see SD 2.19 (9.4).

¹² On *asaṅkheyya*, see SD 2.19 (9.3).

¹³ D 26,14-23/34:67-75 (SD 36.10).

cal evolution advances the human species, this **spiritual evolution**, beginning with the Buddha, provides the path of higher evolution, that leading to awakening (*bodhi*).

1.1.3 Ancient conception of numbers

1.1.3.1 According to the **Neyy'attha Nī't'attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5+6), when studying the suttas, the rule is that we should first ascertain whether the teaching is one “whose sense is (or has been) drawn out” (*nī't'-attha*) or if it is one “whose sense is to be drawn out” (*neyy'attha*).¹⁴ We should examine *how* the teaching is taught, that is, whether in worldly or conventional manner (that is, relatively or *pariyāyena*), or in direct or spiritual terms (that is, ultimately or *nippariyāyena*).¹⁵

A teaching that makes use of experiential terms and ideas (impermanence, suffering, nonself, consciousness, peace, awakening, nirvana), is a teaching **whose sense has been drawn out** (*nī't'-attha*). Such a teaching should be taken *as it is*, and understood as a universal and timeless truth. It has *directly* to do with the path of awakening and nirvana.

When stories (such as those in which individuals are named) or concepts (such as numbers) are used, the teaching is one **whose sense is to be drawn out** (*neyy'attha*). In such cases, the Buddha or the narrator or commentator of the teaching, is making use of some worldly ideas or conventions to illustrate some point or vision of ultimate truth. Hence, included here are worldly language, stories, metaphors, numbers and various literary devices to highlight the Dharma as teaching, as path and as awakening.

Clearly, in the suttas, and especially in the Commentaries, **numbers** are a didactic device used by the Buddha, the sutta narrator or commentator to illustrate some point of Dharma. They are merely a literary tool and not the ultimate teaching itself. They are like a map to a certain destination, a map filled with various placenames, landmarks and symbols representing places and where to go. As interesting as all this may be, the map is not the territory. We must use the map to safely and quickly get to the destination.

1.1.3.2 Now, in the Jātakas—such as **the Cetiya Jātaka** (J 422)—it is said that the first human king, Mahā,sammatta, lived for an “incalculable” (*asañkheyya*) [1.1.2.1]. This time-period is certainly longer than Makhā,deva’s lifespan of 84,000 years, or even the total time of all the 84,000 generations that follow him! The idea of such unimaginable time is just that: they are meant to be “incalculable.” They are to boggle our minds and hold our attention the way the sounds, colours and depictions in a modern movie hold our attention and captivate our imagination forever.

Mathematically, **an incalculable** (*asañkheyya*) is said to be a unit of 1 followed by 140 ciphers, as noted in Ñāṇamoli’s *A Pali Glossary of Technical Terms* (1994).¹⁶ Mathematically, this is either ten quinquadragintillion (10^{139}) or one hundred sexquadragintillion (10^{140}), ie, 1 with 141 zeroes (US method).¹⁷ This is itself, at best, a fanciful word and not a very useful one. No scientist or mathematician today is likely to use such terms anyway.

Modern science uses a shorthand for big numbers; for example, writing one million as 10^6 or 10^6 (read as “ten to the power of six”), and 1 followed by 140 zeros as 10^{140} or 10^{140} . However, the number for *asañkheyya*, mentioned above, is not 1 followed by 140 zeros. A sutta Friend, Dr Jonathan Lilly, a Senior Scientist and researcher at the Planetary Science Institute (Tucson, AZ, USA),¹⁸ explains that it is actually 1 followed by 155 zeros. These are really enormous numbers (but not helpful ones!).

¹⁴ A 2.3.5+6/1:60 (SD 2.6b).

¹⁵ See SD 2.6b (1).

¹⁶ Ñāṇamoli, *A Pali Glossary of Technical Terms*, Kandy, 2nd ed 2007:132. He does not quote any sources.

¹⁷ [English names of the first 10000 powers of 10 - American System without dashes \(lcn2.github.io\)](https://github.com/lcn2/english-names-of-the-first-10000-powers-of-10).

¹⁸ <https://www.psi.edu/>. <https://www.psi.edu/staff/>.

Lilly adds:

(1) The age of the universe, with everything we know from observing the cosmos, is about 14 billion years. That's 14,000,000,000 or 14, followed by nine zeros. (By comparison, the human population of the earth is about 8 billion.) If the entire lifetime of the known universe occurred one million times in succession, the number of years that would take would be about 14 followed by fifteen zeros. The numbers you are writing above are vastly larger than even that; so large they are very hard to relate to. Each time you add a zero you get ten times bigger! Even the number of atoms in the universe is much smaller, something like one followed by 82 zeros.

(2) I am glad you mentioned that you think the ancient religions were using numbers symbolically to mean “unimaginably big.” I think this is exactly right. A good example is in the Tao Te Ching, in which “10,000 things” is used repeatedly to mean “myriad” or “countless.”

Another point worth mentioning is that these days, we have the concept of infinity, which is something that is so large, it is bigger than anything you can imagine. Mathematicians these days have ways of dealing with infinities, even saying that there are different sizes of infinities! But historically, that was not the case, so if you wanted to come up with a number that was unimaginably big, you had to pick a specific number that was so big no one could wrap their head around it.

(Jonathan Lilly, personal communications, (1) 24 Nov 2023, (2) 26 Nov 2023)

1.1.4 King Makhā,deva

1.1.4.1 King Makhā,deva was a past life of Gotama Buddha, which is also related in **the Makhā,deva Jātaka** (J 9) [1.2.2]. He was the son of Upacara, in the direct line from Mahā,sammata, “the great elect,”¹⁹ the first ruler of civilized society. Makhadeva was a great, wise and compassionate ruler, and his sons and grandsons, 84,000 in number, reigned in Mithilā. This primordial lineage of Makhā,deva is the one mentioned in M 83.

As a good king, Makhā,deva kept the uposatha and, in old age, renounced the world to cultivate the divine abodes. He instituted this “good tradition” (*kalyāṇa vaṭṭa*) and instructed his successors and descendants to practise it. This good tradition continued unbroken for 84,000 generations, ending with the great King **Nimi**.

1.1.4.2 Nimi's son, according to the Sutta, was **Kaḷāra,janaka**, who, however, did not keep to Makhā,deva's good tradition; he neither renounced nor cultivated the divine abodes.²⁰ His dynasty ended with him and was followed by that of King **Okkāka**, the first ancestors of the Sakyas and the Koliyas.²¹ Prince Siddhattha (who became our Buddha) was from the Sakya clan, while Yasodharā, who married Siddhattha, was from the Koliya clan.²²

1.1.5 Mithilā

1.1.5.1 As evident from the Makhā,deva Sutta, **Mithilā** was a very ancient city, and, according to **the Mahā Govinda Sutta** (D 19,36/2:235),²³ was founded by Mahā Govinda, steward of King Reṇu (son and

¹⁹ SnA 352,13.

²⁰ MAT 29; Dīpv 3.34f; Mahv 2.10. Other Comys say that Kalawas the son of Upacara (DA 1:258 & SnA 1:352).

²¹ See **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3/1:92), SD 21.3. DA 1:258; SnA 1:352,15. The Skt sources confuse Ikṣvāku with his ancestor Sujāta (Mvst 1:348). For a Skt genealogy of the Sakyas: (tr) W W Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*, 1884:9-13.

²² On genealogical connections between the Sakyas and the Koliyas, see H Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, Tokyo, 2000:32-40. On the marriage between Siddhattha and Yasodharā, see SD 52,1 (6.2).

²³ SD 19,36/2:235 (SD 63.4).

successor of King Disampati of Benares). The Makhā,deva Sutta also tells us that it was the capital of King Makhā,deva² and his 84,000 generations of descendants.²⁴ Although these numbers refer to human years, they are not arithmetical but mythical, that is, symbolic of a deeper reality, as in the great ancient legends and popular fairy tales [1.1.2].

Mithilā was also the ancient capital of various other kings mentioned in the Jātaka stories, such as Aṅgatī (J 544),²⁵ Ariṭṭha Janaka (J 539),²⁶ Mahā Janaka (J 539),²⁷ Nimi (J 408),²⁸ Videha (J 160),²⁹ Videha (J 546),³⁰ Sādhīna (J 494),³¹ and Suruci (J 489).³² The size of the city was frequently given as 7 leagues (*yojana*) in circumference, and the city was highly praised in **the Mahā Janaka Jātaka** (J 539).³³ There was a road leading from Campā to Mithilā, a distance of 60 leagues (J 6:32). According to **the Ummagga Jātaka** (J 546), there were 4 market-towns, one at each of the 4 gates of Mithilā, each bearing the same name of Yava,majjhaka (that is, located to the east, the south, the west and the north).³⁴

1.1.5.2 The Buddha is mentioned as having stayed in Mithilā and having taught there **the Makhā,deva Sutta** (M 83)³⁵ and **the Brahm'āyu Sutta** (M 91).³⁶ It is also in Mithilā that the young mother **Vāsiṭṭhī** (or **Vāseṭṭhī**)—mad with grief at the loss of her only infant son—first meets the Buddha, who heals her; she then joins the sangha.³⁷ After the Buddha's death—says **the Buddha,vaṁsa** (B 28.11)—the fire-stick that lit the Buddha's pyre was enshrined in Mithilā, while the Buddha's water-strainer was enshrined in Videha.³⁸

In the time of **Koṇāgamana Buddha**,³⁹ Mithilā was the capital of King Pabbata, and Koṇāgamana visited it and taught there.⁴⁰ **Padum'uttara Buddha**⁴¹ gave his first discourse to his cousins, Devala and Sujāta (who became his pair of chief disciples), in the park of Mithilā,⁴² and later to King Ānanda and his retinue in the same spot.⁴³

Mithilā is generally identified with Janaka,pura, a small town in Nepal near the border with India, north of where the Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts meet.⁴⁴ In the Indian Epics, Mithilā is chiefly famous as the residence of King Janaka.⁴⁵

²⁴ M 83/2:75-83 (SD 60.8); MAṬ:Ce 129, Be 12:220; Dīpv 9, 29, 35.

²⁵ Mahā Nārada Kassapa J (J 544/6:220).

²⁶ **Mahā Janaka J** (J 539/6:30).

²⁷ **Mahā Janaka J** (J 539/6:30 f).

²⁸ **Kumbhakāra J** (J 408/3:378).

²⁹ **Vinīlaka J** (J 160/2:39).

³⁰ **Mahā Ummagga J** (J 546/J 6:330).

³¹ **Sādhīna J** (J 494/4:355).

³² **Suruci J** (J 489/4:315).

³³ J 539/6:46 f.

³⁴ J 546/6:355 f, 365,25*,366 (7); cf 330,28*.

³⁵ M 83/2:75-83 (SD 60.8).

³⁶ M 91/2:133-101 (SD 64.8).

³⁷ Thī 135; Divy 60.

³⁸ B 28.11. **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,6.22-28) however makes no mention of the Videhas getting any bodily relics of the Buddha (SD 9).

³⁹ Koṇāgamana is the 2nd buddha before Gotama: SD 36.2 (3.4.3, the 28 buddhas, (5.9) the past 6 buddhas, SD 49.8b (1.0.4.5) the 7 buddhas.

⁴⁰ BA 260 f.

⁴¹ Padum'uttara is the 15th buddha before Gotama: SD 36.2 (3.4.3) of the 28 past buddhas.

⁴² B 11.23; BA 192. No other details are given about "Mithilā garden," *mithil'uyyāna* (BA 193,24).

⁴³ BA 192 f.

⁴⁴ Cunningham's *Ancient Geography of India* [CAGI], ed S Majumdar, Calcutta, 1924:718.

⁴⁵ Eg Rāmāyaṇa 1.48.

1.1.5.3 Historically, **Mithilā** was the capital of Videha country, whose people were known as Videhā; it was one of the 16 great states (*mahā jana,pada*) of ancient India.⁴⁶ Videha was one of the 2 principal clans constituting the Vajjī confederacy: the other clan was that of the Licchavī. It was located just north of the Ganges, with the kingdom of Magadha across the great river.⁴⁷ Adjacent to it were the kingdoms of Kāsi and Kosala.

1.2 JĀTAKA STORIES CONNECTED WITH MAKHĀ,DEVA

1.2.1 Jātaka

1.2.1.1 The term *jātaka* (from *jāti*, “birth”) means “a birth-story,”⁴⁸ specifically a story narrating an episode in a past life of the Buddha. The Jātakas (the stories) seem to have originally totalled 550,⁴⁹ but we now have only 547 (based on some 2500 verses (J), almost all canonical). The canonical verses form the 10th volume of the Khuddaka Nikāya. The stories are actually commentaries to the verses and are found in the Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā (JA) (Jātaka Commentary), or fully, **Jātak’atṭhakathā,vaṇṇanā** (“a survey of the meaning of the birth-stories”). Such stories, especially the shorter ones, are usually called **fables** or moral apologues. Alternative versions of some of the longer Jātaka stories are found in **the Cariyā,piṭaka**.⁵⁰

The anthology of some 550 stories in the Pāli language—including many non-canonical Jātakas (such as the “50 Jātakas” of Southeast Asia) is preserved by the Theravāda. Jātaka stories focus on the Buddha as an awakened visionary and storyteller, and illustrate moral lessons (similar to those of Aesop’s fables and some modern cartoon fantasies), the workings of karma, or the perfections (*pāramī*) cultivated for the attainment of buddhahood.

1.2.1.2 Individual jātakas are found amongst the suttas, such as **the Makhā,deva Sutta** (M 83) [1.1.1.3], and they are thus called “canonical jātakas,” that is, birth-stories connected with the Bodhisattva (the historical Buddha-to-be). Other canonical jātakas include or are found in:

⁴⁶ They were located mostly in the central Gangetic plain of northern India and its surrounding areas. **SD 4.18** App SD 9 (16): map (16.3); **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39), SD 10.13 (1); **(Tad-ah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70,18), SD 4.18 & App SD 57.8 (3.2.2.1); SD 6.1 (1).

⁴⁷ See eg **Cūḷa Gopālaka S** (M 34,2/1:225), SD 61.3; MA 2:265 f.

⁴⁸ The full Jātaka stories are told in the comy (JA), based on the verses and small sections of prose (J), which are canonical: the PTS ed of text and comy are in 6 vols: **Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births** (J:C), ed E B Cowell with various translators. This tr however is too free to be useful for a Pali student, and awaits a new critical tr. Freely accessible at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/index.htm>. The long intro, Nidāna,katha, is the most important comy source on the Buddha legend, tr N A Jayawickrama, **Story of Gotama Buddha**, Pali Text Soc, 1990. See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 261/1:160-175), SD 1.11(1), & Hinüber 1996: §316.

⁴⁹ Culla,niddesa and comys actually mention only “500 Jātakas” (*pañca,jātaka,satāni*, Nc:Be 164; VA 1:28; AA 3:6; DhsA 26), but as noted by K R Norman, this “is probably nothing more than a ‘round number,’ and should not be taken as evidence that at the time of the composition of that text the Jātaka collection was smaller than we possess now.” (1983:79 n316). The SE Asian Buddhists also have their own set of 50 prob apocryphal Jātakas known as **Paṇṇāsa** (or **Paññāsa**) Jātaka.

⁵⁰ **Cariyā Piṭaka** (C), the 15th and last book of the Khuddaka Nikāya (Kh), comprises 35 Jātaka-like stories in 3 chapters (*vagga*), illustrating each of the 10 perfections (*pāramī*). Of the 35 accounts, 32 can be directly related to the Jātaka collection; another, **Mahā Govinda C** (C 1.5), cf Mahā Govinda S (D 19/2:220-251), SD 63.4; another, **Mahā Loma,haṁsa C** (C 3.15), cf Mahā Sīha,nāda S (also titled Loma,haṁsa Pariyāya (M 12/1:68-83), SD 49.1: see C:H viii f. On C, see Norman 1983b:94- f.

- **Mahā Govinda Jātaka** J 534 in **the Mahā Govinda Sutta** D 19,29-60/2:230-251 SD 63.4;
- **Velāma Jātaka** (J 40)⁵¹ in **the Velāma Sutta** A 9.20,4-5/4:393-396 SD 16.6;
- **Makhā,deva Jātaka** J 9 in **the Makhā,deva Sutta** M 83,3-6/2:75 f SD 60.8;
- **Nimi Jātaka** J 541 in **the Makhā,deva Sutta** M 83,12-19/2:80-82 SD 60.8.

1.2.1.3 Besides their widespread presence in the suttas, jātika stories have been depicted at Buddhist stūpas and temples since before the start of the Common Era. There is also evidence suggesting that the jātika genre played an important role in the formation and dissemination of ideas about buddhahood, merit and karma, and the place of the Buddha in relation to other buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The place of jātikas in the Buddha’s sacred biography gives them a special symbolic value, depicted in local stories, art and ritual. **The Vessantara Jātaka** (J 547), which, in Theravāda tradition, records the Buddha’s penultimate human birth and exemplifies his perfection of generosity, plays a salient role in symbolic, artistic, dramatic, ritual, and festive contexts to this day.

Themes from jātika stories are today frequently seen depicted on temple walls and edifices and continue to be retold in books (especially children’s books), replayed on videos and depicted in television and social media. Huge roadside depictions during the Sri Lankan celebration of Vesak, as well as long public recitations and dramatizations in Southeast Asia, are testament to the enduring popularity of the jātikas.⁵²

1.2.2 Makhā,deva Jātaka (J 9)

1.2.2.1 In early Buddhism, the term *bodhisatta*, or its anglicized form “bodhisattva,” refers to the Buddha Gotama and similar past buddhas, from the time they first aspired to become a self-awakened buddha themselves until their respective great awakenings. When we use the special term with its initial capital—**the Bodhisattva**—we refer to Gotama Buddha. Broadly speaking, the term refers to the past lives of Gotama Buddha as far back as can be remembered, so that we know him better as a being who was “bound for awakening” in an evolutionary sense.

In the ancient past, **the Bodhisattva** was once born as Makhā,deva or Magha,deva (in the Burmese texts), king of Mithilā, [1.1.5] the capital of Videha. For 4 successive periods of 84,000 years, he respectively lives as a (normal) playful boy, ruled as viceroy, reigned as king and, in old age, lived as a **renunciant**. The last stage of his life is prompted by the discovery of grey hairs on his head [§4].

Significantly, this first sighting of the king’s grey hair is called a “**divine messenger**” (*deva, dūta*). Elsewhere in the suttas and commentaries—especially in relation to the Bodhisattva’s last life—is that of sighting the 4 divine messengers: an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a renunciant. Prince Siddhattha felt religious angst (*samvega*) or spiritual urgency on seeing the first 3 sights—embodiments of decay, disease and death—and was relieved that one can be happily free from them, as embodied in the 4th sight, that of *the renunciant*. The Makhā,deva Sutta metaphor of the divine messenger represents these 4 sights.

1.2.2.2 The 4-stage life-cycle is another theme of the Sutta. These fourfold life passages were probably a common practice even before the Buddha’s time. The Makhā,deva Sutta uses this motif (its unify-

⁵¹ See **Khadirāṅgāra Jātaka** (J 40/1:226-234): Velāma mention at J 1:228.

⁵² Further on “**jātaka as fable**,” see SD 36.1 (3.4.4). For *jātaka* as text, see K R Norman, *Pali Literature*, 77-84. For a study of Jātaka as Buddhist literature, see Naomi Appleton, *Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism: narrating the Bodhisatta path*, Farnham (UK) & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. See also Appleton’s article on “**Jātaka**,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias* (online), 2016, 2019. K T S Sarao, “Jātaka,” in (edd) Sarao & Long, *Ency of Indian Religions: Buddhism and Jainism*, Springer, 2017:587-590. On Jātikas in other traditions, see K C Lang, “*Jātikas* and other narrative collections,” in (edd) Keown & Prebish, *Routledge Ency of Buddhism*, 2007:426-428.

ing theme) to highlight the idea of a spiritually meaningful life—that one who has enjoyed worldly power and pleasure, should, in due course, turn to enjoying divine power and pleasures [4.4].

From the perspective of the “life-cycle” theme, the Makhā,deva Sutta depicts the ideal worldly life: that of a powerful yet good king who has a happy childhood; his youth prepares for his future role as king; as an adult, he rules wisely; finally, at the first sign of old age or decay, he rewards his barber with a revenue village for the barber’s services and for pointing out his grey hair, which marks the last stage of his life, that of a renunciant, when he cultivates the 4 divine abodes.

Having lived another 84,000 years, the king dies and is reborn in the brahma heaven. In due course, he is reborn as Nimi, the last great king of the line. In that life, too, he lives through the 4 stages of life. The Makhā,deva Jātaka (J 9), in its conclusion, records the Buddha as identifying the barber with **Ānanda** and the prince with **Rāhula**. The story was related to some monks who were talking one day about the Buddha’s renunciation.⁵³

1.2.2.3 In the Makhā,deva Sutta, the teaching of **the 4 stages of life**, as exemplified by King Makhā,-deva, was not the ideal spiritual life: it did not bring one the freedom of nirvana [§22]. The 4-stage life related in the Sutta acts merely as *a foil* for the Buddha’s own ideal of the noble eightfold path, which is the one and only way to awakening and nirvana. The Sutta teaching is also an exhortation by the Buddha that we should practise the Dharma to reach the path of freedom.

It seemed that the imperious brahmins, fearing that Buddhism would overtake them religiously and socially, pilfered the scheme of the 4 stages of life⁵⁴ to counter the popularity of monastic renunciation of early Buddhism.⁵⁵ By the 4th century BCE, the system was recorded in Dharma Śāstra literature.⁵⁶ The *aśrama,dharma*, it was traditionally known, may be translated as the four “stages of the religious life” of the male devotees, that is, the brahminical tutelage (5-24) as (1) a celibate student (*brahma,cāri*), (2) the “householder” (Skt *grhastya*) (25-49), when the youth takes a wife and lives a family life,⁵⁷ (3) the “forest dweller” (Skr *vana,pastha*) (50-74), a life of solitude, and (4) the “mendicant” (Skt *samnyāsin*) (75-100), a life of renunciation and religious practices leading to release (Skt *mokṣa*) in brahminical terms.⁵⁸

1.2.3 Nimi Jātaka (J 541)

1.2.3.1 The last good king of the Makhā,deva lineage described in the Makhā,deva Sutta is **Nimi** [§§12-19], another past incarnation of the Buddha, related in **the Nimi Jātaka** (J 541). Once, the **Bodhi-sattva** was born as the son of the king of **Mithilā**, in Videha country. He was the reincarnation of King Makhādeva, who came down among men from the brahma world to bring the number of his family, who renounced the world, up to 84,000. And because the boy was born to round off the family, *like the hoop of a chariot*, he was called Nimi (*nemi* = hoop).

On his father’s renunciation, Nimi came to the throne and engaged himself and all his subjects in righteousness and generosity. Once, when doubt arose in his mind as to which was more fruitful—holy life or giving alms—Sakra himself appeared before him to answer and encourage him.

1.2.3.2 Nimi’s reputation spread to Tāvatiṃsa, and when the devas desired to see him, Sakra sent his chariot, driven by Mātali, to fetch Nimi. On the way to Tāvatiṃsa, Mātali showed Nimi the hells and

⁵³ J 1:137-139; cf M 83,21 f & J 6:95. See E J Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, 3rd ed 1949:127.

⁵⁴ See Chāndogya Upaniṣad 2.23.1: SD 36.14 (1.2.3).

⁵⁵ Cf P Olivelle, *The Asrama System: The history and hermeneutics of a religious institution*. NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1993:7 & passim.

⁵⁶ Olivelle 1993:102.

⁵⁷ S C Crawford, *The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals*. Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1982:61-70.

⁵⁸ See SD 36.14 (1.2.3).

the heavens and the palaces of various devas. Arriving at the Sudhammā Hall, Nimi discoursed to the assembled gods. After staying in Tāvatiṃsa for 7 days, he returned to Mithilā to tell his subjects about what he had seen.

When, later, Nimi's barber told him of the appearance of the first white hair on his head, Nimi, like all his predecessors, handed over the throne to his son and became a renunciant. His son, Kālārajanaka, who failed to renounce, was the last of the 84,000 kings of Makhādeva's dynasty.

This story was told by the Buddha when he visited Mithilā. He smiled when he came to the site of Makhādeva's palace, and, when asked why he smiled, he related Makhādeva Sutta (M 83), whose narrative is elaborated as the Makhādeva Jātaka (J 9) and the Nimi Jātaka (J 541). In the Nimi Jātaka, **Anuruddha** is identified with Sakra and **Ānanda** with Mātali.⁵⁹ Nimi's story is also preserved in the Cariyāpiṭaka.⁶⁰

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Makhādeva Sutta

The Discourse on Makhādeva

M 83

1 Thus have I heard.⁶¹

At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in Makhādeva's mango grove, outside **Mithilā**.⁶²

2 Then at a certain place, the Blessed One smiled.

It then occurred to the venerable Ānanda:

“What now is the reason, what is the cause for the Blessed One's smile? Tathagatas smile not without a reason.⁶³”

King Makhādeva

3 “Once upon a time, Ānanda, in this very same Mithilā, there was a king named **Makhādeva**, a righteous Dharma-rajah,⁶⁴ a great king who ruled by the law, stood in the Dharma [the law and justice], lived by the Dharma [the moral code]

⁵⁹ J 541/6:95-129; Dīpv 3.35.

⁶⁰ C 1.6/76 (verses, C 40-44); CA 51-57.

⁶¹ King Makhādeva [**Makhādeva J**, J 9] and King Nimi [**Nimi J**, J 541] were previous lives of the Buddha [§12, §22].

⁶² The grove was originally cultivated by Makhādeva and remained so named after him.

⁶³ Ce Ee na akāraṇena [Be Se na akarāṇe] *tathāgatā sitaṃ pātukarontī ti*. On the Buddha smiling for similar reasons: in Kosala, (**Majjhima**) **Ghaṭikāra S** (M 81,2/2:45), story of Joti,pāla and Ghaṭī,kāra in Kassapa Buddha's time (SD 49.3); in a sal forest in Kosala, **Gavesī S** (A 5.180,3/3:214), story of Gavesī in Kassapa Buddha's time, SD 47.16 (qv); in Nigrodha's park, Kapilavatthu, **Kaṇha J** (J 440/4:6 f), story of the sage Kaṇha.

⁶⁴ *Dhammiko dhamma,rājā dhamme ṭhito mahā,rājā dhammaṃ carati*. This phrase is repeated 5 times in the Sutta: §§3, 12, 13.1, 13.4, 15.1. I interpret this as meaning that he is “a just ruler who rules by law, he himself keeping to the law, and is himself established in the 10 courses of good karma (abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct; from false speech, divisive speech, harsh talk, frivolous chatter; from covetousness, ill will and wrong view), ie 3 bodily karma, 4 verbal karma and 3 mental karma: eg, **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7; they bring good rebirth: (**Saddha**) **Jāṇussoṇi S** (A 10.177,3), SD 2.6a. Cf Comy that glosses “standing in the law” (*dhamme ṭhito*) as **dhamma,kusala,kamma.pathe ṭhito** (MA 3:310,5-8). In **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26), such a king is called a “world monarch” (*cakka,vatti*) (SD 36.10).

amongst brahmins and houselords, amongst townfolk and countryfolk;

he kept the precept days [uposatha], [75] on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.⁶⁵

4 Now, Ānanda, with the passing of many years, many hundred years, many hundred thousand years,⁶⁶ King Makhā,deva addressed his barber thus:

‘Good barber, when you see any grey hairs growing on my head, please tell me.’

‘Yes, your majesty,’ Ānanda, replied the barber to King Makhā,deva.

4.2 Ānanda, after the passing of many years, many hundred years, many thousand years, the barber saw grey hairs growing on King Makhā,deva’s head.

4.3 When he saw them, he said this to King Makhā,deva:

‘The divine messengers have appeared, your majesty; grey hairs are growing on your head.’

‘Then, good barber, pull out those grey hairs carefully with tweezers⁶⁷ and put them in my palm.’

‘Yes, your majesty,’ Ānanda, replied the barber to King Makhā,deva, and he pulled out those grey hairs carefully with tweezers and put them in the king’s palm.

Makhā,deva instructs the crown prince

4.4 Then, Ānanda, King Makhā,deva gave a boon village to his barber, and summoning his eldest son, addressed him thus:

‘Dear prince, the divine messengers have appeared: grey hairs are seen growing on my head. I have enjoyed human sense-pleasures; it is time that I go in quest of divine sense-pleasures.

Come, dear prince, carry on this kingship. I shall shave off hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth from home into homelessness.⁶⁸

4.5 Now, dear prince, when you, too, were to see grey hairs growing on your head, then, after giving a boon village to your barber and after carefully instructing the prince, your eldest son, in kingship, shave off hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth from home into homelessness.

4.6 Continue this good tradition I have laid down, and do not be my last man.

Dear prince, when there are only two men living, he under whom there is a breach of this good tradition, he is the last man of my line.⁶⁹

Therefore, dear prince, I say thus:

Continue this good tradition [76] I have laid down, and do not be the last man (of my line).⁷⁰

⁶⁵ The *uposatha* is an ancient religious observance day of the Indians assimilated by the Buddhists. The Indian year is divided into 3 seasons (*utu*) (the cold, Oct/Nov-Jan/Feb; the hot, Feb/Mar-May/Jun; and the rains (Jun/Jul-Sep/Oct) [SD 1.1 (1.2)] of 4 months (*māsa*) each. The 4 months are divided into 8 fortnights (*pakka*), the 3rd and the 7th have 14 days and the others 15 days. Each fortnight, the full moon night and the new moon night (either the 14th or 15th) and the night of the half-moon (the 8th) are regarded as especially auspicious. These are the *uposatha*, observance days. On the full moon and new moon days, monastics assemble for the Pātimokkha conclave, and the laity listen to Dharma teachings and meditate.

⁶⁶ According to Buddhist cosmology, human lifespan evolves between a minimum of 10 years to as long as 80,000 years [Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S (D 26,14-23), SD 36.10]. Makhā,deva lived at a time when the lifespan was very long.

⁶⁷ *Sanḍāsa* [*saṁ + daṁsa*, from *ḍasati*] (long) pincers, tweezers (A 1:210; J 1:223, 3:138; used to pull out hair, M 2:75; V 2:134).

⁶⁸ This episode of the king’s grey hairs echoes the Bodhisattva’s visions of the 4 sights (an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a renunciant), leading to Siddhattha’s great renunciation.

⁶⁹ *Yena me idaṁ kalyāṇaṁ vaṭṭaṁ nihitaṁ anuppavatteyyāsi. | Mā kho me tvaṁ antima,puriso ahoṣi. || Yasmim kho tāta kumāra, purisa,yuge vattamāne eva,rūpassa kālyāṇassa vaṭṭassa samucchedo hoti, so tesam antima,puriso hoti.*

⁷⁰ *Taṁ tāhaṁ tāta kumāra, evaṁ vadāmi: | ‘yena me idaṁ kalyāṇaṁ vaṭṭaṁ nihitaṁ anuppavatteyyāsi, mā kho me tvaṁ antima,puriso ahoṣi ti.*

5 Then, Ānanda, King Makhā,deva, after giving the boon village to his barber and having carefully instructed the prince, his eldest son, in kingship, in the Makhā,deva mango grove, shaved off hair and beard, donned the yellow robe and went forth from home into homelessness.

THE 1ST DIVINE ABODE REFRAIN: MAKHĀ,DEVA

- (1) He dwelled with a heart of **lovingkindness**, suffusing one quarter; so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,⁷¹ he dwelled suffusing all the world with lovingkindness that is vast, grown great [exalted],⁷² immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.⁷³
- (2) He dwelled with a heart of **compassion**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwelled suffusing all the world with compassion that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.
- (3) He dwelled with a heart of **gladness**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwelled suffusing all the world with gladness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.
- (4) He dwelled with a heart of **equanimity**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwelled suffusing all the world with equanimity that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

6 For 84,000 years, Ānanda, King Makhā,deva played boyish [children’s] games; for 84,000 years, he was vice-regent (*uparāja*); for 84,000 years, he ruled as king (*rāja*); after shaving hair and beard, donning the yellow robe and going forth from home into homelessness, he lived the holy life in this very Makhā,deva mango grove for 84,000 years.

By cultivating the 4 divine abodes, with the breaking up of the body, after death, he reached the Brahma-world.

King Makhā,deva’s son

7 Now, Ānanda, at the end of many years, many hundred years, many thousand years, **King Makhā,deva’s son** addressed his barber:⁷⁴

‘Good barber, when you see any grey hairs growing on my head, please tell me.’

‘Yes, your majesty,’ Ānanda, replied the barber to King Makhā,deva’s son.

⁷¹ *Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya*. Here “everyone” means “all beings, including myself,” and “all kinds of beings,” incl whatever state I am in. On the tr of *sabbattatāya*, see D 13,76 n, SD 1.8; SD 60.2 (4.2.3.1).

⁷² The mind “grown great” (*maha-g,gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

⁷³ See §5 (1) ad loc n.

⁷⁴ From here to end of §9, *mutatis mutandis* as at §4-6.

7.2 Ānanda, after the passing of many years, many hundred years, many thousand years, the barber saw grey hairs growing on King Makhā,deva's son's head.

7.3 When he saw them, he said this to King Makhā,deva's son:

'The divine messengers have appeared, your majesty; grey hairs are growing on your head.'

'Then, good barber, pull out those grey hairs carefully with tweezers and put them in my palm.'

'Yes, your majesty,' Ānanda, replied the barber to King Makhā,deva's son's, and he pulled out those grey hairs carefully with tweezers and put them in the king's palm.

8 Then, Ānanda, King Makhā,deva's son gave a boon village to his barber, and summoning his eldest son, addressed him this:

'Dear prince, the divine messengers have appeared: grey hairs are seen growing on my head. [77] I have enjoyed human sense-pleasures; it is time that I go in quest of divine sense-pleasures.

Come, dear prince, carry on this kingship. I shall shave off hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth from home into homelessness.

8.2 Now, dear prince, when you, too, were to see grey hairs growing on your head, then, after giving a boon village to your barber, and after carefully instructing the prince, your eldest son, in kingship, shave off hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth from home into homelessness.

8.3 Continue this good tradition I have laid down, and do not be my last man.

Dear prince, when there are only two men living, he under whom there is a breach of this good tradition, he is the last man amongst them.

Therefore, dear prince, I say thus:

Continue this good tradition I have laid down, and do not be the last man of my line.'

9 Then, Ānanda, King Makhā,deva's son, after giving the boon village to his barber and having carefully instructed the prince, his eldest son, in kingship, in the Makhā,deva mango grove, shaved off hair and beard, donned the yellow robe and went forth from home into homelessness.

THE 2ND DIVINE ABODE REFRAIN: MAKHĀ,DEVA'S SON

(1) *He dwelled with a heart of **lovingkindness**, suffusing one quarter;*

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,⁷⁵

*he dwelled suffusing all the world with **lovingkindness***

that is vast, grown great [exalted],⁷⁶ immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.⁷⁷

(2) *He dwelled with a heart of **compassion**, suffusing one quarter,*

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,

*he dwelled suffusing all the world with **compassion***

that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

⁷⁵ *Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya.* Here "everyone" means "all beings, including myself," and "all kinds of beings," incl whatever state I am in. On the tr of *sabbattatāya*, see D 13,76 n, SD 1.8; SD 60.2 (4.2.3.1).

⁷⁶ The mind "grown great" (*maha-g,gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

⁷⁷ The recurrence of these last two phrases—"without hate, without ill will"—attests to the fact that lovingkindness is the basis for all the other three abodes, ie, they are actually a refinement of lovingkindness applied on deeper and broader levels.

- (3) *He dwelled with a heart of **gladness**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwelled suffusing all the world with gladness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*
- (4) *He dwelled with a heart of **equanimity**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, he dwelled suffusing all the world with equanimity that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, [78] without ill-will.*

10 For 84,000 years, Ānanda, King Makhā,deva’s son played boyish games; for 84,000 years, he was vice-regent; for 84,000 years, he ruled as king; after shaving hair and beard, donning the yellow robe and going forth from home into homelessness, he lived the holy life in this very Makhā,deva mango grove for 84,000 years.

By cultivating the 4 divine abodes, with the breaking up of the body, after death, he reached the Brahma-world.

King Makhā,deva’s lineage

11 Now, Ānanda, the descendants of King Makhā,deva, 84,000 kings in succession in his lineage,⁷⁸ after shaving off hair and beard, and donning the yellow robe, went forth from home into homelessness in this very Makhā,deva mango grove.

THE 3RD DIVINE ABODE REFRAIN: MAKHĀ,DEVA’S DESCENDANTS

- (1) *They dwelled with a heart of **lovingkindness**, suffusing one quarter; so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, they dwelled suffusing all the world with lovingkindness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*
- (2) *They dwelled with a heart of **compassion**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, they dwelled suffusing all the world with compassion that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*
- (3) *They dwelled with a heart of **gladness**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, they dwelled suffusing all the world with gladness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*

⁷⁸ “Now ... in his lineage,” *rañño kho pan’ānanda,makhā,devassa putta-p,paputtakā tassa paramparā catur-āsīti,-khattiya,sahassāni*. The cpd **putta-p,paputtaka** (M 2:78,8) is resolved as putta, “sons” + paputta (Skt *praputta* + ka), “grandsons”; Comy glosses as “sons and grandsons” (*puttā ca paputtā cā ti*, MA 3:312,13), ie, descendants.

(4) *They dwelled with a heart of **equanimity**, suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone, they dwelled suffusing all the world with **equanimity** that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.*

12 For 84,000 years, Ānanda, they played boyish games; for 84,000 years, they were vice-regents; for 84,000 years, they ruled as kings; after shaving hair and beard, donning the yellow robe and going forth from home into homelessness, they lived the holy life in this very Makhā,deva mango grove for 84,000 years.

By cultivating the 4 divine abodes, with the breaking up of the body, after death, they reached the Brahma-world.

King Nimi

13 Nimi⁷⁹ was the last of these kings, *a righteous Dharma-rajah, a great king who ruled by the law, stood in the Dharma [the law and justice], lived by the Dharma [the moral code] amongst brahmins and house lords, amongst townsfolk and countryfolk, (and) who kept the precept days, on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.* [S3]

14 Once upon a time, Ānanda, when the gods of Tāva,tīmsa [the 33] **[79]** gathered together and were seated in the Sudhamma Assembly, this talk arose amongst them:

‘What a gain, sirs, for the people of Videha! What a great gain for the people of Videha! Their King Nimi is *a righteous Dharma-rajah, a great king who rules by the law, standing in the Dharma [the law and justice], living by the Dharma [the moral code] amongst brahmins and house lords, amongst townsfolk and countryfolk, (and) who keeps the precept days, on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.*’

The Tāvatiṃsa devas wish to see Nimi

14.2 Then, Ānanda, Sakra, lord of the devas, addressed the gods of Tāva,tīmsa, ‘Good sirs, do you want to see King Nimi?’ ‘Good sir, we wish to see King Nimi.’

14.3 Now at that time, it being the precept day of the 15th, King Nimi had washed his head and gone up to the roof-terrace of the royal palace,⁸⁰ where he was seated for the precept-day observance.

Then, Ānanda, just as a strong man might stretch his arm out or bend it back, Sakra, lord of the devas, disappeared from amongst the Tāvatiṃsa devas and reappeared before King Nimi.

⁷⁹ Gotama Buddha’s past life as Nimi is related in **Nimi J** (J 541/6:95-129) [1.2].

⁸⁰ *Upāri,pāsāda,vara,gato*, here *vara* (“best”) is tr as “royal,” a common phrase: V 1:345,23, 4:112,2, 158,15; **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,1.2/1:47,8), SD 8.10; **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17,1.7/2:172,15×2), SD 36.12; **Pāyāsi S** (D 23,9/-2:325,8), SD 39.4; **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,4.3/3:61,24+30), SD 36b.10; **Mahā Go,siṅga S** (M 32,6/1:213,28), SD 44.12; **Makhā Deva S** (M 83,13/2:79,11), SD 60.8; **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129,34/3:172,15×2), SD 2.22; **(Piyā) Mallikā S** (S 3.8/1:75,3+14 = U 5.1/47,4+14), SD 38.7; VA 4:880 (def); DA 1:140 (def), 2:517; MA 2:254 (“7- or 9-storied”), 4:214; SA 3:21; AA 1:292, 316, 451; KhpA 172; SnA 1:278; UA 273 (def); CA 55; PvA 75, 105,25, 216, 279. See PED: vara¹.

14.4 Then, Ānanda, Sakra, the lord of the devas, said this to King Nimi:

‘It’s a gain, sir, for you, maharajah [great king]! The devas of Tāvatiṃsa were seated together, sire, in the Sudhamma Assembly, praising you thus:

“What a gain, sirs, for the people of Videha! What a great gain for the people of Videha! Their King Nimi is a righteous Dharma-rajah, a great king who rules by the law, standing in the Dharma [the law and justice], living by the Dharma [the moral code] amongst brahmins and houselords, amongst townsfolk and countryfolk, (and) who keeps the precept days, on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.”

14.5 Maharajah, the devas of Tāvatiṃsa want to see your majesty. I shall send a chariot yoked to a thousand thoroughbreds to fetch you, maharajah. Maharajah, mount the divine chariot without any hesitation.’⁸¹

Ānanda, King Nimi consented by being silent.

14.6 Then, Ānanda, Sakra, lord of the devas, understanding King Nimi’s consent, just as a strong man might stretch his arm out or bend it back, disappeared before King Nimi and reappeared before the devas of Tāvatiṃsa.

15 Then, Ānanda, Sakra, the lord of the devas, addressed the charioteer Mātali:

“Come, good Mātali, having yoked a thousand thoroughbreds to the chariot, approach King Nimi and say this to him:

‘Maharajah, this chariot yoked to a thousand thoroughbreds has been sent by Sakra, lord of the devas. Please mount the divine chariot, maharajah, **[80]** without any hesitation.’

‘As you wish, my lord!’⁸² the charioteer Mātali replied to Sakra, lord of the devas.

Having yoked the thousand thoroughbreds to the chariot, he approached King Nimi, and said to him:

15.2 ‘This chariot yoked with a thousand thoroughbreds, maharajah, has been sent by Sakra, lord of the devas. Please mount the divine chariot, maharajah, without any hesitation.

But, maharajah, by which route shall I drive you:

by that on which evil-doers experience the fruits of bad karma,
or by that on which the good-doers experience the fruits of good karma?’

‘Drive me by both routes, Mātali.’⁸³

16 Then, Ānanda, Mātali brought King Nimi before the Sudhamma Assembly.

Sakra, lord of the devas, saw King Nimi coming in the distance and said to him:

⁸¹ Abhiruheyāsi mahārāja dibbaṃ yānaṃ avikampamāno ti. Avikampamāno (“not being shaken”) = a + vi + √KAMP, “to tremble”; pres part med of kampaṭi.

⁸² Idiomatic, *bhaddan, tavā ti = bhadda* (“august, auspicious, lucky, good”) + *tuvaṃ*, “you,” nom sg of *tumha*). Also *bhaddan te, bhaddaṃ vo*, “Good fortune to you! Please! As you wish!”; voc “Sir! Lord! My lady! Sirs!” D 2:259,13 *samayo dāni ~an te (~an tava hotu, DA 689,30); 263,20 evaṃ ~an tavā ti kho devā tāvatiṃsā sakkassa devānam indassa paccassosurā ≈ S 1:216,13; M 2:80,1 evaṃ hotu ~an tavā ti kho ānanda ...* . See DP 3:622e.

⁸³ Comy: Mātali first took Nimi through the hells, then he turned back and led him through the heavenly world. (MA 3:316-318). Since Mātali is from the 2nd highest of the earthbound heavens (Tāvatiṃsa) [SD 54.3a (3.5.1); SD 57.10 (1.4.2.1)], we must imagine that he should have no difficulty showing Nimi the hells, but they could only view the nearer of the higher heavens. Then again, we should not lose the mythical lesson of the whole story that, by one’s moral virtue, one knows hell and heaven, which are really states of mind more than just places “out there.” On Buddhist mythology, see SD 2.19 (1), SD 51.11 (3.1.1), SD 60.1c (1.16.1). On the evolution of the Buddhist hells: SD 2.23 (3).

‘Come, maharajah; welcome, maharajah. The devas of Tāva,tiṃsa, maharajah, were seated together, sire, in the Sudhamma Assembly, praising you thus:

*“What a gain, sirs, for the people of Videha! What a great gain for the people of Videha!
Their King Nimi is a righteous Dharma-rajah, a great king who rules by the law,
standing in the Dharma [the law and justice], living by the Dharma [the moral code]
amongst brahmins and house lords, amongst townfolk and countryfolk,
(and) who kept the precept days, on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.’*

16.2 ‘Enough, good sir. Let the charioteer drive me back to Mithilā.
There I will live by the Dharma [the moral code]
amongst brahmins and house lords, amongst townfolk and countryfolk;
I will keep the precept days, on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.’

17 Then, Ānanda, Sakra, lord of the devas, addressed the charioteer Mātali:
‘Come, good Mātali, having yoked a thousand thoroughbreds to the chariot, take King Nimi back to Mithilā.’

‘As you wish, my lord!’ the charioteer Mātali replied to Sakra, lord of the devas.
Having yoked the thousand thoroughbreds to the chariot, he took King Nimi right back to Mithilā.
And there, indeed, Ānanda, King Nimi lived by the Dharma [the moral code]
amongst brahmins and house lords, amongst townfolk and countryfolk;
and kept the precept days, **[81]** on the 14th, the 15th and the 8th of the (lunar) fortnight.’

18 Now, Ānanda, with the passing of many years, many hundred years, many hundred thousand years, **King Nimi** addressed his barber thus:

‘Good barber, when you see any grey hairs growing on my head, please tell me.’
‘Yes, your majesty,’ Ānanda, replied the barber to King Nimi.

18.2 Ānanda, after the passing of many years, many hundred years, many thousand years, the barber saw grey hairs growing on King Nimi’s head.

18.3 When he saw them, he said this to King Nimi:
‘The divine messengers have appeared, your majesty; grey hairs are growing on your head.’
‘Then, good barber, pull out those grey hairs carefully with tweezers and put them in my palm.’
‘Yes, your majesty,’ Ānanda, replied the barber to King Nimi, and he pulled out those grey hairs carefully with tweezers and put them in the king’s palm.

Nimi instructs the crown prince

18.4 Then, Ānanda, King Nimi gave a boon village to his barber, and summoning his eldest son, addressed him thus:

‘Dear prince, the divine messengers have appeared: grey hairs are seen growing on my head. I have enjoyed human sense-pleasures; it is time that I go in quest of divine sense-pleasures.

Come, dear prince, carry on this kingship. I shall shave off hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth from home into homelessness.

18.5 Now, dear prince, when you, too, were to see grey hairs growing on your head, then, after giving a boon village to your barber, and after carefully instructing the prince, your eldest son, in kingship, shave off hair and beard, don the yellow robe, and go forth from home into homelessness.

18.6 Continue this good tradition I have laid down, and do not be my last man.

Dear prince, when there are only two men living, he under whom there is a breach of this good tradition, he is the last man amongst them.

Therefore, dear prince, I say thus:

Continue this good tradition I have laid down, and do not be the last man (of my line).'

19 Then, Ānanda, King Nimi, after giving the boon village to his barber and having carefully instructed the prince, his eldest son, in kingship, in the Makhā,deva mango grove, shaved off hair and beard, donned the yellow robe and went forth from home into homelessness.

THE 4TH DIVINE ABODE REFRAIN: NIMI

(1) He dwelled with a heart of **lovingkindness**, suffusing one quarter;
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,
he dwelled suffusing all the world with lovingkindness
that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(2) He dwelled with a heart of **compassion**, suffusing one quarter,
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,
he dwelled suffusing all the world with compassion
that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(3) He dwelled with a heart of **gladness**, suffusing one quarter,
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,
he dwelled suffusing all the world with gladness
that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

(4) He dwelled with a heart of **equanimity**, suffusing one quarter,
so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone,
he dwelled suffusing all the world with equanimity
that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

20 For 84,000 years, Ānanda, King Nimi played boyish games;
for 84,000 years, he was vice-regent;
for 84,000 years, he ruled as king;
after shaving hair and beard, donning the yellow robe and going forth from home into homelessness, he lived the holy life in this very Makhā,deva mango grove for 84,000 years.

By cultivating the 4 divine abodes, with the breaking up of the body, after death, he reached the Brahma-world.

21 Now, Ānanda, King Nimi's son was a prince named **Kalāra, janaka**.
He did not go forth from home into homelessness.
He broke the good tradition. He was the last man amongst them.

22 Now, Ānanda, you might think thus:
'Certainly, at that time someone else was King Makhā,deva, who instituted the good tradition.'
But it should not be regarded thus.

23 I was King Makhā,deva at that time. I instituted the good tradition, and later generations continued the good tradition instituted by me. But that kind of good tradition does *not* lead to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to nirvana, but only to the reappearance in the Brahma-world.

The Buddha's good tradition

24 But there is this kind of good tradition that has been instituted by me now, which leads to complete revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to nirvana. And what is that good tradition (*kalyāṇa,vaṭṭa*)?

It is this **noble eightfold path**, that is,
right view, right intention;
right speech, right action, right livelihood; **[83]**
right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

This is the good tradition that has been instituted by me now, which leads to complete revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to nirvana.

25 Ānanda, I say to you:
continue this good tradition instituted by me, and do not be my last man.
Ānanda, when there are two men living, he under whom there occurs a breach of the good tradition—
he is the last man amongst them.

Therefore, Ānanda, I say to you:
*continue this good tradition instituted by me, and do not be the last man (of my line)."*⁸⁴

26 This is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda, joyful at heart, approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

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⁸⁴ Comy: The good tradition is broken when a virtuous monk thinks: "I cannot attain arhathood" and does not exert effort. It has been broken by one who is immoral. It is being continued by the 7 learners (*sekha*). It has been continued by the arhat. (MA 3:318 f). The 7 learners and the full-fledged arhat are said to be the "8 individuals" (*aṭṭha purisa,puggala*): see SD 15.10a (1.0.4); SD 16.7 (1.1.2.1).

60.9

Sīti,bhāva Sutta

The Discourse on the Cool | A 6.85

(Chakka) Sīti,bhava Sutta The (Sixes) Discourse on Coolness [the Cool State]

Theme: Wrong practice and right practice

Translated & annotated by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2022, 2023

1 Sutta summary**1.1 WHAT PREVENTS US FROM REALIZING NIRVANA**

The **Sīti,bhava Sutta** (A 6.85) is a typical correlative sutta, that is, it comprises two closely related parts: the first usually states something negative or a practice to be avoided [§§1-2], and the second something positive or a practice to be done [§§3-4]. Here, in the first part, the Buddha states that one who is caught in 6 unwholesome conditions will not be able to realize “the supreme cool state” (*anuttara sīti.bhāva*) or nirvana [§2], that is:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| (1) one does not restrain the mind when it should be restrained; | <i>cittaṃ na niggāṇhāti</i> |
| (2) one does not exert the mind when it should be exerted; | <i>cittaṃ na paggaṇhāti</i> |
| (3) one does not encourage the mind when it should be encouraged; | <i>cittaṃ na sampahaṃsati</i> |
| (4) one does not look on the mind with equanimity when one should do so; | <i>cittaṃ na ajjhupekkhati</i> |
| (5) one is of inferior disposition; | <i>hīnādhimuttiko</i> |
| (6) one delights in self-identity. [1.2.2.1] | <i>sakkāyādhirato</i> |

1.2 THE SUTTA COMMENTARY**1.2.1 Why one does not attain nirvana**

1.2.1.1 The Aṅguttara Commentary on A 6.85 explains how to correct the first 4 negative aspects of the Sutta teaching [§2], that is, respectively, as follows:

- (1) “The mind is *to be restrained* (*niggahetabbam*) by concentration on an occasion of restlessness (*uddhacca*); (entails practice of the faculty of concentration);
- (2) it is *to be exerted* (*sampahaṃsitabba*) with energy at a time when it has fallen into sluggishness (*kosajjānupatita*); (entails practice of the faculty of effort);
- (3) it is *to be encouraged* (*paggaṇhetabbam*) with concentration at a time when it is dull (*nirassāda,gata*); (entails practice of the faculty of faith);
- (4) it is *to be observed* (*ajjhupekkhitabbam*) with the equanimity awakening factor when it is proceeding evenly (*sama-p,pavatta*)” (entailing practice of the faculty of wisdom).

(AA 3:413,14-18)

1.2.1.2 The Sīti,bhāva Sutta (A 6.85) further lists 2 more negative aspects preventing us from gaining nirvana, which are:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <u>unwholesome aspects</u> | <u>wholesome counterpart</u> |
| (5) one is of inferior disposition (<i>hīnādhimuttika</i>) | one is of superior disposition (<i>paṇītādhimuttika</i>) |
| (6) one delights in self-identity (<i>sakkāyādhirata</i>) | one delights in nirvana (<i>nibbānābhirata</i>) |

Neither the suttas nor the Commentaries explain any of these qualities, except for the term *paṇītādhimuttika*, “one of superior disposition,” in §4 (5), which is explained in the Aṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā Tīka (subcommentary) as meaning that one is “disposed to, slopes, tends, inclines to¹ the refined, supreme path and fruits” (*paṇīte uttame magga, phale adhimutto ninna, poṇa, pabbhāro*, AAṬ:BE 20:146). In other words, the practitioner is thus ready to attain the path or is favourably disposed to the idea.

Hence, we may conclude that its unwholesome counterpart—*hīnādhimuttika*—has an opposite meaning, that is, “**one with an inferior disposition**,” who either is unable to attain the path (even to gain streamwinning) or is not favourably disposed towards the idea. Such a person is likely to degrade the arhats or hold wrong views about the Buddha, the bodhisattva (the historical Buddha before his awakening),² and so on, that is, to reject the key early Buddhist teachings on the path of awakening (regarding streamwinning, etc).

1.2.1.3 We can thus see that the teachings of **the Sīti, bhāva Sutta** [1.1] cover a number of related practices on how to prepare and train our mind to approach the path of awakening. Now, Item (5) of the negative conditions—“**one is of inferior disposition**” (*hīnādhimuttika*)—refers to neither understanding nor working for the path. The negative item (6)—“**one delights in self-identity**” (*sakkāyādhirata*)—is more specific about the problem here: one is overwhelmed by the 3 spiritual fetters so that one is unable to attain even streamwinning. [1.2.2]

1.2.1.4 On the other hand, the positive item (5)—**one is of superior disposition** (*paṇītādhimuttika*)—means that one is willing and able to work for the path of awakening. With proper training and practice regarding the 5 spiritual factors (*pañc’indriya*), one will be able to progress towards the path [2.1]. The idea of harmonizing the 5 spiritual factors is in fact hinted at by the first 4 positive qualities [§4; 2.1].

The additional two positive qualities—those (5) “of superior disposition” (*paṇītādhimuttika*) and (6) “who delight in nirvana” (*nibbānābhirata*)—refer to the overcoming of **the 3 mental fetters** (to begin with) so that one is able to attain the path as a streamwinner. [1.2.2]

In what follows, we will begin with what the 3 spiritual fetters are and how to overcome them [1.2.2.1], and how understanding and weakening the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hatred and delusion) helps us progress on the path [1.2.2.2]. We will then see how the 5 lower fetters are overcome and the benefit of this accomplishment [1.2.2.3].

1.2.2 The 3 spiritual fetters; the 3 roots; the 5 fetters

1.2.2.1 The negative term (6) “**one delights in self-identity**” (*sakkāyādhirata*) [1.2.1.3] is very interesting. It refers to the first of the 3 spiritual fetters (or simply “fetters”), which are part of the 10 fetters (*samyojana*). The phrase “one delights in self-identity” (*sakkāyādhirata*) clearly, in this context, refers to the fetter that is **self-identity view** (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), the first of the “3 fetters.”³

¹ On the expression, “slopes, tends, inclines to” (*ninna, poṇa, pabbhāro*), see **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73, 14/-1:493), SD 27.4.

² I’m not here concerned with the post-Buddha idea of “Bodhisattva,” which I feel is not applicable to early Buddhism.

³ These are the first 3 of the 10 fetters (*dasa samyojana*). For the full list, see SD 56.1 (4.4).

The 3 fetters are:⁴

		<u>description</u>
(1) self-identity view	<i>sakkāya,diṭṭhi</i>	the view that we are our body or our mind;
(2) spiritual doubt	<i>vicikicchā</i>	lacking wisdom or faith to see true reality;
(3) attachment to rituals and vows	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa</i>	superstition: dependence on “external” solutions for matters arising internally.

(1) Self-identity view. Early Buddhist texts, such as **the Anatta,lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59), define self-identity view as the notion of identifying with or trying to own or fixate on any or all of the 5 aggregates—*form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*—as “this is mine, this I am, this is my self.”

The Sutta advises us thus:

“Therefore, any kind of form, ... feeling, ... perception, ... formation, ... consciousness, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near⁵—all forms ... feelings ... perceptions ... formations ... consciousness ... should be seen as they really are with right wisdom, thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’⁶ (S 22.59,17-21/3:68), SD 1.2

Essentially, **the self-identity view** is the view that there is some kind of abiding essence or “something” (*kiñcana*) that is our body or mind, a part of it, or apart from it. This is usually called a “soul” or “spirit.” This wrong view is unequivocally rejected in a succinct teaching preserved in **the Go,datta Sutta** (S 41.7).⁷

A modern example of such a self-view is the notion that **merit** (*puñña*) is “something” that can be “transferred.” However, nowhere in the suttas is such a serious wrong view ever mentioned. Out of love

⁴ On the 3 fetters, see **Abhabba Tayo,dhamma S** (A 10.76,6 f), SD 2.4. On a study of the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8 esp (2).

⁵ See S 22.48/3:47. This classification of the aggregates is explained in detail in the Vibhaṅga and briefly in the Visuddhi,magga: “**internal**” = physical sense-organs; “**external**” = physical sense-objects; “**gross**” = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); “**subtle**” = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water); “**inferior**” = unpleasant and unwholesome sense-experiences [sense-world existence]; “**superior**” = pleasant and wholesome sense-experiences [form & formless existences]; “**far**” = subtle objects (“difficult to penetrate”); “**near**” = gross objects (“easy to penetrate”) (Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7). “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (Gethin 1986:41). See also Gethin 1986: 43-46.

⁶ *N’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmi, na mēso attā ti*. This threefold formula is the contrary of “the 3 graspings” (*ti,vidha gāha*), that is, of view (*diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), of conceit (*māna*) (MA 2:111, 225): here applied to the 5 aggregates [17-21]. A brief version, “There can be no considering that (element) as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’” (*ahan ti vā maman ti vā asmī ti vā*) is found in **Mahā Hatthi,padôpama S** (M 28/1:184-191 §§6b-7, 11b-12, 16b-17, 21b-22). These three considerations represent respectively the 3 kinds of **mental proliferation** (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*) and of conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). In **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,-12-16/3:68), the formula is applied to the 5 aggregates & in **Pārileyya S** (S 22.81/ 3:94-99) to the 4 primary elements. See also **Rāhula S** (A 4.177/2:164 f). See **Pārileyya S**, SD 6.16 (5).

⁷ S 42.7 + SD 60.4 (1.2.1.4).

and respect for the departed, we dedicate a good deed to them. Since most beings are reborn, only the pretas, it is said, will rejoice in our act of merit, and this rejoicing is what benefits the pretas.”⁸

(2) Spiritual doubt, in practical terms, refers to our either not knowing or not understanding a teaching or some truth and not endeavouring to search the suttas, inquiring of wise and morally virtuous teachers, and reflecting on the teachings until the doubt is cleared or some working understanding is reached.

In sutta terms, “spiritual doubt” refers to not fully accepting the 3 jewels with wisdom and faith. In other words, we do not accept that Gotama is the one and only historical Buddha, or we imagine that there are other Buddhas equal to or superior to Gotama Buddha or we misunderstand his state as the first arhat amongst other arhats in early Buddhism. Essentially, this is a rejection of the *historicity* of early Buddhism and the teaching that we, through *self-effort*, are able to master the Dharma and attain the noble eightfold path of *the arhats*.

In Dharma terms, spiritual doubt is that clinging or fixation to our views that does not reflect true reality. We have objectified those views or any of them—this can be in the form of expert knowledge—and conclude that that is all there is to it. Doubt arises when our own knowledge becomes a hindrance to the understanding that frees us from self-identity view: the “self” here being our own view or views.⁹

(3) Attachment to rituals and vows is essentially resorting to a repetitive action or speech (such as a prayer), with the belief that such a repetitive behaviour will benefit us. A more sophisticated version of this wrong view is that whatever happens to us (whether it is “good luck” or “bad luck”) happens for a reason. That reason, we believe, lies outside of ourselves, beyond our control (usually some kind of external power, such as God, the devil, a spirit, demon, our disobedience to some authority figure, and so on). Hence, we need to act in such a way—by a ritual or a vow—to appease or negotiate with that power for our benefit. In short, this is superstition.¹⁰

Included in this fetter of superstition is that mere ritual and vows will change people and things for the better. In early Buddhist teachings, **prayer** would not be some kind of “bribing” an external power, but should be done only when we are willing to work for it; *pray only for what we are willing to work for*. In **the (Pañcaka) Itṭha Sutta** (A 5.43), for example, the Buddha states that most often people desire *long life, beauty, happiness, fame and heavenly birth*, but none of these are gained through prayer (if this were the case, many could have gained them through prayer or wishing). Instead, we should live our lives in such a wholesome way so as to gain longevity, beauty, happiness, fame or heavenly birth.¹¹

We should be willing to work for what we pray for. This is called **diligence** (*appamāda*). The best diligence or heedfulness is that of avoiding evil, doing good and cultivating the mind—then, we begin to understand what the path of true happiness is and progress towards it.

1.2.2.2 The 3 fetters—self-identity view, spiritual doubt and attachment to ritual and vows—are “fettors” because they keep us *selfish, stupid and superstitious*. They imprison us to the habitual and cyclic life of suffering through our own selfishness (especially narcissism), stupidity (through lacking a desire to learn wholesome things), and superstition (depending on external solutions instead of cultivating our own mind).

⁸ According to **Tiro,kuḍḍa S** (Pv 1.5 = Khp 7), an act of merit is, with lovingkindness, dedicated to the pretas, who are said to “rejoice” (*anumodare*); no “transference” is involved at all (SD 2.7 (4)).

⁹ For a succinct exposition of this teaching, see **Antā S** (S 22.103), SD 14.1.

¹⁰ On the 3rd fetter as superstition, see SD 40a.8 (5.2).

¹¹ A 5.43/3:47-49 (SD 47.2).

When these 3 fetters are understood and broken, we free ourselves from our animal-like habituality and predictability to become streamwinners (*sotāpanna*). This is the very first step on the noble path of awakening which will, in due course, surely bring us to nirvana.¹²

1.2.2.3 We have already stated that the streamwinner is one who has fully overcome the 3 fetters. These 3 fetters are further part of the 5 fetters, properly called “**the 5 lower fetters**” (*orambhāgiya saṃyojana*), so called because they fetter or hold us down to the sense-world. This includes the human world, where, as a result of our bad karma (especially habitually breaking the precepts), we are likely to be reborn in the subhuman worlds as an asura, a preta, an animal or a hell-being. As a result of our good karma, we are reborn among humans commensurate to the karmic fruits that have arisen, or we may arise in one of the lower deva heavens.¹³

When a streamwinner further strengthens themselves to weaken the unwholesome karmic roots of greed, hatred and delusion, they go on to become **once-returners** (*sakad-āgāmī*), one with only one more life to go before attaining arhathood.¹⁴ How do the fetters relate to the unwholesome roots?

<u>the 5 lower fetters</u>		<u>the 3 unwholesome roots</u>
(1) self-identity view	<i>sakkāya,diṭṭhi,</i>	greed <i>lobha;</i>
(2) spiritual doubt	<i>vicikicchā,</i>	hatred <i>dosa;</i>
(3) attachment to rituals and vows	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa,</i>	delusion <i>moha;</i>
(4) sensual lust	<i>kāma,rāga,</i>	greed <i>lobha;</i>
(5) aversion	<i>paṭigha,</i>	hatred <i>dosa.</i>

In the above table, on the same row or line as the fetter (1) self-identity view, we can see greed (*lobha*), which is basically a desire for “things.” What we see as *things* can only be any of the following:

- our *body*, a part of it (like the eye, the face, the hands, the body itself, and so on),
- our *feelings*, especially pleasure, but we are often troubled by pain,
- our *perceptions*, how we recall and recognize things,
- our *formations*, our actions, speech and thoughts, that is, karmic states, and
- our *consciousness*, simply put, our mind.

When we *identify* with any of these **5 aggregates** (that’s what they are), we will cling to them; hence, they are called the “aggregates of clinging.” The streamwinner understands this; thus, they do not identify with any of these things. However, they still have the unwholesome karmic roots: they still desire a pleasant body, feeling, perception, formation or consciousness.

1.2.2.4 The once-returner (*sakad-āgāmī*) has to some extent weakened these 3 unwholesome roots through their understanding that all these aggregates are impermanent, suffering and nonself. Greed, hatred and delusion thus have a weaker hold on the once-returner. However, as the Buddha tells Mahānāma in **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 14), so long as one lives a household life, enjoying the pleasures of the senses (sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches)—these are called the 5 “cords of

¹² See SD 3.3 (5).

¹³ On the 5 lower fetters, see **Orambhāgiya S**, (S 45.179) + SD 50.11 (2); SD 10.16 (1.6.7).

¹⁴ On the once-returner, see SD 10.16 (12.1.2.1).

sense-pleasures” (*kāma, guṇa*)—and has not cultivated zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*) of dhyana (which is more pleasurable than any of these sense-pleasures), one will still be drawn to them in some way.¹⁵

Notice that sensual lust and its opposite, aversion, are listed as fetters (4) and (5), respectively. In other words, they are both still present in the once-returned, although in a weak way. When both sensual lust and aversion are also overcome—through the accomplishment of attaining the dhyanas—then, one becomes a **non-returned** (*anāgāmi*), that is, one who will never return to be reborn in the sense world any more but is bound to attain arhathood in no time.¹⁶

This completes our study of the teachings of **the Sīti, bhava Sutta** (A 6.85) ending with “one takes delight in self-identity” (or self-centred existence) [§2 (1-6)]. We will now look at how properly practising meditation helps us progress towards the path of awakening, that is, how the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc’indriya*) work to help us do this. [2.1]

2 Conditions for realizing nirvana

2.1 BALANCED MEDITATION PRACTICE

2.1.1 Unbalanced or disharmonious practice

2.1.1.1 In the first part of **the Sīti, bhava Sutta**—on the 6 qualities that “prevent one from realizing the supreme cool state (nirvana),” [§2] we are told that when we have not mastered, at the right time, to restrain the mind, to exert it, to encourage it, or to equanimously look at it, then we will have an “inferior disposition” [§2 (5)], that is, we will fail in our practice [1.2.1.3], because we “take delight in self-identity,” explained in some detail at [1.2.2].

In meditation terms, when **the 5 spiritual faculties** (*pañc’indriya*)—those of faith, effort, mindfulness, samadhi and wisdom [2.1]—are not developed or applied harmoniously, we will not be able to get full mental concentration, that is, dhyana. We then lack the mental calm and clarity necessary for cultivating the insight wisdom, and realising true reality.

2.1.1.2 The second part of **the Sīti, bhava Sutta** records the Buddha as stating that these conditions bring one to realise nirvana [§4], that is:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| (1) a monk <u>restrains the mind</u> when it should be restrained; | <i>cittam niggaṇhāti</i> |
| (2) he <u>exerts the mind</u> when it should be exerted; | <i>cittam paggaṇhāti</i> |
| (3) he encourages the mind when it should be encouraged; | <i>cittam sampahaṃsati</i> |
| (4) he <u>looks on the mind with equanimity</u> ,
when one should look on with equanimity; | <i>cittam ajjupekkhati</i> |
| (5) one is of superior disposition; | <i>paṇītādhimuttiko ca hoti</i> |
| (6) he delights in nirvana. [1.2.1.3] | <i>nibbānābhirato</i> |

We have already noted in some detail how, in the Sutta’s negative teachings [§2], one (5) with an inferior disposition will go on to (6) delight in self-identity [1]. We will now look at the positive teachings [§4], where it is stated that one (5) of superior disposition will (6) delight in nirvana; in other words, practise successfully to reach the path. This practice entails meditation [2.2] and doing it properly [2.3].

¹⁵ **Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 14), SD 4.7

¹⁶ On non-returning, see SD 10.16 (13). Fetters broken, SD 23.16 (1.1) n. a layman as non-returned, SD 60.1d (3.3.3.5).

2.2 THE 5 SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

2.2.1 Balancing the meditation

2.2.1.1 One useful way of practising the teachings of **the Sīti,bhava Sutta** (A 6.85) is to see them as instructing us how to balance and harmonize our moral conduct and mindfulness. The negative lessons [§2] remind us of what to avoid; the positive lessons [§4] instruct us how to practise moral conduct and mindfulness, how to keep the body and mind in wholesome harmony. Directly connected with these efforts are **the 5 spiritual faculties** (*pañc'indriya*).

A **spiritual faculty** (*indriya*) is a dharma or wholesome state (*dhamma*) that we must cultivate in a balanced and harmonious way so that our body is well and our mind is able to become calm and clear to see the path of awakening.¹⁷ In other words, these are mental tools that ready the body and prime the mind to gain the path—that is, at least as a streamwinner.

Once we attain streamwinning or higher, these very same faculties are transformed into “spiritual powers” (*bala*), especially those of the arhats. In other words, the arhats are accomplished in them as *natural* spiritual qualities that are not shaken by any lack of *faith, effort, mindfulness, samadhi* or *wisdom*.

2.2.1.2 In terms of Dharma practice, the 5 faculties are cultivated closely in connection with the cultivation of the path (*magga*), that is, the 3 trainings, in *moral virtue, concentration and wisdom*. **The (Indriya) Suddhika Sutta** (S 48.6) lists the 5 spiritual factors (simplified) as follows:

<u>The 5 faculties</u> (<i>pañc'indriya</i>)		<u>the 3 trainings</u> (<i>sikkha-t,taya</i>)
(1) The faculty of faith	<i>saddh'indriya</i>	} moral virtue (<i>sīla,sikkhā</i>)
(2) The faculty of effort [energy]	<i>viriy'indriya</i>	
(3) The faculty of mindfulness	<i>sat'indriya</i>	} concentration (<i>samādhī,sikkhā</i>)
(4) The faculty of samadhi [mental stillness]	<i>samādh'indriya</i>	
(5) The faculty of wisdom	<i>paññ'indriya</i>	— wisdom (<i>paññā sikkhā</i>)

(S 48.6/5.194), SD 10.4 (1)

Upon more careful consideration, we have seen how the 5 faculties are meditation-spirited elaborations of the 3 trainings. **The faculty of faith** arises and grows with an understanding of moral virtue and the practice of the precepts. **The faculty of effort** is seen in the practice of the precepts and is enhanced by the fourfold efforts of seeing what is unwholesome and to abstain from it; of ending any unwholesome habit that we have; of seeing what is wholesome, and of cultivating it. These wonderful efforts are inspired by wise acts of faith.

The faculty of mindfulness is directing the mind undistractedly to the proper mind-object, mindfully aware of its conditioned and impermanent nature. As the mind is more fully aware of the object's true nature, we experience it “with the body,” that is, how our body (form) is also conditioned and impermanent. When we then are no longer held back by our self-views, we are more fully focused on the nature of the mind: this is concentration (*samādhī*), that is, **the faculty of concentration**.

With our deepening understanding of the true nature of the body (form) and how the mind arises as *feelings* on account of *perceptions* (memories and psychological reactions), we fall into karmic *formations*, all this arising on the stage of *consciousness*, that is, our senses and the mind. This understanding of the 5 aggregates is our **faculty of wisdom**.

¹⁷ See *Pañc'indriya*, SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3); SD 54.3h (3.1).

2.2.2 Contents of the faculties

2.2.2.1 According to **the (Pañcaka) Daṭṭhabba Sutta** (A 5.15) the faculties are transformed into powers, that is, become unshakable by their opposing unwholesome qualities, in the following manner:

	<u>are transformed into “powers” in</u>	
(1) the faculty of faith	the 4 limbs for streamwinners ¹⁸	<i>sotāpatti-y-aṅga</i>
(2) the faculty of effort	the 4 right strivings ¹⁹	<i>sammā-p, padhāna</i>
(3) the faculty of mindfulness	the 4 focuses of mindfulness ²⁰	<i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>
(4) the faculty of concentration	the 4 dhyanas ²¹	<i>jhāna</i>
(5) the faculty of wisdom	the 4 noble truths ²²	<i>ariya, sacca</i>
		(A 5.15/3.11 f)

2.2.2.2 A related text, **the (Indriya) Daṭṭhabba Sutta** (S 48.8), states that these faculties, transformed in this manner, are “seen” (*daṭṭhabba*) as their respective “powers” (*bala*).²³ Although these faculties are developed by the learners (*sekha*)—streamwinners, once-returners and non-returners—at varying levels, they are fully developed as “powers” in the arhat.

Although **the 5 powers** (*pañca bala*) are often associated with the arhat, the last 3 are, in the case of the arhathood of **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja**, listed as the faculties of mindfulness, of concentration and of wisdom—as stated in **the Piṇḍola, bhāra, dvāja Sutta** (S 48.49/5:224). This Sutta defines Piṇḍola’s “final knowledge,” that is, his arhathood, as “the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration and the faculty of wisdom” that one has developed and that end in “the destruction of birth, decay and death.” This is a *unique* triad called the “3 faculties” (*tīṇ’indriya*).

2.3 THE 7 AWAKENING FACTORS

2.3.1 Proper progress of meditation

2.3.1.1 The 7 awakening factors (*satta bojjaṅga*) or “limbs of awakening” are the modes by which the mind moves or grows closer to the path of awakening.²⁴ They may refer to the process of the medi-

¹⁸ **The 4 limbs for streamwinning** (*catusu sotāpatti-y-aṅgesu*), viz: (1) association with true individuals, (2) hearing the true teaching, (3) wise attention, and (4) practising the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma (SD 47.1 (2.1 + 2.3): the practice of one *not yet* a streamwinner. **The qualities of a streamwinner** (*sotāpanassa aṅgāni*) are: (1-3) wise faith in the 3 jewels, and (4) moral virtue dear to the noble ones (SD 47.1 (2.2)), ie, one who *is* a streamwinner. See also SD 3.3 (4.1.1).

¹⁹ *Catusu sammā, padhānesu*, or the 4 right efforts, viz: (1) the effort to *prevent* the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, (2) the effort to *abandon* arisen unwholesome states, (3) the effort to *cultivate* unarisen wholesome states, and (4) the effort to *maintain* [guard] arisen wholesome states: see **(Catu) Padhāna S** (A 4.14/2:16 f = D 33,1.11(10)), SD 10.2.

²⁰ *Catusu sati’paṭṭhānesu*, viz, the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassana*), the contemplation of feelings (*vedanā’nupassanā*), the contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) and the contemplation of dharmas [phenomena] (*dhammānupassanā*). See SD 13.

²¹ *Catusu jhānesu*, viz, the 1st, the 2nd, the 3rd and the 4th dhyanas. See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

²² *Catusu ariya, saccesu*, viz, the noble truths that are suffering, its arising, its ending, and the way leading to its ending: see **Dhamma.cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1.

²³ S 48.8/5:196, SD 10.4 (1.1.1.3),

²⁴ For details on the 7 awakening factors, see **(Bojjaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15.

tating mind reaching concentration and dhyana, or the stages of meditation at which the meditator works to keep the mind in wholesome meditation.

The 7 awakening factors are listed in the suttas as follows:²⁵

1. mindfulness	<i>sati sambojjhaṅga</i>
2. dharma-investigation [investigation of states]	<i>dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga</i>
3. effort	<i>viriya sambojjhaṅga</i>
4. zest	<i>pīti sambojjhaṅga</i>
5. tranquillity	<i>passaddhi sambojjhaṅga</i>
6. concentration	<i>samādhi sambojjhaṅga</i>
7. equanimity	<i>upekkhā sambojjhaṅga</i>

2.3.1.2 These 7 awakening-factors work in either of 2 ways: as a sequence or in sets. For an adept meditator or when the meditation is successful, the 7 awakening-factors work sequentially to bring about dhyana (*jhāna*), as illustrated in **the Bojjhaṅga Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3).²⁶ This is when the meditator successfully and fully frees the mind from the gravitation of the body or physical senses and thoughts. The mind is able to focus on itself and attain a profound state of inner calm and clarity, broadly known in modern terms as enstasy.²⁷

2.3.1.3 On the other hand, for the unawakened or inexperienced meditator, especially when the mind is “stuck” (*kosajja*), factors 2-4—*investigation of states, effort, and zest*—as a set have to be applied or cultivated to exert or energize the mind [4.2 f]. Or, when the mind is “restless” (*uddhatta*), factors 5-7—*tranquillity, concentration and equanimity*—as a set have to be applied or cultivated to restrain or calm the mind down [4.1]. This is laid out in **the (Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta** (S 46.53).²⁸

2.3.2 Levels of the awakening factors

2.3.2.1 The Abhidhamma and commentarial literature sometimes describe the Buddha’s disciples or a particular teaching in terms of 3 faculties or capacities (*tīṇ’indriya*), that is, those of “weak” or “soft” faculty (*mud’indriya*), those of “medium” faculty (*majjh’indriya*) and those of “sharp” faculty (*tikkh’indriya*).²⁹ The set or term itself is not found in the suttas but is closely related to the teaching on the 4 kinds of “learners” (*sekha*), where *sekha* has a broad sense, not necessarily referring only to those on the path.³⁰

It is possible that the set of “3 faculties” is older but never caught on, since the 4 kinds of learners better describe the capacity for learning and progressing in a practitioner. The 2 sets essentially contain the same idea, more succinct in the 3 faculties and more comprehensive in the 4 learners. It is also possible that the 3 faculties refer to meditators, while the 4 learners refer more broadly to Dharma students generally.

²⁵ **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3), SD 10.15; **Mahā Sakul’udāyī Sutta** (M 77,20) + SD 6.18 (7) ; **Aggañña S** (D 27,-30), SD 2.19.

²⁶ S 46.3/5:67-70 (SD 10.15).

²⁷ On “enstasy,” see SD 60.1f (4.2.3).

²⁸ S 46.53/5:112-114 (SD 51.13).

²⁹ The categories *mu’indriya* and *tikkh’indriya* are, however, first mentioned as a set only in **Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 341) and the 3rd category, *majjh’indriya* added to make a triad in **Netti-p,pakaraṇa** (Nett 100).

³⁰ The set of 4 kinds of learners are listed in **Ugghaṭitaññū S** (A 4.143), SD 3.13(3.3).

Their interconnection can be seen in this comparative table:

the 3 faculties (<i>tīṇ'indriya</i>)			the 4 learners (<i>sekha</i>)	
the sharp facultied	<i>tikkh'indriya</i>	}	the quick learner	<i>ugghaṭitaññū</i>
the medium facultied	<i>majjh'indriya</i>		the diffuse learner	<i>vipacitaññū</i>
the weak facultied	<i>mud'indriya</i>		the tractable	<i>neyya</i> [ñeyya]
			the word learner	<i>pada, parama</i>

2.3.2.2 The Vibhaṅga (the 2nd book of the Abhidhamma) defines the weak faculties and the sharp faculties, thus:

(1) Those beings with “**weak faculties**” (*mud'indriya*) are those in whom the 5 faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom “are not pursued, nor cultivated, nor developed, nor are abundant” (*anāsevitāni abhāvitāni abahulikatāni anussada, gatāni*). (Vbh §381/341)

(2) Those beings with “**sharp faculties**” (*tikkh'indriya*) are those in whom the 5 faculties are “pursued, cultivated, developed, made abundant” (*āsevitāni bhāvitāni bahulikatāni ussada, gatāni*). (Vbh §822/-341)

Interestingly, the Vibhaṅga does not mention the “medium faculties” (*majjh'indriya*). This shows that it is likely the earliest canonical set comprises only the pair: the sharp faculties (*tikkh'indriya*) and the weak faculties (*mud'indriya*).

2.3.2.3 It seems that **the Netti-p, pakaraṇa** (Netti for short), a paracanonical text (one that is not included in the canon but is older than the Commentaries), preserves what is the first attempt to formulate the 3 faculties regarding mental concentration (*samādhi*):

“That same concentration has 3 states for its equipment, namely faculties (*indriya*), powers (*bala*) and effort (*viriya*). Those same faculties become powers by virtue of effort; they are *faculties* in the sense of predominance (*adhipateyya*), while they are *powers* in the sense of unshakeability. Thus there are those who are weak-facultied, who are medium-facultied and who are sharp-facultied.”³¹ (Nett 100)

The Netti explains that the Buddha teaches his disciples in terms of *advice, disclosing, meditation method, escape and training* in 3 ways, thus:

<u>teaching method</u>		<u>the sharp facultied</u>	<u>the medium facultied</u>	<u>the weak facultied</u>
(1) advising	<i>ovāda</i>	in brief	in brief and in detail	in detail
(2) disclosing	<i>desanā</i>	easy teaching	easy to sharp teaching	sharp teaching
(3) meditation	<i>bhāvana</i>	samatha	samatha and vipassana	vipassanā
(4) escape	<i>nissaraṇa</i>	escape	dangers and escape	gratification, dangers, escape
(5) training	<i>sikkhā</i>	higher morality	higher concentration	higher wisdom

(Nett 100 f)

³¹ *Tāni yeva indriyāni viriya, vasena balāni bhavanti. Adhipateyya'atthena indriyāni, akampiyatthena balāni. Tāni Iti tesarṇ mudu, majjhādhimattatā: ayaṃ mud'indriyo, ayaṃ majjh'indriyo, ayaṃ tikkh'indriyo ti.* (Nett 100, 24 f). See Pm 1:21.

2.3.2.4 The term the “3 faculties,” *tīṇ’indriya*, appears in the suttas as a technical term for the moment of attaining the path, that is, of streamwinning and of arhathood, as stated in the Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33):

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (1) the faculty, “I shall know the final knowledge yet to be known” | <i>anaññatañ ñassāmīt’Indriya,</i> |
| (2) the faculty of final knowledge | <i>aññ’indriya,</i> |
| (3) the faculty of one accomplished in final knowledge | <i>aññātā-v-indriya</i> |

The **Saṃyutta Commentary** (SA 3:237) explains these 3 faculties as follows:³²

The 1st faculty is the realisation—“**I shall know the final knowledge yet to be known**”—arising at the moment of the path of streamwinning for one who is practising with the aspiration, “I will know the Dharma I have not known before in beginningless samsara” (SA 3:237). The function of this faculty is the abandoning of the 3 fetters (self-identity view, doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows), resulting in the attaining of streamwinning.³³

The 2nd—“**the faculty of final knowledge**”—is the knowledge that arises on the 6 occasions from the fruition of streamwinning onwards (up to the fruition of arhathood). It is a deeper knowledge of the first one.

The 3rd—“**the faculty of one accomplished in final knowledge**”—arises in terms of whatever is fully known at the fruition of arhathood.

The first 2 faculties are found in the following texts: **the Aññ’indriya Sutta** (S 48.23), SD 42.19(1.5) = It 62/53 with verses (SD 98.5), and **the (Iti) Indriya S** (It 3.2.3), SD 50.5. The 3rd faculty is found in **the Aññ’indriya S** (S 48.23), SD 42.19(1.5).

2.3.2.5 In later polemical literature, the Sanskrit notion of the “3 faculties” (Skt *trīndriya*) is often used to declare one’s preferred teaching as intended only for those of “sharp faculties” (Skt *tīkṣṇendriya*), while dismissing other competing teachings as intended for those of intermediate (*madhyendriya*) or weak faculties (*mṛdvindriya*).

3 The 10 skills in dhyana and their explanation (Vism 4.42-66/128-136)

3.1 THE 10 SKILLS IN FULL CONCENTRATION (DASA, VIDHA APPANA, KOSALLA): SUMMARY (VISM 4.42/128)

3.1.1 A careful study of **the Sīti,bhava Sutta** (A 6.85) and its commentary in the Visuddhi,magga (which follows) suggests that the Sutta is about how to practise so that “full concentration” (*appanā*) or dhyana (*jhāna*) is attained. The Visuddhi,magga includes an analysis of the positive teachings of the Sīti,bhāva Sutta [§4], and elaborates on them in the “10 skills in dhyana” (**Vism 4.51-64/130-135**).

This is what we will now examine, but not in the sequence as they are presented in the Visuddhi,-magga. We will here study the Visuddhi,magga commentary in connection with the Sīti,bhava Sutta teachings, meaning that we will be dealing with the Vism commentaries topically (rather than sequentially).

³² See It 53,3 (ItA) = S 5:204,19 (SA) ≈ D 3:219,9 (DA): for other refs, see CPD sv an-aññāta. Further see Pm 1:-115,26-116,3 = 2:30,1-12; P, 1:118,13.

³³ VbhA 127 f; quoted at Vism 491,11.

3.1.2 The 10 skills in full concentration (dhyana)

3.1.2.1 The 10 skills for attaining and sustaining dhyana (*jhāna*) are listed in **the Visuddhi,magga** (Vism 4.42/128) in the chapter detailing the 4 form dhyanas (Vism 4.79-202).³⁴ The Saṃyutta Commentary mentions these 10 skills in full concentration, as follows:³⁵

(1) cleaning up the mind-object,	<i>vatthu,visada,kiriyatā</i>
(2) balancing the spiritual faculties,	<i>indriya,samatta,paṭipādanatā</i>
(3) skill in the sign,	<i>nimitta,kusalatā</i>
(4) restraining the mind on occasion,	<i>samaye citassa niggahaṇatā</i> [4.1]
(5) exerting the mind on occasion,	<i>samaye cittassa paggahaṇatā</i> [4.2]
(6) encouraging the dull mind with faith and sense of urgency,	<i>citta sampahaṃsitabba</i> [4.3]
(7) equanimously looking on what is occurring rightly,	<i>cittam ajjupekkhitabba</i> [4.4]
(8) avoidance of people who lack mental concentration,	<i>asamāhita,puggala,parivajjanatā</i>
(9) association with mentally concentrated people,	<i>samāhita,puggala,sevanatā</i>
(10) resoluteness in this (concentration).	<i>tad-adhimuttatā</i>

3.1.2.2 Note that skills (4-7) are listed in **the Sīti,bhava Sutta** (A 6.85). When we fail to attain this set of 4 skills, we will not be able to attain nirvana [§2]. On the other hand, being accomplished in them will enable us to gain nirvana [§4].

The Visuddhi,magga discusses these 4 nirvana-attaining skills in the broader context of attaining “full concentration” or dhyana (*jhāna*). In other words, these 10 skills help us gain dhyana, whose profound calm and clarity we can use to cultivate insight (*vipassanā*) as the basis for seeing into true reality and thus at least attain the path of awakening.³⁶

3.2 THE 11 THINGS BRINGING ABOUT THE CONCENTRATION AWAKENING FACTOR

Buddhaghosa, in Vism 4.61, lists the same items in a set he calls “the 11 things bringing about the concentration awakening factor” [3.1.2], where he adds “(10) reviewing of dhyanas and liberations” and pushing “resoluteness in this (concentration)” down to be “(11),” thus:

(10) reviewing of dhyanas and liberations	<i>jhana,vimokkha,paccavekkhaṇatā</i>
(11) resoluteness in this (concentration)	<i>tad-adhimuttatā</i>

³⁴ 1st dhyana: Vism 4.79-138/139-155; 2nd dhyana: Vism 4.139-152/155-159; 3rd dhyana 4.153-182/159-165; 4th dhyana: 4.183-202/165-169.

³⁵ In other words, these 10 conditions are identical with the “11 things bringing the *concentration* awakening factor” (SA 3:163), except for the omission of item (10) “reviewing of dhyanas and liberations” of the set of 11 [4.1.5].

³⁶ On samatha and vipassana working together, see SD 15.1 (1.2); SD 33.1b (8.1).

4 Visuddhi,magga Commentary on A 6.85: the 10 skills in dhyana

4.1 THE FACULTY OF CONCENTRATION (*SAMĀDH'INDRIYA*)

4.1.1 Cleaning up the bases (*vatthu,visada,kiriyatā*) (Vism 4.43/128 f)

4.1.1.1 {1}³⁷ Herein, **making each basis clean** is cleansing the internal and the external bases. For when one's head hair, body hair and nails are long, or when the body is soaked with sweat, then the internal basis is also untidy and unclean. So, too, when an old, dirty, smelly robe is worn or when the lodging is messy, then the external basis is untidy and unclean.

When the internal and external bases are unclean, then the knowledge in the mind (consciousness) and the mental factors that arise are also likely to be unpurified, like the light of a lamp that arises with an unclean lampbowl, wick and oil as its support; formations do not become evident to one who tries to comprehend them with unpurified knowledge, and when one devotes oneself to a meditation object, it is not cultivated, developed and fulfilled.

4.1.1.2 (Vism 4.44/129). But when the internal and external bases are clean, then the knowledge in the consciousness and mental factors that arise is clean and bright, too, like the light of a lamp that arises with a clean lampbowl, wick and oil as its support; formations become evident to one who tries to comprehend them with purified knowledge, and as one devotes oneself to a meditation subject, it is cultivated, developed and fulfilled.

4.1.2 {2} Balancing the faculties

4.1.2.1 (Vism 4.45/129). **Keeping the faculties in balance** is harmonising the [five] faculties (faith and the rest).

For if one's faith faculty is strong and the other faculties weak, then the energy faculty cannot perform its function of exerting, the mindfulness faculty its function of establishing, the concentration faculty its function of not being distracted, and the wisdom faculty its function of seeing.

So in that case, **the faith faculty** should be modified either by reviewing the true nature of the mental states (that is, the objects of attention) or by not attending to them in the way in which the faith faculty became too strong.

This is illustrated by the story of **the elder Vakkali**.³⁸

4.1.2.2 (Vism 4.46/129). Now, if the energy faculty is too strong, the faith faculty cannot perform its function of resolving, nor can the rest of the faculties perform their respective functions. So in that case, the energy faculty should be modified by cultivating calm, and so on.

This is illustrated by the story of **the elder Sona**.³⁹ So too with the other faculties, for it should be understood that when any one of them is too strong, the others cannot perform their respective functions.

³⁷ The numbers 1-10 within {braces} refer the sections of **the 10 skills in dhyana** [3.1.2.1].

³⁸ **Vakkali S** (S 22.87/3:119), SD 8.8.

³⁹ **Sona S** (A 3.55/3:374-76), SD 20.12; V 1:179-85.

4.1.2.3 (Vism 4.47/129 f). However, it is particularly recommended that faith be balanced with Wisdom, and concentration with energy. For one strong in faith but weak in wisdom has faith uncritically and groundlessly.

One strong in wisdom but weak in faith may err on the side of cunning which may be hard to cure, like one sick with a disease caused by the medicine itself. With the balancing of the two, one has faith only when there are grounds for it.

Moreover, dullness overpowers one strong in concentration and weak in energy, since concentration often favours dullness. Restlessness overcomes one strong in energy and weak in concentration, since energy often is likely to be restless.

But concentration coupled with energy is unlikely to fall into dullness, and energy coupled with concentration is unlikely to fall into restlessness.

So these two should be balanced, for dhyana comes with the proper balancing of the two.

4.1.2.4 (Vism 4.48/130). Again, faith and concentration should be balanced. One working on concentration needs strong faith, since it is with such faith and confidence that one reaches dhyana.

Now concentration and wisdom need to be balanced. One working on concentration needs strong mental unification, since that is how one reaches dhyana; and one working on insight needs strong wisdom, since that is how one penetrates the characteristics (of impermanence, etc). But with the balancing of the two, one reaches dhyana, too.

4.1.2.5 (Vism 4.49/130). Strong **mindfulness**, however, is needed in all instances. Mindfulness protects the mind from falling into *restlessness* through faith, energy and wisdom, which favour restlessness, and from falling into *dullness* through concentration, which favours dullness [through being idle]. So it is desirable in all instances just as a seasoning of salt may be desirable in all sauces, or as a prime minister in all the king's businesses.

Hence, it is said, 'And mindfulness has been called universal by the Blessed One. For what reason? Because the mind has mindfulness as its refuge, and mindfulness is manifested as protection, and there is no exertion and restraint of the mind without mindfulness.'⁴⁰

4.1.3 Exerting the mind: the faculty of effort [4.2]

4.1.3.1 (Vism 4.50/130) {3} Skill in the meditation sign

"**Skill in the sign** is skill in cultivating the as yet unarisen sign of mental unification (concentration) through the earth kasina, etc. It is the skill in cultivating the sign when it arises and skill in protecting it by cultivating it. The last is what is meant here."

We will return to the skill in the sign below [4.1.6].

4.1.3.2 (Vism 4.51 f/130 f) {4} How does one exert the mind on an occasion when it should be exerted? [4.2.1]. When one's mind is slack with over-laxness of energy, etc., then, instead of developing the 3 awakening factors beginning with tranquillity, one should cultivate those beginning with dharma-investigation. This we will do below [4.2.3].

⁴⁰ Untraced but qu in all major Comys: *Sati ca pana sabbatthikā vuttā bhagavatā. Kiñ, karaṇā. Cittaṃ hi sati, paṭi-saraṇaṃ, ārakkha, paccupaṭṭhānā ca sati, na vinā satiyā cittaṃ paggaḥa, niggaho hoti.* (DA 3:788; MA 1:292; SA 3:157; AA 2:57; VbhA 278)

4.1.4 {5} The mind is to be restrained by concentration on an occasion of restlessness (*uddhacca*) (Vism 4.57/133)

4.1.4.1 How does one “restrain the mind on an occasion when it should be restrained”?

When one’s mind is restless through being restless (*uddhata*) and so on (*accāradḍha, viriyat’ādīhi*); then, instead of cultivating the 3 awakening factors [2.3.1.1]⁴¹ beginning with dharma-investigation, he should cultivate those beginning with tranquillity.⁴²

For this is said by the Blessed One [**the (Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta**, S 46.53]:

“Bhikkhus, suppose a man wanted to extinguish a great mass of fire, and he put dry grass on it ... and did not scatter dirt on it. Would that man be able to extinguish that great mass of fire?

“No, bhante.”

“So too, bhikkhus, when the mind is agitated, that is not the time to cultivate the investigation-of-states awakening factor, the energy awakening factor, and the zest awakening factor.

Why is that? Because a restless mind cannot be properly stilled by those states.

When the mind is restless, that is the time to cultivate the tranquillity awakening factor, the concentration awakening factor and the equanimity awakening factor.

Why is that? Because a restless mind can be properly stilled by those states.

Bhikkhus, suppose a man wanted to extinguish a great mass of fire, and he put wet grass on it ... and scattered dirt on it. Would that man be able to extinguish that great mass of fire?”

“Yes, bhante.”

(S 46.53,17-20/5:113-115 f), SD 51.13⁴³

4.1.4.2 NOTE. Technically, being “restless” (*uddhata*) refers only to the hindrance or defilement of restlessness (*uddhacca*). This is when we are hindered from mental focus due to our mind being excited or troubled by something done or undone (the past) or the possibility of things (the future). Often, this is thinking about the future, what to do next, or fearing what is to come.⁴⁴

In the 4th hindrance, “guilt” (*kukkucca*), that is, “guilty feeling,” is worrying about what we have done or undone, something in the past. However, we can also feel guilty or troubled about such commissions and omissions. Hence, as a dvandva, the 4th hindrance comprises *uddhacca* (which refers to being distracted by the future) and *kukkucca* (which refers to being distracted by the past).⁴⁵

4.1.5 Tranquillity, concentration, equanimity (Vism 4.58/133 f)

4.1.5.1 And here, the cultivation of the tranquillity awakening factor and so on should be understood as the food for each one (of the awakening factors), respectively. For it is said [**the (Bojjhaṅga) Āhāra Sutta**, S 46.51]:

(1) “There are, bhikkhus, the tranquillity of body and the tranquillity of mind.⁴⁶

⁴¹ I.e., the investigation of states, effort and zest.

⁴² I.e., tranquillity, concentration and equanimity [2.3.1.1].

⁴³ Cf **Aggi-k, khandhopama S** (A 7.68), SD 52.12.

⁴⁴ On *uddhacca* by itself, see SD 50.12 (2.4.4); *dharm’uddhacca*, see SD 41.5 (5); SD 32.7 (2.1.4, 2.2.3); SD 41.4 (2.2.1). On how the mind becomes restless, see SD 51.13 (2.2.2).

⁴⁵ It should be noted that an early sutta usage of *uddhata*, simply meaning “mentally restless” arises even in the non-returner; only the arhat is not troubled in any way over the nature of things: SD 51.13 (1.1.2.3).

⁴⁶ (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Kāya S** (S 46.51): Wise consideration well and often applied brings bodily tranquillity that leads to mental tranquillity, S 46.51/5:104 f (SD 7.15). Comy on S 46.2: Bodily tranquillity is the stilling of distress (*daratha*)

Frequently giving wise attention to them, this is food for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of tranquillity and for the growth and abundance of the arisen awakening factor of tranquillity.

(2) Likewise: “There are, bhikshus, the sign of calm (*samatha, nimitta*) and the undisturbed sign (*avyagga, nimitta*).⁴⁷

Frequently giving wise attention to them,⁴⁸ this is food for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of concentration and for the growth and abundance of the arisen awakening factor of concentration.

(3) Likewise: “There are, bhikshus, the bases for the awakening factor of equanimity (*upekkhā, sambojjhaṅga-ṭ, ṭhāniyā dhammā*).⁴⁹

Frequently giving wise attention to them, this is food for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of equanimity and for the growth and abundance of the arisen awakening factor of equanimity.”
(S 46.51,12-14/5:104 f), SD 7.15

4.1.5.2 The Commentary adds the following 7 conditions that lead to the arising of the awakening factor of **tranquillity** (SA 3:162):

(1) a good nutritious diet	<i>paṇīta, bhojana, sevanatā</i>
(2) congenial climate	<i>utu, sukha, sevanatā</i>
(3) comfortable posture	<i>iriyā, patha, sukha, sevanatā</i>
(4) showing impartiality (reflecting on ownership of karma)	<i>majjhatta, payogatā</i>
(5) avoiding restless people	<i>sāradaddha, kāya, puggala, parivajjanatā</i>
(6) associating with calm people	<i>passaddha, kāya, puggala, sevanatā</i>
(7) right resolution (a mind bent on establishing tranquillity),	<i>tad-adhimuttatā</i>

4.1.6 Wise attention; the signs (Vism 4.59/134)

“Skill in the sign” has been mentioned earlier [4.1.3.1]. Let’s look at it a bit more here.

Here wise attention given to the 3 instances (the past, present and future) is attention occurring in arousing tranquillity and so on, by observing the way in which they arose in one earlier.

The *sign of calm* is a term for calmness itself, and *non-diversion* is a term for it, too, that is, as non-distraction [mental focus]. What is this calm? It is the tranquillity awakening factor.

4.1.7 Tranquillity awakening factor (Vism 4.60/134)

Furthermore, the Commentary gives these **7 things that bring about the tranquillity awakening factor** (SA 3:162):

(1) taking good proper food,	<i>paṇīta, bhojana, sevanatā</i>
(2) living in a suitable climate,	<i>utu, sukha, sevanatā</i>
(3) resorting to a suitable posture,	<i>iriyā, patha, sukha, sevanatā</i>
(4) keeping moderation,	<i>majjhatta, payogatā</i>
(5) avoidance of excitable people,	<i>sāradaddha, puggala, parivajjanatā</i>

in the 3 mental aggregates (feeling, perception and formations), mental tranquillity the stilling of distress in the aggregate of consciousness (SA 3:170,19 f). Cf (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Kāya S** (S 46.2), SD 62.9; Vbh 228.

⁴⁷ Also tr as “the sign of non-dispersal” (S:B). See DA 3:794; MA 1:297; SA 3:141; VbhA 283.

⁴⁸ Comy mentions 10 conditions that lead to the arising of the awakening factor of **concentration**: [3.1.2.1].

⁴⁹ On the 5 conditions that lead to the arising of the awakening factor of **equanimity**, see [4.1.9]

- (6) associating with people who are tranquil in body, *passaddh,kāya,puggala,sevanatā*
 (7) resoluteness on this (tranquillity). *tad-adhimuttāta*

4.1.8 Concentration awakening factor (Vism 4.61/134)

The Commentary lists these **11 things that bring about the *concentration* awakening factor** (SA 3:163):

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) clearing up the mind-object; or personal and environmental cleanliness (or both), | <i>vatthu,visadatā</i> |
| (2) skill in the sign, | <i>nimitta.kusalatā</i> |
| (3) balancing the spiritual faculties, | <i>indriya,samatta,paṭipādanatā</i> |
| (4) restraining the mind on occasion, | <i>samaye citassa niggahaṇatā</i> |
| (5) exerting the mind on occasion, | <i>samaye cittassa paggahaṇatā</i> |
| (6) encouraging the dull mind with faith and sense of urgency, ⁵⁰ | <i>nirassādassa cittassa saddhā,saṁ-
vega,vasena sampahaṁsanatā</i> |
| (7) equanimously looking on what is occurring rightly, | <i>sammā,pavattassa ajjhupekkhanatā</i> |
| (8) avoidance of people who lack mental concentration, | <i>asamāhita,puggala,parivajjanatā</i> |
| (9) association with mentally concentrated people, | <i>samāhita,puggala,sevanatā</i> |
| (10) reviewing of dhyanas and liberations, ⁵¹ | <i>jhana,vimokkha,paccavekkhanatā</i> |
| (11) resoluteness on this (concentration). | <i>tad-adhimuttatā</i> |

4.1.9 Equanimity awakening factor (Vism 4.62/134 f)

The **5 things leading to the arising of the *equanimity* awakening factor** listed in the Commentary (SA 3:164) are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) maintenance of neutrality towards living beings, | <i>satta,majjhattatā</i> |
| (2) maintenance of neutrality towards formations; | <i>saṅkhāra,majjhattatā</i> |
| (3) avoidance of people who are partial to beings and formations; | <i>satta,saṅkhāra,kelāyana,puggala,-
parivajjanatā</i> |
| (4) association with those moderate to beings and formations; | <i>atta,saṅkhāra,majjhatta,puggala,-
sevanatā</i> |
| (5) resoluteness on this (equanimity). | <i>tad-adhimuttatā</i> |

Thus by arousing these things in these ways, one cultivates the equanimity awakening factor, as well as the others.

This is how one restrains the mind on an occasion when it should be restrained.

4.2 THE FACULTY OF EFFORT (VIRIY'INDRIYA)

The mind is *to be exerted* with energy at a time when it has fallen into sluggishness (*kosajjānupatita*).

⁵⁰ On “sense of urgency” (*saṁvega*), see SD 1.11 (3); SD 9 (7.6).

⁵¹ This item is omitted from the “10 skills in full concentration” [3.1.2.1].

4.2.1 When the mind is dull (Vism 4.51/130 f)

4.2.1.1 How does one *exert the mind on an occasion when it should be exerted*? When one's mind is slack with over-laxness, such as lack of energy, etc, then, instead of cultivating the 3 awakening factors of *tranquillity, concentration and wisdom*, one should cultivate the awakening factors of *dharma-investigation, effort and zest*.

4.2.1.2 For this is said by the Blessed One (**the (Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta**, S 46.53):

14 “Suppose, bhikshus, a person wants to build up a small fire, but he stokes it with wet grass, and with wet cowdung, and with wet wood.⁵² He exposes it to a moist wind and scatters dirt over it. Would that person be able to build up the small fire?”
“Not at all, bhante!”

14.2 So, too, bhikshus, *when the mind is stuck, it is untimely to cultivate the awakening-factor that is tranquillity; it is untimely to cultivate the awakening-factor that is concentration; it is untimely to cultivate the awakening-factor that is equanimity.*

14.3 What is the reason for this?

The mind, bhikshus, is stuck; it is hard to be uplifted by these states.

15 Bhikshus, when the mind is *stuck*, it is timely to cultivate the awakening-factor that is **dharma-investigation**; it is timely to cultivate the awakening-factor that is **effort**; it is timely to cultivate the awakening-factor that is **zest** [joy].

*dhamma, vicaya s.
viriya sambojjhaṅga
pīti sambojjhaṅga*

15.2 What is the reason for this?

The mind, bhikshus, is *stuck*; it is easy to be uplifted by these states.

16 Suppose, bhikshus, a person wants to *build up a small fire*, and he stokes it with dry grass, and with dry cowdung, and with dry wood, he exposes it to a dry wind, and does not scatter dirt over it— would that person be able to build up the small fire?”
“Yes, bhante!”

(S 46.53,14-16/5:112 f), SD 51.13

4.2.2 Investigation of states, energy, zest (Vism 4.52/131)

4.2.2.1 (In the (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Āhāra Sutta**, S 46.51:)

Here the cultivation of **the dharma-investigation awakening factor**, and so on, should be understood as the food for each one, respectively, for this is said:

⁵² So tattha allāni c’eva tiṇāni pakkhipeyya, allāni ca gomayāni pakkhipeyya, allāni ca kaṭṭhāni pakkhipeyya, | udaka, vātañ ca dadeyya, paṁsukena ca okireyya.

9 “There are, bhikshus, wholesome and unwholesome states, blameworthy and blameless things, low and sublime states, and dark and bright states, the counterpart of each other.⁵³

Frequently giving wise attention to them: this is food for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of *dharma-investigation* and for the growth and abundance of the arisen awakening factor of *dharma-investigation*.⁵⁴

Likewise, ‘There are, bhikshus, the element of initiative, the element of exertion and the element of strength.⁵⁵

Frequently giving wise attention to them, this is food for the arising of the unarisen **awakening factor of effort** and for the growth and abundance of the arisen awakening factor of effort.⁵⁶

11 Likewise: ‘There are, bhikshus, the bases for the awakening factor of zest (*pīti,sambojjhaṅga-ṭ,ṭhāniyā dhammā*).⁵⁷

Frequently giving wise attention to them: this is food for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of zest and for the growth and abundance of the arisen awakening factor of zest.”

(S 46.51,9-11/5:104), SD 7.15

4.2.2.2 WISE ATTENTION (Vism 4.53/132)

Herein, **wise attention** (*yoniso manasikāra*) given to the *wholesome*, etc, is attention occurring in penetration of individual essences and of [the 3] general characteristics.

Wise attention given to the *element of initiative*, etc, is attention occurring in the arousing of the element of initiative, and so on.

Herein, initial energy is called the *element of initiative*. The *element of launching* is stronger than that because it launches out from dullness [including idleness].

The *element of persistence* is still stronger than that because it goes on persisting in successive later stages. *States productive of the zest awakening factor* is a name for zest itself and attention that arouses that is wise attention.

4.2.3 Dharma investigation awakening factor (Vism 4.54/132)

Furthermore, the Saṃyutta Commentary lists these 7 things as leading to the arising of **the dharma-investigation awakening factor** (SA 3:157):

- (1) asking questions,
- (2) making the bases clean,
- (3) balancing the faculties,
- (4) avoidance of persons without understanding,
- (5) cultivation of persons with understanding,
- (6) reviewing the field for the exercise of profound knowledge,
- (7) resoluteness on this (investigation of states).

⁵³ Qu at Vism 4.53/131.

⁵⁴ On the 7 conditions that lead to the arising of the awakening factor of **dharma-investigation**, see [4.2.3].

⁵⁵ *Ārambha,dhātu, nikkama,dhātu* and *parakkama,dhātu* respectively. These are the 3 phases of effort: the initial phase, intermediate phase (gathering strength through overcoming sloth) and full intensity phase respectively: qu at MA 1:284. **Atta,kārī S** (A 6.38) uses these words in a literal sense (A 6.38.3b, 4-6 = 3:337), as part of the Buddha’s answer that there is self-agency (SD 7.6).

⁵⁶ On the 11 conditions that lead to the arising of the awakening factor of **effort**, see [4.2.5].

⁵⁷ On the 11 conditions that lead to the arising of the awakening factor of **zest** see [4.2.6].

4.2.4 Energy awakening factor (Vism 4.55/132)

The Saṃyutta Commentary lists these 11 things as leading to the arising of **the energy awakening factor** (SA 3:158):

- (1) reviewing the fearfulness of the states of loss, such as the hell realms, etc;
- (2) seeing benefit in obtaining the mundane and supramundane distinctions dependent on energy;
- (3) reviewing the course of the journey [to be travelled] thus: ‘The path taken by the buddhas, pratyeka buddhas, and the great disciples has to be taken by me, and it cannot be taken by an idler,’
- (4) being worthy of the alms food received (by living a moral life of peace and wisdom), producing great fruit for the givers;
- (5) reviewing the greatness of the Master thus: ‘My Master praises the energetic, and this unsurpassable Dispensation that is so helpful to us is honoured in the practice, not otherwise’;
- (6) reviewing the greatness of the heritage thus: ‘It is the great heritage called the Good Dhamma that is to be acquired by me, and it cannot be acquired by an idler’;
- (7) removing stiffness and torpor by attention to perception of light, change of postures, frequenting the open air, etc;
- (8) avoidance of idle persons;
- (9) cultivation of energetic persons;
- (10) reviewing the right endeavours;
- (11) resoluteness upon that [energy].

4.2.5 Zest awakening factor (Vism 4.56/132 f)

The Saṃyutta Commentary lists these 11 things (that is the practice of any of them) as leading to the arising **of the zest awakening factor** (SA 3:161,26-30):

- (1) the recollection of the Buddha;
- (2) the recollection of the Dharma;
- (3) the recollection of the sangha;
- (4) the recollection of moral virtue;
- (5) the recollection of giving;
- (6) the recollection of deities;
- (7) the recollection of peace;
- (8) avoidance of violent persons;
- (9) association with morally pleasant (*siniddha*) persons;
- (10) reviewing inspiring discourses;
- (11) resoluteness upon that [happiness].

Thus, by arousing these things in these ways, one cultivates **the dharma-investigation awakening factor** [4.2.3] and the others. This is how one exerts the mind on an occasion when it should be exerted.

4.3 THE FACULTY OF FAITH (SADDH’INDRIYA)

The mind is to be gladdened [encouraged] with **faith** at a time when it is dull (*nirassāda,gata*).

4.3.1 Gladdening the mind (Vism 4.63/135)

4.3.1.1 {6} How does one *gladden the mind on an occasion when it should be encouraged?*

One gladdens the mind with any of **the 6 “inspiring meditations.”**⁵⁸ Traditionally, the recollections (*anussati*) that are a streamwinner’s life-long practice (*nissaya, vihāra*), that is, the recollections of:

(1) the Buddha	<i>buddhānussati</i>	SD 15.7 f,
(2) the Dharma	<i>dhammānussati</i>	SD 15.9,
(3) the noble sangha	<i>saṅghānussati</i>	SD 15.10a f,
(4) moral virtue	<i>sīlānussati</i>	SD 15.11,
(5) charity	<i>cāgānussati</i>	SD 15.12,
(6) deities	<i>devatānussati</i>	SD 15.13.

Understandably, these 6 recollections are also listed in the “11 things” that arouses **zest** (*piṭi*). [4.2.6]

4.3.1.2 Furthermore, when one’s mind is **dull** owing to sluggishness in concentration or to failure to attain the bliss of peace, then one should stimulate it by reviewing **the 8 grounds** for a sense of urgency (*samvega*). These are the 4 natural conditions, namely, *birth, decay, sickness, and death*, with (5) the suffering of the subhuman states of loss (*apāya*),⁵⁹ and also (6) the suffering in the past rooted in samsara [cycle of rebirths], (7) the suffering in the future rooted in samsara, and (8) the suffering in the present rooted in the search for food and for pleasure.

Thus, one gladdens the mind on an occasion when it should be gladdened.

4.4 THE FACULTY OF WISDOM (PAÑÑ’INDRIYA)

The mind is to be *observed* with the equanimity awakening factor when it is proceeding evenly (*sama-pavatta*).

4.4.1 Practising equanimity (Vism 4.64/135)

{7} How does one *look on the mind with equanimity on an occasion when it should be looked on with equanimity?*

When one is practising in this way with the mind following the path of samatha, which arises evenly on the object, and is not idle, not agitated, not dull, then one is inclined neither to exert nor restrain nor gladden it. One is like a charioteer with the horses progressing evenly. This is how *one looks on the mind with equanimity on an occasion when it should be looked on with equanimity.*

4.4.2 Avoiding unwholesome people, associating with wholesome people (Vism 4.65/135)

{8} *Avoidance of unconcentrated persons* is keeping distance from persons who do not give priority to the growth of the practice of renunciation,⁶⁰ who are busy with many affairs, whose hearts are distracted.

⁵⁸ SD 15.1 (1.5.6); SD 15.17 (1.1.2); (**Agata,phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10), SD 15.3 (2, 3.3); SD 10.16 (1.4.1.3).

⁵⁹ *Apāya* refers to “(a state of) deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell,” in ref to “the 4 states of loss” (*cat’upāya*) or the 4 subhuman states, ie, asura, animal, preta and hell states: SD 54.3f (2.2.4); SD 2.22 (1.7).

⁶⁰ The phrase “who do not give priority to the growth of the practice of renunciation” (*nekkhamma, paṭipadaṃ anārujha, pubbānaṃ*) refers not only to the unmindful laity, but to anyone (incl monastics) who does not keep to the Vinaya or does not live a renounced life.

{9} *Association with concentrated persons* is approaching occasionally persons who give priority to the growth of the practice of renunciation and gained concentration.

{10} *Resoluteness upon that* [Vism 4.42] is the state of being committed to mental concentration; the meaning is, giving priority to concentration; tending, leaning, inclining to concentration.

This is how **the 10 skills in concentration** should be undertaken.

4.4.3 The 5 similes (Vism 4:67-72/136 f)⁶¹

(1) The bee (Vism 4.67)

When an unclever clever bee learns that a flower is blooming on a tree, it sets out hurriedly, overshoots the mark, turns back and arrives when the pollen is finished. Then, another, not clever enough bee, who sets out with too slow a speed, arrives when the pollen is finished, too. But a clever bee sets out with balanced speed, arrives with ease at the cluster of flowers, takes as much pollen as it pleases and enjoys the honey-dew.

(2) A surgeon's students (Vism 4:68)

Again, when a surgeon's students are being trained in the use of the scalpel on a lotus leaf in a dish of water, one who is unclever applies the scalpel hurriedly and either cuts the lotus leaf in two or pushes it under the water. Another, not clever enough, does not even dare touch it with the scalpel for fear of cutting it into two or pushing it under. But one who is clever moves the scalpel stroke on it by means of a balanced effort, and being good at his craft, one is rewarded on such occasions.

(3) A spider's thread (Vism 4:69)

Again, when the king announces, "Anyone who can draw out a spider's thread 4 fathoms long shall receive 4,000 pieces (of money)," one person who is unclever breaks the spider's thread here and there by pulling it hurriedly; another who is not clever enough does not dare to touch it with his hand for fear of breaking it. But a clever person pulls it out starting from the end with a balanced effort, winds it on a stick, and so wins the prize.

(4) The skillful skipper (Vism 4:70)

Again, an unclever **skipper** hoists full sails in a high wind and sets his ship adrift. Another, not clever enough skipper, lowers his sails in a light wind and remains where one is. But a clever skipper hoists full sails in a light wind, takes in half his sails in a high wind, and so arrives safely at his destination.

(5) The oil-quiver (Vism 4.71)

Again, a teacher says, "Anyone who fills the oil-quiver without spilling any oil will win a prize." One who is unclever fills it hurriedly out of greed for the prize and spills the oil. Another who is not clever enough does not dare to pour the oil at all for fear of spilling it. But one who is clever fills it with a balanced effort and wins the prize.

(Vism 4.72)

Just as in these 5 similes, so too when the sign arises, one monk forces his energy, thinking, "I shall soon reach dhyana!" Then his mind is agitated because of over-exerting himself, and is unable to attain

⁶¹ Vism 4.66/135 f has been omitted.

dhyana. Another who sees the defect in over-exertion slackens his energy, thinking, “What is dhyana to me now?” Then his mind falls into dullness because of his lax energy, and so is unable to gain dhyana.

Yet another who frees his mind from dullness, even when it is only slightly idle, and from restlessness when only slightly agitated, directing his mind to the sign with balanced effort, reaches dhyana. One should be like the last person.

— — —

Sīti,bhava Sutta

The Discourse on the Cool

A 6.85

One incapable of realizing the supreme cool state

1 “Bhikshus, accomplished in 6 qualities, a monk is incapable of realizing the supreme cool state.⁶² What are the six?

2 Here, bhikshus,⁶³

- (1) a monk does not restrain the mind when it should be restrained;⁶⁴
- (2) he does not exert the mind when it should be exerted;⁶⁵
- (3) he does not gladden [encourage] the mind when it should be gladdened;⁶⁶
- (4) he does not look on the mind with equanimity when he should look on it with equanimity;⁶⁷
- (5) he is of inferior disposition;⁶⁸
- (6) he delights in self-identity.⁶⁹

Accomplished in these 6 qualities, bhikshus, a monk is incapable of realizing the supreme cool state.

One capable of realizing the supreme cool state

3 Bhikshus, accomplished in 6 qualities, a monk is capable of realizing the supreme cool state. What are the six?

4 Here, bhikshus,

- (1) a monk restrains the mind when it should be restrained; *cittaṃ niggaṇhāti*

⁶² “The supreme cool state” (*anuttaraṃ sīti,bhāvaṃ*) is nirvana. It is said to be “cool” (*sīti*) because the 3 fires of greed, hatred and delusion have been extinguished.

⁶³ The full points are discussed in some detail in Vism 4.51-64/130-135 but without full the sequence of teachings here [4].

⁶⁴ *Bhikkhū yasmim samaye cittaṃ niggahetabbarā, tasmim samaye cittaṃ na niggaṇhāti.*

⁶⁵ *Yasmim samaye cittaṃ paggaṇhātabbarā, tasmim samaye cittaṃ na paggaṇhāti.*

⁶⁶ *Yasmim samaye cittaṃ sampahaṃsitabbarā, tasmim samaye cittaṃ na sampahaṃsati,*

⁶⁷ *Yasmim samaye cittaṃ ajjupekkhitabbarā, tasmim samaye cittaṃ na ajjupekkhati.*

⁶⁸ *Hīnādhimuttiko ca hoti.* [1.2.1.2]

⁶⁹ *Be Ee Se sakkāyādhirato ca; Ce -abhirato.* [1.2.1.3]

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| (2) he <u>exerts the mind</u> when it should be exerted; | <i>cittam paggaṇhāti</i> |
| (3) he gladdens [encourages] the mind when it should be gladdened; | <i>cittam sampahaṃsati</i> |
| (4) he <u>looks on the mind with equanimity</u>
when he should look on it with equanimity; | <i>cittam ajjupekkhati</i> |
| (5) he is of superior [refined] disposition; | <i>paṇītādhimuttiko ca hoti</i> |
| (6) he delights in nirvana. ⁷⁰ | <i>nibbānâbhirato</i> |

Accomplished in these 6 qualities, bhikshus, a monk is capable of realizing the supreme cool state.”

— evaṃ —

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⁷⁰ “He delights in nirvana” [1.2.1.3].

60.10 (Chakka) Arati Sutta

The (Sixes) Discourse on Discontent | A 6.113/4:448
 Theme: Discontent is when we know not what is truly good
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2023

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The **(Chakka) Arati Sutta** (A 6.113) is a brief teaching by the Buddha to motivate and guide the laity based on right thought (*sammā saṅkappa*). In other words, we are reminded of how our right attitudes will help strengthen our commitment (faith) and diligence (effort) in personal development for true happiness and spiritual health, especially as we mature and age.

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 The social emotions

A “normal” socially healthy and mentally wholesome person is one who is able to accept others as they are, to joyfully reach out to others appropriately, to happily interact with them and to remain calm and clear-minded, even stoic, in the face of any difficulty he faces. Essentially, this is the practice of the 4 social emotions, otherwise called the “divine abodes” (*brahma, vihāra*): love, ruth [compassion], joy and peace.

1.2.2 The 6 elements of escape

On a deeper Dharma level, there is the spiritual cultivation of the “6 elements of escape” (*nissaraṇīya dhātu*), that is, ways of fully freeing ourselves from any negative emotions, from being obsessed with “things” (objects or “signs”), even to reach the path of awakening. **The (Chakka) Nissaraṇīya Sutta** (A 6.13), for example, teaches us about these “elements of escape” through meditation, to the point of reaching the path as streamwinners.¹

2 The 3 unwholesome attitudes, the 3 wholesome states

2.1 RIGHT THOUGHT AS THE BASIS FOR RIGHT PRACTICE

2.1.0 The 3 negative states beginning with discontent can be collated with the 3 components of **right thought**, as defined in **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117), thus:

<u>the 3 unwholesome attitudes</u>		<u>right thought</u> ²	
(1) discontent	<i>arati</i> ;	renunciation	<i>nekkhamma</i> ;
(2) harmfulness	<i>vihimsā</i> or <i>vihesā</i> ;	non-violence	<i>avihimsā</i> ;
(3) undharma conduct	<i>adhamma, cariyā</i> ;	non-ill will	<i>mettā</i> .

2.1.1 (1) Discontent (*arati*) is the lack of interest or boredom in teachings and truths that help us become a better person. We are caught up with and distracted by immediate pleasures of the physical senses. In other words, we live a habitually animal-like existence prodded and guided by sense-objects

¹ A 6.13/3:290-292 (SD 55.18).

² M 117,15/3:73 (SD 6.10).

(sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches) but lacking joyful humanity. We are likely to feel self-centred in the sense of satisfying *our* needs and even feel a sense of entitlement to such pleasures (as in the case of narcissists).

We lack or reject the idea of “letting go” or **renunciation**, that is, the quality that opposes discontent. This is often because we are drawn to people and the crowd, not so much in the sense of a healthy “belonging” (like a family or community), but as the desire and delight in being approved and applauded by others. Hence, we are unlikely to like mindfulness or meditation, especially in a quiet and solitary environment.

The Vibhaṅga defines discontent (*arati*) as follows:

“Discontent, not being contented, non-delight, non-delighting, dissatisfaction, dread of remote dwellings or this and that higher wholesome state.”³ (Vbh §856)

2.1.2 (2) Harmfulness (*vihimsā* or *vihesā*) is the thought of cruelty and violence. The Vibhaṅga calls this “the element of harmfulness” (*vihimsā dhātu*), and defines it as follows:

“The thought, thinking, intending, focus, focusing, mental fixation, wrong intention associated with harmfulness. This is called the element of harmfulness. Herein, someone harms (other) beings, with the hand, or with a clod, or with a stick, or with a sword, or with a rope, or with one thing or another; that which is of the nature of harassing, hurting, annoying, injuring, provoking, enraging, harming (others). This is called *the element of harmfulness*.”⁴

2.1.3 (3) Undharma conduct (*adhamma, cariyā*)

2.1.3.1 The Sāleyyaka Sutta (M 41) defines “undharma conduct,” that is, living against the true teaching, as committing any of the 10 unwholesome courses of action (*akusala kamma, patha*), that is:

(1) killing	(destroying living beings)	}	bodily acts (<i>kāya, kamma</i>)
(2) stealing	(taking the not-given)		
(3) sexual misconduct	(violating another’s person) ⁵		
(4) false communication		}	verbal acts (<i>vacī, kamma</i>)
(5) divisive speech			
(6) harsh language			
(7) frivolous chatter		}	mental acts (<i>mano, kamma</i>)
(8) covetousness			
(9) a malevolent mind			
(10) wrong view			

³ *Pantesu vā senāsanesu aññatar’aññataresu vā adhikusalessu dhammesu arati aratitā anabhirati anabhiramaṇā ukkaṇṭhitā paritassitā—ayaṃ vuccati arati* (Vbh 352,4-6).

⁴ *Vihimsa, paṭisaṃyutto takko vitakko saṅkappo appanā vyappanā cetaso abhiniropanā micchā, saṅkappo: ayaṃ vuccati vihimśa, dhātu. Idh’ekacco pāṇinā vā leḍḍunā vā daṇḍanena vā satthena vā rajjuyā vā aññatar’aññatarena satte viheṭheti yā eva, rūpā heṭhanā viheṭhanā himśanā vihimśanā rosanā virosanā parūpaghāto: ayaṃ vuccati vihimśa, dhātu.* (Vbh 86,25-30)

⁵ The suttas, as a rule, qu the Vinaya conventional def of the precept against sexual misconduct as violating any of the 10 prohibited women, viz, (1) one under the care of their mother, (2) under the care of their father, (3) under the care of their parents, (4) under the care of their brother, (5) under the care of their sister, (6) under the care of a relative,⁵ (7) one protected by dharma,⁵ (8) one with a husband, (9) one protected by law,⁵ (10) even with one adorned with a string of garlands (in betrothal to another). (Sangh 5.4.1 @ V3:139). These categories need to be updated to accommodate both sexes and reflect our contemporary conditions.

The **Sāleyyaka Sutta** gives a full list of the 10 unwholesome karmic acts (§§7-10) and the 10 wholesome karmic acts (§§11-14).⁶ This is not just a personal practice but is meant to be a common social conduct, and it is our task to inspire and encourage others to maintain this moral conduct and these moral codes so that we have a good society that is wholesomely progressive, creative and sustainable.

2.1.3.2 In this connection, the **Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7) upholds the “3 points of purity” (*ti,koṭi parisuddhi*) of moral conduct, that is: *keep the precepts oneself, encourage others to do the same, and “speak in praise” of the precepts.*⁷ These points, in fact, define the practical aspects of **the golden rule**.⁸ In other words, moral virtue is not merely about *living and letting live*, but also about living *well* and promoting a wholesome society and sustainable environment. This view is in keeping with the understanding that we do not exist alone but live as a network of “extended minds.”⁹

Living in this manner, then, we are each said to be living in Dharma. The Dharmafarer lives happily (*dhamma,cārī sukhaṃ seti*) (Dh 169). Wherever such a person is born, that family thrives happily (Dh 193). And wherever one goes, one brings happiness; in their company, one is ever happy (Dh 206).

— — —

⁶ M 41/1:285-290 (SD 5.7). On the constituents of each precept, see SD 5.7 (2).

⁷ S 55.7,6-12 + SD 1.5 (3).

⁸ On the golden rule—one should neither harm *oneself* nor *others* nor *both* oneself and others (the environment)—see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,6-12), SD 1.5; Dh 129 f.

⁹ On reciprocally responsible social relationships, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,27-34), SD 4.1. On living for one’s own good and for the good of other, see **Atta,hita S** (A 4.96), SD 64.6; **Sikkhā S** (A 4.99), SD 64.9. On “extended minds,” see SD 60.1e (12.7).

(Chakka) Arati Sutta

The (Sixes) Discourse on Discontent

A 6.113

Originating in Sāvattihī.

1 “Bhikshus, there are these 3 things [states]. What are the three?

2 They are

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| (1) discontent , | <i>arati</i> , | [renunciation] |
| (2) harmfulness , and | <i>vihimsā</i> or <i>vihesā</i> , | [nonviolence] |
| (3) undharma conduct . | <i>adhamma, cariyā</i> . | [non-ill will] |

These, bhikshus, are the 3 things.

3 Three (other) things are to be cultivated for the abandoning of these 3 things.

4 What are the three?

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (4) For the abandoning of <u>discontent</u> , | gladness | should be cultivated. ¹⁰ | <i>muditā</i> |
| (5) For the abandoning of <u>harmfulness</u> , | non-violence | should be cultivated. | <i>avihimsā</i> |
| (6) For the abandoning of <u>undhamma conduct</u> , | dharmafaring | should be cultivated. | <i>dhamma, cariyā</i> |

5 These are the 3 things that are to be cultivated for the abandoning of the (previous) 3 things.”

— evaṃ —

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¹⁰ On joy being the opposite of *discontent*, see (Chakka) Nissaraṇīya S (A 6.13,3), SD 55.8.

60.11 (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sati Sutta

The (Satipaṭṭhāna) Discourse on the Mindful | S 47.2

or Ce Sato Sutta The Discourse of Mindfulness

Theme: Mindfulness is being here and now

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2023

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sati Sutta (S 47.2), the (satipatthana) discourse on the mindful, is a short statement by the Buddha on the practice of keeping the mind properly focused on a meditation object or the mind to keep it in the present moment of true reality. The Sutta serves as an introduction to the full exposition of satipatthana, especially in the **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), SD 13.3.

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 Mindfulness (in brief)

1.2.1.1 Mindfulness (*sati*) is the minding of or attending to the body, to feelings, to thoughts or to dharmas (states or realities) as meditation objects. The **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) carefully words such a minding as follows:

a monk¹ dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful,² [2.1.1]

contemplating the body	in the body, ³	<i>kāye kāyānupassī</i>	[§§4-31]
contemplating feeling	in the feelings,	<i>vedanāsu vedanā'nupassī</i>	[§§32 f]
contemplating mind [thought]	in the mind,	<i>citte cittānupassī</i>	[§§34 f]
contemplating dharma	in the dharmas,	<i>dhamme dhammānupassī</i>	[§§36-45]

(M 10,2/1:56 (SD 13.3))

The curious syntactical structure “the body *in* the body,” “feeling *in* the feelings,” “mind *in* the mind,” and “dharma *in* the dharmas” highlights that each of these satipatthanas (focuses of mindfulness) as meditation-object should be “closely seen” (*anupassī*) *as it is*, as it arises and falls, that is, in the present moment.

1.2.1.2 Mindfulness here is *the close attention* we give to the meditation- or mind-object. The meditator should here be “exertive, clearly aware, mindful” (*ātāpī sampajāno satimā*). In this Pali phrase, we need to read the last word first, that is, “mindful (*satimā*): we need to be “exertive” (*ātāpī*) in bringing the mind back to the object whenever the mind wanders off; we need to keep it “clearly aware” (*sampajāno*) so that the mind does not wander into the past or chase the future. We need to do this until the mind merges with the object; then, there is concentration, even dhyana.

This mindfulness is a gentle but firm focus; it is far from being “non-judgemental.”⁴ The very idea of being “mindful” is that the mind is only “full” with a *true* vision of the mind object. It is **wrong**

¹ Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipatthana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251): see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5). [§4 n]

² *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*. In this para, we see 4 of the 5 faculties (*pañc'-indriya*) in action [2.1.1.2].

³ “Contemplating body in the body” (*kāye kāyānupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

⁴ This notorious error prob started with Nyanaponika's *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, London, 1962:32, 42. This error was famously and profitably perpetuated by J Kabat-Zinn's notion of medical “Mindfulness” [SD 60.1e (1.1.3.4)].

mindfulness (*micchā sati*) when we superimpose a memory (the past) onto it or when we project the future (imagination) onto it. The point is that when doing satipaṭṭhāna, we need to be mindful of neither falling back into the past nor projecting into the future. “The past is gone, and the future has not yet come.”⁵ We call this “**mindfulness of the present.**”

1.2.1.3 However, there is also what we can call the “**mindfulness of the 3 times.**” In certain practices, such as the recollections (*anussati*), we can be wholesomely mindful of the past or be wholesomely mindful of the future, or be wholesomely mindful of the present. There is an important teaching on this mindfulness of the 3 times in **the Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61), (SD 3.10).

The Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta records the Buddha’s teaching on the “mindfulness of the 3 times” regarding the 3 karmic doors, that is, reviewing our bodily act, speech and thought, thus:

- (1) This action I want to do with **the body—will it** harm me, will it harm others, will it harm both?
- (2) This action I am doing with **the body—is it** harming me, is it harming others, is it harming both?
- (3) This action I have done with **the body—did it** harm me, did it harm others, did it harm both?”

(Knowing) it is **unwholesome** ... with painful outcome, painful result,
then, Rāhula, you should **give up** such an action with the body.

(Knowing) it will be a **wholesome** ... with pleasant outcome, pleasant result,
then, Rāhula, you should **do** such an action with the body ...

[Similarly with “speech,” and with “the mind.”] (M 61,9-11/1:415 f), SD 3.10

In the case of (1), reviewing an action <u>before</u> doing it is	<i>mindfulness of the future.</i>
In the case of (2), reviewing an action <u>while</u> doing it is	<i>mindfulness of the present.</i>
In the case of (3), reviewing an action <u>after</u> having done it is	<i>mindfulness of the past.</i>

In short, this is the “**mindfulness of the 3 doors** over the 3 times.”

1.2.2 Clear awareness (in brief)

1.2.2.1 In sutta usage, we see mindfulness (*sati*) and clear awareness (*sampajañña*) working together; hence, we often see the dvandva (twin compound) **sati,sampajañña**, “mindfulness and clear awareness” or simply, “mindfulness and awareness.” Hence, as we have stated [1.2.1.2], mindfulness, far from being “non-judgmental,” but carefully minds the mind-object, keeping it just as it is, whether it is in the present moment, about something in the past, or about something in the future [1.2.1.3].

Technically, we can say that while mindfulness *directs* the mind to the object and *keeps* it there, it is clear awareness that works to “clear” away whatever prevents this full mental attention from occurring, whether a present-moment object (eg watching the breath), a memory as an object (such as in the recollection of the Buddha), or wise consideration of a future action [1.2.1.3]. In other words, mindfulness *does judge* the mind-object with “clear awareness.”

1.2.2.2 The Commentaries explain further that **clear awareness** not only fully minds the meditation-object, but it also minds or ensures that the meditation itself is done properly. In other words, we should be clearly aware that we have the right purpose for meditating, that we have the right object for our meditation, that our meditative nature takes *every* daily activity mindfully [below], and that the goal of our meditation is to gain wisdom or non-delusion that frees us from delusion.

⁵ *Yad atītaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ | appattañ ca anāgataṃ: Bhadd’eka,ratta S* (M 131,3/3:187), SD 8.9; *Ānanda Bhadd’eka,ratta S* (M 132,3/3:191), *Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd’eka,ratta S* (M 133,5/3:193), *Lomasak’aṅgiya Bhadd’eka,ratta S* (M 134,3/3:200). (SD 8.9 (2.1.1)).

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10) defines clear awareness (*sampajañña*) comprehensively in the following 7 ways, covering all our *conscious* activities, thus:

One is **clearly aware** of what one is doing:

- (1) in [while] going forward or going backward [stepping back];
- (2) in looking forward or looking back;
- (3) in bending or stretching;
- (4) in carrying one's upper robe, outer robe and bowl; [while dressing and working]
- (5) in eating, drinking, chewing and tasting;
- (6) in voiding or peeing;
- (7) in walking, in standing, in sitting, in sleeping, in waking,⁶ in talking, or in remaining silent.

In short, the meditator is mindfully present with clear awareness in their actions even outside of formal meditation. This is the true and full contemplative life.

1.2.3 Sati,sampajañña and vitakka,vicāra

1.2.3.0 It is very interesting to examine how mindfulness and clear awareness are mentioned at the start of the attaining of **the 1st dhyana** (*paṭhama jhāna*). The stock passage on the attaining of the 1st dhyana reads as follows:

- Quite detached from sense-objects, (detached) from unwholesome mental states, (1)
having attained, one dwells in **the 1st dhyana**, (2)
accompanied by initial application⁷ and sustained application, (3)
accompanied by zest and joy, born of solitude. (4)

- (1) *Vivicc'eva kāmehi akusalehi dhammehi* | (3) *sa,vitakkaṃ sa,vicāraṃ* |
(4) *viveka,jam pīti,sukhaṃ* | (2) *paṭhama-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*

(D 2,75.2/1:73), SD 8.10⁸

1.2.3.1 (1) "Quite detached from sense-objects" (*vivicc'eva kāmehi*) means that the meditator's mind is free from the distraction or influence of the physical body as a whole. This signifies "physical (or bodily) solitude" (*kāya,viveka*), that is, the mind no more has to process any sense-experiences or sense-data, including thoughts regarding them. Generally, "physical solitude" also refers to being free from any external distractions, that is, being in an environment that conduces to meditation progress and mental growth.

"**(Detached) from unwholesome mental states**" (*akusalehi dhammehi*) means that the mind, too, is (temporarily) free from greed, hatred and delusion. As a whole, this means that the mind is free from all the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*): sensual desire (*kāma-c,chanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca,kukkucca*), sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*).⁹ This denotes "mental solitude" (*citta,viveka*), that is, the mind is fully free, calm and clear.

1.2.3.2 (2) It is then said that "**having attained, one dwells in the 1st dhyana**" (*paṭhama-j,jhanaṃ upasampajja vihāraṃ*) when all the 5 mental hindrances [1.2.3.1] have been overcome and the mind

⁶ "In sleeping, in waking," *sutte jāgarite* (both loc of reference), lit, "while asleep, while awake." Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, "lying down, reclining." For details, see SD 13.1 (3.6.2). See also SD 60.1f (4.3.2.5).

⁷ The 4 dhyana-factors have been underscored.

⁸ On the dhyana-factors of the 4 form dhyanas, see SD 8.4 (5).

⁹ See **Nīvaraṇa**, (SD 32.1); (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12.

is fully unified (in samadhi) and naturally radiant. In this case, one does not only get a glimpse of the free, radiant mind, but actually remains in it for as long as one has aspired to do so.¹⁰

1.2.3.3 (3) This first dhyana is said to comprise these 4 **dhyana-factors** (*jhān'āṅga*)—the basic “limbs” of dhyana—initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest (*pīti*) and joy (*sukha*). Of special interest to our current study is the presence of the dvandva “initial application and sustained application” (***vitakka, vicāra***). *Vitakka* is our directing attention to the meditation object; *vicāra* then carefully examines the object, thus keeping the attention there, deepening the focus and concentration in due course.

We can thus see *vitakka* and *vicāra* respectively act as *sati* and *sampajañña*: initial application is the mind “applying” itself on the meditation object *mindfully*; sustained application is when it keeps itself *aware* of the meditation object, freeing the mind from the body (sense-objects), as a result of which zest and joy arise. [1.2.3.4]

1.2.3.4 (4) We have just mentioned that zest (*pīti*) and joy (*sukha*) arise as a result of the mind fully attending to the mind-object on account of *vitakka, vicāra* [1.2.3.3]. **Zest** is an *exuberant* joy of the mind at the feeling of being fully free of the senses and thoughts; **joy** is a calmer *sense of satisfaction* (or resolution) at the resultant *stillness* of mental oneness and *solitude* of inner aloneness. Hence, it is said to be “zest and joy born of solitude” (*vivekajaṃ pīti, sukhaṃ*).

In other words, this is not ordinary mindfulness and awareness, but mentally focused meditative application of attention to the meditation object and keeping it anchored there until the mind attains concentration and dhyana. This is called ***samatha***. Further, upon emerging from dhyana, with the wake of the dhyana that is *calm and clarity*, the mind clearly sees the true nature of true reality, beginning with impermanence. This is ***vipassana***.

1.2.3.5 We can thus see that *sati, sampajañña* is closely related to the experiences of **calm** (*samatha*) and **insight** (*vipassanā*). Theoretically, when we keep applying the mind (attention) to the meditation object, even without closely examining the object, joy will still arise. This is then followed by the arising of *sukha* (joy or happiness). Here we see *sati, sampajañña* working as **the 7 awakening factors** (*satta bojjhaṅga*)—(1) mindfulness (*sati*), (2) investigation of states (*dhamma, vicaya*), (3) effort (*virīya*), (4) zest (*pīti*), (5) tranquillity (*passaddhi*), (6) concentration (*samādhi*), and (7) equanimity (*upekkhā*).¹¹

Here we see the 7 awakening factors begin with (1) **mindfulness** (*sati*), followed by **awareness** by way of (2) investigation of states (*dhamma, vicaya*) and (3) effort (*virīya*). This is then followed by (4) zest (*pīti*) (the joyful free mind) and (5) tranquillity (*passaddhi*) (the stilling of all sense-experiences and thoughts), leading to (6) concentration (*samādhi*), and resulting in (7) equanimity (*upekkhā*), the peace of dhyana and the on-looking calm and clarity that follows.

¹⁰ Traditionally, on account of bodily limitations (the body needs food), a meditator normally can only stay in dhyana continuously for 7 days at the most.

¹¹ On the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*), see **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15; **Mahā Sakul'udāyī S** (M 77,20) + SD 6.18 (7); **Aggañña S** (D 27,30), SD 2.19.

2 Sati and sampajañña

2.1 MINDFULNESS (SATI)

2.1.1 The basic satipatthana formula

2.1.1.1 The definition and usage of the dvandva (a pair of terms), *sati,sampajañña*, is found in the well known **basic satipatthana formula** (on the 4 focuses of mindfulness,¹² which opens **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) and **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), thus:

Here, bhikshus, a monk, ... dwells exertive [ardent], clearly aware, mindful, ... putting away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world.

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ... viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,do-manassā. (M 10,8), SD 13.3, = (D 22,4), SD 13.2¹³

Firstly, we should note that this basic or auxiliary satipatthana formula gives the essence of practical meditation, that is, the establishment of mindfulness (*sati'paṭṭhāna*). Hence, we can clearly see how this formula is based on the framework of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*), those qualities that define, harmonise and fulfil our meditation.

2.1.1.2 Four of the 5 faculties are clearly evident from the way this satipatthana formula is worded, thus:

effort [energy] = “exertive”;
wisdom = “clearly aware”;
mindfulness = “mindful”;
samadhi = “putting away covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world.”¹⁴

The faculty of **faith** (*saddh'indriya*) is the first and most basic of the faculties and underpins all these 4 faculties: we must have faith in our effort, wisdom (understanding), mindfulness, and samadhi (mental concentration). This is a practical or “hands on” faith, that is, the willingness and ability to apply these “satipatthana faculties” for the attaining of mental focus, which is then applied for attaining liberating wisdom. Hence, faith underpins all these 4 satipatthana faculties.

2.1.2 Mindfulness in early Buddhism

2.1.2.1 Mindfulness, a well-known and widely accepted translation of the key Pali term *sati* can mean anything to any scholar, especially the mind scientists (a broad term for psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, etc). Such modern definitions are “purpose-driven” or “professionally limited,” depending on the purpose of the professional using them.¹⁵ Such definitions often quickly attract criticism and are often debunked within a generation. To determine which of such terms are useful in the study of a history of modern psychology, we need to keep to the sutta-based definitions and implications of the term, *sati*, if we are interested in Buddhist studies and practice.¹⁶

¹² See SD 13.1 (3.1.2).

¹³ For details on *sati,sampajañña*, see SD 13.1 (3.6).

¹⁴ Covetousness and displeasure are synecdoche for the 5 mental hindrances [4.2.5], the removal of the hindrances implies some level of mental concentration. See §4.2.

¹⁵ This is sometimes called “the scholars’ Buddhism”: see SD 60.1c (6.3).

¹⁶ For other meditation terms in modern usage (but not necessarily current), see SD 60.1f (0.3). For a detailed survey on modern conceptions of “mindfulness,” see SD 60.1e (1-5).

If the “**professional notion of mindfulness**” is a psychological Scylla, then there is the “sectarian notion of *sati*” that is an ethnic Charybdis.¹⁷ In the competitive market of ethnic Buddhism, **sectarian teachers** tend to come up with their own, often curious, even bizarre, definitions or interpretations of *sati* and other early teachings. Those who put the teacher above the teaching are easily and profoundly driven by such developments. Again, such personal and private teachings often last only as long as the teacher lives. Although such teachers may have produced prodigious writings on their systems, such sources are hardly read by their followers, but can be useful to research scholars studying the development of Buddhist dogma or some aspects of comparative Buddhism.

2.1.2.2 In this lesson (SD 60.11), it is essential and sufficient that we understand that *sati* is not “present-moment awareness” but simply *mindfulness* *the object in mind*. It is **awareness** (*sampajañña*) that discerns whether the object is wholesome or unwholesome: the former to be cultivated and the latter to be abandoned. Thus, we have both mindfulness and awareness (*sati, sampajañña*).

Secondly, mindfulness is *not* merely awareness of the present; it is also mindfulness past objects (memories) and future objects (imagination). It is awareness that discerns these aspects of the object and deals with them accordingly, such as letting go of the past and of the future. It is awareness that watches the present rising and ending of mental states; mindfulness keeps the focus to effect the process.

Finally, it should be noted that mindfulness as a pregnant term—that is, as “mindfulness and awareness”—has a significant presence throughout our spiritual training, thus, **mindfulness**:

- (1) stands at the head of **the 7 awakening factors** (*satta bojjhaṅga*);
- (2) stands right in the middle amongst **the 5 faculties** (*pañc’indriya*) and **the 5 powers** (*pañca, bala*); and
- (3) stands near the end as the 3rd training amongst **the 8 path-factors** (*magg’āṅga*).

Mindfulness appears like a captain commanding the ship that is our conscious body; it works as awareness investigating states (*dharmā*) as they arise. Mindfulness as effort keeps going on the proper course; this brings on zest, which leads on to tranquillity (the body fully settles leaving the calm and bright mind). In this profound peace, the mind focuses in samadhi, resulting in equanimity (including dhyana).

While we are meditating, mindfulness is the conductor or moderator that harmonizes *faith* with wisdom, and *effort* with *concentration*—they work as the 5 spiritual faculties—so that we mentally progress on a sure and even keel. With *awareness*, mindfulness penetrates ever deeper into seeing true reality until we are mentally free with the attaining of some level of concentration, even dhyana.

As path-factors, that is, qualities bringing about the path of freedom (even if only a momentary vision of it), right mindfulness is preceded by right effort and fruits in right concentration. In simple terms, *right effort* keeps away distractions and cultivates the right conditions, bringing on *right mindfulness*, when the mind focuses on the object, and this results in *right concentration*, that is, dhyana.

Underlying all this process is, of course, mindfulness and awareness at ever more refined levels.

¹⁷ Scylla and Charybdis were mythical sea-monsters in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Greek mythology locates them on opposite sides of the Strait of Messina between Sicily and Calabria (on the Italian mainland). Scylla was a 6-headed sea-monster (rationalized as a treacherous rock shoal) and Charybdis was a whirlpool. Here this allusion refers to a difficult choice best avoided by resorting to sutta-based definitions informing our own experiences. On this mythology, see SD60.1c (6.2.3).

2.2 CLEAR AWARENESS (*SAMPAJAÑÑA*)

2.2.1 The 4 applications of clear awareness

The same advice is given in **the Gelaṅṅa Sutta 1** (S 36.7), the first discourse on the infirmary. The Sutta Commentary explains at length the practice of **clear awareness** (*sampajañña*).¹⁸ Clear awareness or full knowing (*sampajañña*)—often simply “awareness”—has been discussed in a number of places in the suttas and the SD series.¹⁹

The Commentaries give detailed explanations of **clear awareness** (*sampajañña*) as having these **4 applications**, that are, briefly, as follows:²⁰

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) clear awareness of <u>purposefulness</u>
(<i>sāttḥaka, sampajañña</i>) | discerning the wholesome worth of our actions; |
| (2) clear awareness of <u>suitability</u>
(<i>sappāya, sampajañña</i>) | discerning the proper means for our practice; |
| (3) clear awareness of <u>the resort</u>
(<i>gocara, sampajañña</i>) | being mindful of one’s meditation in daily activities; |
| (4) clear awareness as <u>non-delusion</u>
(<i>asammoha, sampajañña</i>) | seeing our actions as being conditioned, without an abiding self.
(DA 1:183; MA 1:184, 253 f; SA 3:182-190; VbhA 347) |

By “clear awareness” here is meant that we are clearly knowing or fully keeping in mind the true **purpose** in taking up the Dharma, of our **practice** of mindfulness and meditation, of our **daily activities**, and of **the true nature** of these activities leading to mental concentration and liberating wisdom. In other words, we are not using Buddhism for worldly gains or any self-centred agenda except for a life of outer and inner renunciation for happiness. [2.2.2.1]

2.2.2 The 4 phases of clear awareness

2.2.2.1 The Buddha’s teaching has only one **purpose**: that of **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*). All the sutta teachings in some way address or result in the renouncing of unwholesome states, the cultivating of wholesome states, and the attaining of mental freedom. This is the true purpose for practising the Buddha’s teaching and for renouncing the world to join the monastic sangha.²¹

Just as the Buddha Dharma has only one purpose, that of renunciation, it also has only one goal, that is, freedom (*vimutti*), which here refers to self-awakening itself. Thus, **the Pahārāda Sutta** (A 8.19) uses the parable of the great ocean, playing on the word *rasa*, “taste,” to mean “goal.” Hence, it is said regarding **the clear awareness of purpose**:

¹⁸ S 36.7/4:211,1-19. For trs of this teaching, see Soma, *The Way of Mindfulness* [1941], 4th ed, Kandy, 1975: 83-132; Bodhi, *Discourse on the Fruits of Recluseship*, Kandy, 1989:96-134.

¹⁹ See SD 13.1 (3.6). On “full or clear awareness,” see **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13.1 (3.6.3); **Sāmañña, phala** (D 2,65), SD 8.10 = **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,33), SD 1.7

²⁰ For a contemporary explanation, see Nyanaponika, 1962:46-57.

²¹ On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

Pahārāda, just as *the great ocean has only one taste, the taste of salt—*
so, too, Pahārāda, this Dharma-Vinaya has only one taste, the taste of freedom.²² [§16.1-2]
(A 8.19,16) + SD 45.18 (2.6)²³

2.2.2.2 As a rule, we do not often have the opportunity to choose the **suitable conditions** for our practice. For various reasons, it is not easy for us to practise Dharma when we are old or ill, or when food is difficult to obtain, or in times of social strife or when the sangha is split. Hence, the Samayāsamaya Sutta (A 5.54)—a teaching on the clear awareness of the suitability of practice—records the Buddha as stating the wrong times for Dharma practice and the 5 right times, as follows:²⁴

Wrong times for practice

- (1) when one is old
- (2) when one is ill
- (3) when there is a famine
- (4) where there is social unrest
- (5) when the sangha is split

Right times for practice

- (1) when one is young
- (2) when one is healthy
- (3) when food is plentiful
- (4) when people dwell in concord
- (5) when the sangha dwells in concord

A 5.54/3:65-67 (SD 51.15)

A rule of thumb for the clear awareness of the right conditions for Dharma practice is as follows:

- (1) the best time for practice is *now*;
- (2) the best meditation-object is *the here and now*;
- (3) the best teacher is *our own sufferings*;
- (4) the best effort is *not to give up*; and
- (5) the best awakening is that our body and mind changes all the time.

2.2.2.3 When we have the clear awareness of purpose and suitability, the clear awareness of the proper **resort** for practice comes easily: we are mindful and aware of the kinds of **people, places, food** and **habits** to avoid, as we have a better understanding of how our body and mind work. Simply put, we clearly know that, or are inclined towards, bodily acts that are wholesome, speech that is wholesome—both of these constitute our moral practice and virtue—and thoughts that are wholesome, which we guard and cultivate with mindfulness and mental concentration.

2.2.2.4 With the preceding 4 kinds of clear awareness, it is not difficult for the clear awareness of **non-delusion** to arise and guide us. The main root of delusion to be aware of and avoid here is that of *identifying* with our body (our body-parts and looks) or with our mind: feelings, perceptions (memories), formations (karmic acts, words and thoughts), and consciousness (sense-experiences and the mind).

When we do not identify with these 5 aggregates, which bring about clinging (*upādāna*), or at least work to lessen such an identifying, we are less likely to feel “entitled” to the notions “this is mine” (craving), “I am this” (conceit) or “this is my self” (view).²⁵ These are, in fact, the roots of

²² *Evam evaṃ kho pahārāda ayaṃ dhamma, vinayo eka, raso vimutti, raso*. Cf Maitrāyana Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad 6.35: sacrificers dissolve in that ocean like salt, and this is the oneness with Brahman. On the parable, cf Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.11.

²³ The parable (in a set of 8 parables) are also found in (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Uposatha S** (A 8.20), SD 59.2a, and (**Samudda**) **Uposatha S** (U 5.5), SD 59.2b, and Vinaya’s Pātimokkha Thapana Khandhaka (Cv 9.1-2 @ V 2:237-240), SD 59.2c.

²⁴ A 5.54/3:65-67 (SD 51.15).

²⁵ *Etam mama, eso’ham asmi, eso me attāti*. These are “**the 3 graspings**” (*ti, vidha gāha*), ie, of view (*diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), of conceit (*māna*) (MA 2:111, 225). The notion “This is mine” arises through craving; the notion “This I am” arises through conceit; the notion “This is my self” arises through views. These 3 considerat-

narcissism. We tend to be overwhelmed by any of these views through the habit of **self-identity** (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), a view arising from identifying with any of the 5 aggregates.

The basic and constant reflection we need to cultivate in this connection is that *all my body and mind are impermanent*. Whatever is impermanent is also unsatisfactory: we can never be fully satisfied with what is ever-changing. What is impermanent and unsatisfactory does not have any abiding essence with which we can identify as “I,” “mine” or “me.” When we habitually renounce the self-identity view in this way, we will attain **streamwinning** in this life itself, if not, at the very moment of passing away—as stated by the Buddha in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1).²⁶

— — —

(Satipaṭṭhāna) Sati Sutta

The (Satipatthana) Discourse on the Mindful

S 47.2

1 At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling at Anātha, piṇḍika’s park monastery in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvathī.

2 There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus, “Bhikshus!”
“Bhadante,” replied the monks.

The Blessed One said this:²⁷

3 “Bhikshus, a monk should dwell **mindful and clearly aware**: this is our instruction to you.”²⁸

Mindfulness

4 And how, bhikshus, is a monk²⁹ **mindful**?

ions represent respectively the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), and of conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). The opposite formula, *n’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmi, na mēso attā ti*, is applied below to the 5 aggregates [§§17-21]. See §17 n. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f. For detailed studies, see **I: The nature of identity**, SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a; **Mine: The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

²⁶ S 25.1/3:225 (SD 16.7).

²⁷ Here the Buddha gives the essence of **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10), ie, the basic satipatthana formula [M 10,3] and the section on “clear awareness” [M 10,8] (SD 13.3).

²⁸ *Sato bhikkhave, bhikkhu vihareyya sampajāno. Ayaṃ vo amhākaṃ anusāsani.*

²⁹ “Monk” (*bhikkhu*) is a synecdoche for a meditator [M 10,3A n, SD 13.3] or sutta audience [SD 4.9 (5.3); SD 13.1 (3.1.1)]. On laity attaining “monkness” (*bhikkhu, bhāva*) during meditation, see (M 10,3A) + n, SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5); SD 16.7 (1.1.1.2).

Here, bhikshus,

- (1) a monk³⁰ dwells³¹ exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating the body in the body,³²
 removing³³ covetousness and displeasure [discontent]³⁴ in regard to the world;³⁵ [M 10,4-31]
- (2) he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating feeling in the feelings,
 removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world; [M 10,32 f]
- (3) he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating mind [thought] in the mind,
 removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world; [M 10,34 f]
- (4) he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating dharma in the dharmas,³⁶
 removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. [M 10,36-45]

In this way, bhikshus, a monk is mindful.

Clear awareness

- 5 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **clearly aware**?

³⁰ Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipaṭṭhana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251): see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5). Note that in **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97) Sāriputta teaches the divine abodes to the layman Dhānañjāni (addressing him directly) (M 97,32.2), SD 4.9, and that in **(Nānā,karaṇa) Mettā S 1** (A 4.125), the subject of each of the stock passages on the 4 divine abodes is “a certain person” (*ekacco puggalo*) (A 4.125,2 etc), SD33.9.

On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

³¹ *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassam*. Here we see 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc’indriya*) in action [1.2.1.1].

³² “Contemplating body in the body” (*kāye kāyānupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

³³ *Vineyya* can mean “would or should remove” (as pot or opt, like *vineyya*, Sn 590) or as “having removed” (as ger or absol, like *vineyya*, Sn 58, or *vinayitvā*, Pm 1:244), and both senses apply in Satipaṭṭhāna S. U Silananda similarly ends the sentence with “removing covetousness and grief in the world” (1990:177); also 1990:22-25. See Sn:N 170 n58 + 284 n590. See SD 13.1 (4.2c) above.

³⁴ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā,domanassam*, alt trs: “desire and discontent,” “desiring and disliking,” or “longing and loathing.” Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders it as “hankering and fretting [in regard to the world].” See SD 13.1 (4.2).

³⁵ “World” (*loka*). See SD 13.1 (4.2.4).

³⁶ “Dharma” (*dhamma*) here refers to either mental states or realities (truths) that arise during the meditation or generally as “mind-objects.” See SD 13.3 (5D).

Here, bhikshus,³⁷

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) in [while] going forward or going backward [stepping back], | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |
| (2) In looking forward or looking back, | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |
| (3) In bending or stretching, | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |
| (4) In carrying his upper robe, outer robe and bowl, ³⁸ | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |
| (5) In eating, drinking, chewing and tasting, | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |
| (6) In voiding or peeing, | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |
| (7) In walking, in standing, in sitting, in sleeping,
in waking, ³⁹ in talking, or in remaining silent, | one is clearly aware what one is doing. |

In this way, bhikshus, a monk is clearly aware.

6 Bhikshus, a monk should dwell mindful and clearly aware; this is our instruction to you.

— evaṃ —

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³⁷ In this set of clear awareness of one's bodily activities, the Chin version (**MĀ 98**/T1.582b25) has fewer activities than both the Satipaṭṭhāna Ss (D 22, M10): it does not mention such activities as *looking forward and looking back, eating and drinking, or voiding and peeing*. These same activities seem to be absent from the passage on clear awareness in Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra: frag S 360 fol 167V6 (Waldschmidt 1950:15) continues after *sāṅghāticīvarapātradhāraṇe* right away with *gate sthite niṣaṃṇe śayite*. **M 10,8** (1:57,7), on the other hand, follows *saṅghāṭi, patta, cīvara, dhāraṇe* with *asite pīte khāyite sāyite* and *uccāra, passāva, kamme*, and then on to *gate ṭhite nisinne sutte*. Chin Dīrgha Āgama version, **DĀ 2** (T1.14a3), mentions clear awareness regarding looking in different directions as well regarding eating and drinking (cf Yit's tr, 2008:273 n17), as does the Śrāvabhūmi (Shukla 1973: 111,12; ŚSG 1998:20,5); T1579 (T30.397b17); for a detailed exposition of clear awareness: Shukla 1973:111,11; ŚSG 1998:172,1; and T1579 (T30.413c29). The set of activities described in **D 22,4** (2:292,25) and **M 10,8** (1:57,5) appears to be a pericope for proper conduct in the suttas. The importance of such proper conduct is reflected in **Cātumā S** (M 67,16/1:460,9), SD 34.7, and **Ūmi, bhaya S** (A 4.122/2:123,29), SD 47.9, according to which a monk's unwillingness to submit to instructions on how to undertake these activities can eventually lead him to disrobing. A description of proper conduct in the Jain tradition (Deo 1956:487), also mentions voiding and peeing.

³⁸ This whole line: *Saṅghāṭi, patta, cīvara, dhāraṇe sampajāna, kāri hoti*, lit "upper robe, bowl, outer robe ...". Traditionally, **the "3 robes"** (*ti, cīvara*) are (1) the outer robe (*uttar'āsaṅga* = "one-sided robe," *ekaṃsika cīvara*), (2) the under-garment (*antara, vāsaka*, also called *nīvasana*, V 1:46) and (3) the upper robe (*saṅghāṭi*) (V 1:94,8 = 2:272,11 ≈ 5:175,2). When "amongst houses" (ie, outside of the monastery, eg, for almsround) the outer robe must cover both shoulders. However, when showing respect to elders or the sangha, it should be placed on one side (*ekaṃsaṃ uttarā, saṅgaṃ karitvā*, V 1:45,32, 46,5, 2:126,32). **Cīvara** is a generic term, meaning "robe," and can refer to any of the 3 above. Here, however, the context clearly refers to it being used as an "outer robe," *uttar'āsaṅga*. See CPD: *uttarāsaṅga*; also C S Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms*, Varanasi, 1975: 88-91.

³⁹ "In sleeping, in waking," *sutte jāgarite* (both loc of reference), lit, "while asleep, while awake." Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, "lying down, reclining." For details, see SD 13.1 (3.6.2). See also SD 60.1f (4.3.2.5).

60.12

Aṭṭha,sata Sutta

The Discourse on the 108 | S 36.22

Theme: The various forms and sets of feelings

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2013, 2023

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The **Aṭṭha,sata Sutta** (S 36.22), the discourse on the 108, is a brief but comprehensive listing of the various sets of feelings used in the teachings recorded in the suttas, that is, sets of 2, 3, 5, 6, 18, 36 and 108 feelings. These 7 sets of feelings are classified respectively according to (2) location, (3) quality, (5) spiritual faculty, (6) sense-contact, (18) (mental) exploration, (36) household versus renunciation (secular versus spiritual), and (108) time the past, future and present.

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

The 7 sets of feelings are also listed (without elaboration) in the **Pañcak'aṅga Sutta** (S 36.19). There, as here, we see the Buddha stating that the teaching is *versatile* and can be explained metaphorically (*pariyāyena*) with the usage of different teaching lists. This is the *spirit* of the Dharma, which can be expressed in different wordings and formulas. Hence, we should keep an open mind to use the teaching to see the same true reality from different teachings.¹

This is not to cavalierly claim all religions teach the same thing (they certainly do *not*), although there are some overlapping teachings and truths. However, when we keep an **open mind** of not being caught up with the words and worldliness of religions and dogmas, then “everything is teaching us,” that is, when we are willing and ready to learn. What we learn, or rather realize, here is the *natural* true reality of things, not the private truths and fabricated dogmas of religions for controlling and exploiting followers.

1.3 RELATED SOURCES

In the Aṭṭha,sata Sutta, the Buddha only lists 7 sets of feelings and the types of feelings for each set without elaborating. A similar listing is found in early texts such as the Daṭṭhabba Sutta (S 36.5)² and the **Bahu,vedaniya Sutta** (M 59).³

There is an essay on **the feeling aggregate** (SD 17.3), which should be consulted when studying the Aṭṭha,sata Sutta.

2 Feeling in modern psychology (in brief)

2.1 MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW OF FEELING

2.1.1 The American Psychological Association definition (2015)

2.1.1.1 The APA *Dictionary of Psychology* (2nd edition, 2015) defines **feeling** as follows:

¹ Pañcak'aṅga S (S 36.19/4:223-228), SD 30.1.

² S 36.5/4:207 (SD 17.3(5)).

³ M 59/1:396-400 (SD 30.4).

feeling *n.*

1. a self-contained phenomenal experience. Feelings are subjective, evaluative, and independent of the sensations, thoughts, or images evoking them. They are inevitably evaluated as pleasant or unpleasant, but they can have more specific intrapsychic qualities, so that, for example, the affective tone of fear is experienced as different from that of anger. The core characteristic that differentiates feelings from cognitive, sensory, or perceptual intrapsychic experiences is the link of affect to appraisal. Feelings differ from emotions in being purely mental, whereas emotions are designed to engage with the world.

2. any experienced sensation, particularly a tactile or temperature sensation (eg, pain, coldness).

This is probably the key definition of feeling in modern psychology, even of “feeling” in the modern academic understanding. Also, as we see above, there are 2 psychological definitions of “feelings”: (1) is the key psychological definition, and (2) is broad practical or ordinary usage of “feeling.” We will discuss more about (1).

2.1.1.2 Next, we notice that in this modern psychological definition of **feeling** there is an overlap between feeling and emotion: “fear” and “anger” have different “affective tone,” which are “intrapsychic qualities” (they are features of the mind itself). In early Buddhist psychology, feelings (*vedanā*) and emotions (*saṅkhārā*) are clearly different categories.

In early Buddhism, feelings are basically *affective* qualities as reactions to pleasant objects, unpleasant objects or neutral objects. As noted in the Aṭṭhasata Sutta, these feelings can be categorized into 7 sets, that is, by (1) location, (2) quality, (3) spiritual faculty, (4) sense-contact, (5) explorations, (6) household versus renunciation, and (7) time (the past, future and present).

2.1.1.3 The early Buddhist definition of **emotion** (*saṅkhāra*) also differs from the modern psychological view, where “feelings differ from emotions in being purely mental, whereas emotions are designed to engage with the world.” Firstly, in Buddhism, both feelings and emotions arise with worldly engagement, that is, through the senses and through thinking (by the unawakened mind). The term “non-worldly” or “spiritual” (*nirāmisa*)⁴ refers to such experiences when they are free from greed, hatred and delusion (even momentarily).

Furthermore, emotions (*saṅkhārā*) are defined as “karmically potent” acts of the mind, speech and the body, that is, as thoughts, words and acts, respectively. In other words, they tend to be habit-forming and shape our lives and their qualities. Such emotions (lust, hatred, delusion, fear, and so on) keep us in the “loop” of cyclic life (*saṃsāra*). Only acting through non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, and cultivating them are regarded as “wholesome” (*kusala*)—this is how we evolve into beings liberated from cyclic life and suffering.

2.1.1.4 Another point that seems unique to early Buddhism (not found in modern psychology) is the concept of “**neutral**” **feeling**. Modern psychology sees feelings (as it defines them) as being *emotionally loaded or coloured*, that is, they are either pleasurable or not pleasurable. This is a rather narrow conception of a very rich and engaging experience in our conscious lives.

It is helpful to see that in early Buddhism, **feeling** (*vedanā*) is part of our mental apparatus of learning or how we learn and know things. Every waking moment, feelings arise in us through our sense-experiences: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. Meanwhile, almost at the same moment,

⁴ See SD 55.6 (1.1.1); SD 49.9 (2.2.3).

the mind, too, generates its own feelings **recalling** (through memory) past events, most of which are re-constructed or reinterpreted. The mind also **imagines** things from its present conditioned states about possible futures.

In addition to this mental editing of the memories and imaginations, the mind also tries to “make sense” of present events from how it is conditioned. It is rare that we see our experiences for what they really are (impermanent, etc), but we tend to evaluate or value-add them in terms of *greed*, *hatred* and *delusion*. On account of *greed*, we run *after* the experiences we see as pleasurable; out of *hatred*, we run *away from* experiences we see as not pleasurable; they tend to be coloured by how we recall similar past experiences. When we lack such past experiences with which to “measure” present states, our ignorance or *delusion* makes us ignore them.

2.1.1.5 Essentially, this describes how we act and react *karmically* in our daily lives: we are moved by our latent tendencies (*anusaya*) like puppets on the strings of greed, hatred and delusion. Whenever we react with *greed*, we feed the latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*); when we react with *hatred*, we feed the latent tendency of *aversion* (*paṭighānusaya*); and when we react with *delusion*, we feed the latent tendency of *ignorance* (*avijjānusaya*).⁵

What has been described here [2.1.1.4] is essentially **how we learn things** (or not) and shape our personality and behaviour. We become what we *like*, *dislike* or *ignore*; we create our own karma, and we are our own karma. **Karma** is our intentional thoughts, acts and speech, whether we are conscious of them or not. In fact, in the unawakened, most of such actions are unconscious, habitual and conditioned. We tend to be creatures of habit. Feelings underlie all such experiences; **feelings** are the currency of our sense-experiences and thinking.

2.1.2 Feeling and religion

2.1.2.1 The best-known encyclopaedias of psychology, it seems, do not carry any articles or discussions on “feeling” or “feeling(s).” A rare article by John Ryan Haule⁶ entitled “Feeling” is found in **the Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion** (2010:323 f).⁷ The following critical discussion is mainly based on Haule’s article. Haule opens his article by defining *feeling* as “the conscious registration of an emotion or affect,” and adds that:

Emotion is a physiological state of arousal governed by the brain’s limbic system that places the body in an attitude of fear, rage, lust, disgust, etc. Emotions are *automatic responses* that occur before an individual has a chance to think about what is going on. Feeling occurs as the *conscious recognition* that an emotional state is already in effect.

(Haule, 2010:323; emphases added)

Like the Abhidhamma tradition, modern psychology generally locates the generation and process of *emotional states* in **the limbic region**. Early Buddhism, however, does not locate emotions, or feelings or any mental process in the brain but sees it as a “general” process that occurs with the *whole* bodily state, or to be exact, the whole *conscious body* (*sa,viññāṇaka kāya*).⁸

⁵ On the 3 latent tendencies, see **Sammā Ditṭhi S** (M 9,65-67), SD 11.14; **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (8.2).

⁶ C G Jung Institute Boston, Chestnut Hill, MA 2467, USA.

⁷ (Edd) David A Leeming, K Madden, S Marlan, *Ency of Psychology and Religion*, NY: Springer, 2010.

⁸ On “the body (endowed with) with consciousness” (*sa,viññāṇaka kāya*): SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

According to early Buddhism, **emotions** are “psychological states of arousal” that put the mind (not the body, at least not the body alone) “in an attitude of fear, rage, lust, disgust, etc.” The last 2 sentences of Haule’s definition of emotion above, especially when he says “emotions are automatic responses” and that feeling “occurs as the conscious recognition that an emotional state is already in effect,” are only partly true. In some ways, this agrees with the feeling process described in early Buddhism (in the unwholesome or worldly mind), but it can also be restrained or cultivated by the wholesome mind. We will briefly discuss in the next section.

2.1.2.2 Before we go on to see how early Buddhism explains, first, that there are feelings (and how they arise), and then there are emotions, let us read further what Haule says about **feeling** (from the Jungian perspective):

In Jungian psychology, **feeling** is—along with thinking, sensation, and intuition—one of the four “psychic functions” for apprehending the two worlds, inner and outer. While “sensation” (the five senses) determines that something is there before me and “thinking” determines what it is, feeling evaluates the people, situations, and objects that I meet. Feeling establishes that something is attractive or disgusting, benign or threatening, gratifying or enraging, etc; and it does so on a hierarchical basis, determining which object is more lovable or inspiring than another. Because it sets the world in order, Jung calls feeling a “rational” function, along with thinking. Sensation and intuition are “irrational” in that they only register the psychic facts that come before one, establishing no order among them.

(Haule 2010:323)

Haule’s remarks here about feeling come remarkably close to those of early Buddhist psychology, but reading his article as a whole, I must say he is merely trying to interpret Jung’s ideas about feelings and emotions. Even then, there are too many unclear and uncertain ideas about feelings and emotions compared to the practical, cohesive early Buddhist psychological system, at least concerning the two key topics.

“**Sensation**,” for example, is neither defined nor detailed in Haule’s article. Hence, we can take it to mean (1) as a countable noun, “a feeling that you get when something affects your body”; or (2) as an uncountable noun, “a general feeling or impression that is difficult to explain; an experience or a memory.”⁹ Either definition is too broad to be psychologically useful.

In early Buddhist psychology, sense 1 refers to any physical **sense-experience** or sense-based activity (*āyatana*), and sense 2 refers to **emotions** (*sankhārā*), our karmically potent mental reactions to feelings and states. It is important here to note that while the sense-experiences are *felt*, the emotions are the *intention* behind our acts, speech and thoughts. The significance of this psychological structuring of our experiences will be briefly explained next.

2.1.2.3 Haule’s article continues:

In using the rational, ordering capability of **feeling**, an individual may remain self-possessed and take charge of the circumstances that present themselves in the moment. By contrast, **emotion** occurs as a psychological “shock” that lowers the level of mental functioning and narrows the field of awareness. Adequate everyday living, therefore, requires a capacity to use’s [sic] one’s feeling in order to survey in detail the full world-picture unfolding before one without the

⁹ Both defs from *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 6th ed 2000, 10th ed 2020.

distortion of an overwhelming emotion. A differentiated and dependable “feeling function” is essential for satisfying and nuanced interpersonal relations and for social behavior, in general.
(Haule 2010:323)

From Haule’s quote, he seems to be using “the rational” for “ordering capability of feeling,” with which we have some kind of “ordering capability of feeling.” Haule seems to say that feeling helps us “remain self-possessed and take charge of the circumstances ... in the moment.” This, according to him, is the “**feeling function**.” From Haule’s explanation of Jung, it seems that because feeling responses are hierarchical we automatically decide that “this is better than that; that is worse than this ... “

Early Buddhism describes 2 kinds of feeling processes: the worldly or unwholesome process and the wholesome or cultivated process. **The worldly feeling process** lacks “free will”: it is merely our reflex action or conditioned reaction to sense-experiences by way of perception (*saññā*). Hence, how I experience feelings in themselves, they are not karmically potent. For example, when I see, hear, smell, taste, or touch [feel] something unpleasant, this is not, as a rule, due to my karma but to other **natural orders of things** (such as the laws of physics).¹⁰

Feelings arise depending on how we **perceive** them after they have arisen as mind-objects, that is, as sights, sounds, smells, tastes and thoughts. The fact that we do experience something is, as a rule, due to some natural order of things—not always as a result of past or present karma. That we see, hear, smell, taste, feel or think of something may be due to the laws of physics (light, sound, smells, etc), the laws of heredity (like skin colour, being prone to certain ailments), mental processes (the way we are conditioned to think or behave), and to nature itself (the way things are, like gravity, physical causes and effects); karma is only *one*, the 3rd, of these 5 natural orders or things.

2.1.2.4 In some cases, the natural orders may occur to us as a result of some past or present karma. When we do not react negatively—with more greed, hatred or delusion—these situations do not have any serious or significant hold on us; we do not suffer as much as we would if we reacted negatively to them.

Another interesting point here is that many, even most, of our reactions to such situations—arising on account of any of the 5 natural orders—*physics, heredity, karma, psychology* or *natural phenomena*—are reflexive actions or conditioned reactions that are technically “unconscious.” They are, as a rule, morally neutral events; they have no karmic significance or impact on us (at least at the moment of their arising).

Then, we **perceive** (*sañjānāti*)¹¹ feelings *aesthetically* as being pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, but we react no further to them, except to see them simply as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling [touching] or thinking. This is what the whole habit of **wise consideration** (*yoniso manasikāra*) trains us to do; we regard these experiences as being conditioned and impermanent. In this way, our response to them actually creates wholesome karma, since there is no greed, hatred or delusion. [4.1.1.1]

2.1.2.5 However, for most of us—who have no training in wise consideration (or “Vipassana” in the lingo of sectarian Buddhists)—we are likely to perceive our sense-experiences and thoughts in terms of our **memories**, that is, our perception of the past. Conditioned by memories of past events:

¹⁰ There are the 5 natural orders of things (*pañca,niyāma*), ie, those of (1) heat (*utu,niyāma*, incl the laws of physics), (2) seeds (*bīja,niyāma*) or heredity, (3) karma (*kamma,niyāma*), (4) mental processes (*citta,niyāma*, incl psychic phenomena), and (5) nature (*dhamma,niyāma*), ie nature itself, such as dependent arising, the nature of buddhas, gravity, instincts and tropisms: DA 2:432; DhsA 272; SD 5.6 (2).

¹¹ On this perception (*saññā*), see SD 17.4 (esp 2.2).

- we tend to react to a mind-object that reflects a *good* memory as a **pleasant** feeling;
- we tend to react to a mind-object that reflects a *bad* memory as an **unpleasant** feeling;
- we tend to react to a mind-object of which we have no memory as a **neutral** feeling.

Perceiving in this manner, our reactions are karmically rooted in *greed* or *hatred*, and certainly in *delusion*. We are then likely to *desire* what we perceive as a pleasant experience; we are likely to *reject* what we perceive as an unpleasant experience; and we tend to *ignore* what we have no memory of.

We have now intentionally coloured these perceptions so that they become **negative emotions** (*saṅkhāra*), with the following karmic consequences:

- when we desire what we see as pleasant, we feed the latent tendency of **lust** *rāgānusaya*;
- when we reject what we see as unpleasant, we feed the latent tendency of **aversion** *paṭighānusaya*;
- when we ignore what we see as neutral, we feed the latent tendency of **ignorance** *avijjā'nusaya*.

Although **feelings** play a major role in early Buddhist psychology, it is highly significant to see that they are not depicted in a negative way. In fact, feelings are karmically neutral experiences—that is, when we understand them as conditioned and impermanent, we should not react to them in a negatively emotional manner. Feelings become negative emotions when they are invested with greed, hatred or delusion. Unsurprisingly, then, we have numerous sets of feelings, even up to 108 of them; they play a vital role in early Buddhist aesthetics [4].

3 Abhidhamma on feeling

3.1 COMMENTS ON ABHIDHAMM'ATTHA, SAṅGAHA, 3.2 VEDANĀ, SAṅGAHA (ABHS:BRS 115 F)

3.1.1 Analyses of feeling

3.1.1.1 The Compendium on Feeling opens with this statement:

“Therein [in the Abhidhamm'attha Saṅgaha] compendium of feeling there are first 3 kinds of feeling, namely, pleasant, painful and that which is neither painful nor pleasant. Again, feeling is analysed as fivefold: pleasure, pain, joy, sorrow, and equanimity.” (*Tattha vedanā, saṅgahe tāva tividhā vedanā: sukhā, dukkhā, adukkha-m-asukhā cā ti. Sukhaṃ dukkhaṃ somanassaṃ domanassaṃ upekkhā ti ca bhedenā pana pañcadhā hoti*) (Abhs 3.2).

As we can see here, the Compendium keeps to the suttas in its listing of the kinds of feelings, though this is not as comprehensive as listed in, for example, **the Aṭṭha,sata Sutta** (S 36.22) or **the Daṭṭhabba Sutta** (S 36.5) [1.3].

3.1.1.2 Analyses of feeling. In Abhidhamma, feeling (*vedanā*) is a universal mental factor (*cetasika*), which functions as the experiencing of the “flavour” (*rasa*) or moral quality of a mind-object. Since some kind of feeling accompanies every consciousness (*citta*), feeling serves as an important variable in terms of which consciousness (*citta*) is classified. Here, the Compendium's main concern is to classify the totality of cittas¹² by way of the kind of feeling that arises accordingly.

¹² In Abhidhamma writing, “citta(s)” is the anglicized term for the conscious moment or “mind.”

3.1.1.3 The 3 kinds of feeling. Feeling is here analysed either as threefold or as fivefold. When it is analysed simply in terms of its *affective* quality, it is threefold: pleasant, painful, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant. In this threefold classification, pleasant feeling includes both bodily pleasure and mental pleasure or joy, and painful feeling includes both bodily pain and mental pain or displeasure.

3.1.2 The 5 kinds of feeling (Vism 14.128)

3.1.2.1 When feeling is analysed by way of spiritual faculty (*indriya*), it is seen as being fivefold. These 5 types of feelings are called faculties because they exercise “lordship” or control (*inda*; Skt *indra*) over their associated states regarding the affective mode of experiencing the object.

In the fivefold analysis of feeling, the pleasant feeling of the twofold scheme is divided into *pleasure* (bodily) and *joy* (mental); the painful feeling of the threefold scheme is divided into *pleasure*, *pain* (bodily and mental); and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, which is identified with *equanimity* or neutral feeling.

3.1.2.2 In the suttas, the Buddha speaks of feeling in various ways [1], such as twofold, as pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*). This is a loose or metaphorical (*pariyāya*) method of analysis, arrived at by merging the blameless neutral feeling in pleasure and the blameworthy neutral feeling in pain.

The Buddha further declares that “whatever is felt is included in suffering” (*yaṃ kiñci vedayitam taṃ dukkhasmiṃ*, S 36.11/4:216). In this statement, the word *dukkha* does not have the narrow sense of painful feeling but the broader meaning of *the suffering inherent in all conditioned things* on account of their impermanence.

3.1.2.3 Pleasure (*sukha*) has the characteristic of experiencing a *desirable tangible* object, the function of intensifying associated states, manifestation as bodily enjoyment, and its proximate cause is the body faculty. In other words, it is some *form* of sense-object (of the body) that the mind delights in.

3.1.2.4 Pain (*dukkha*) has the characteristic of experiencing an *undesirable tangible* object, the function of withering associated states, manifestation as bodily affliction, and its proximate cause is also the body faculty. In other words, it is some form of sense-object that the mind does not delight in.

3.1.2.5 Joy (*somanassa*) has the characteristic of experiencing a *desirable mind* object, the function of partaking of the desirable aspect of the object, manifestation as *mental* enjoyment, and its proximate cause is tranquillity. In other words, it is some form of mental object (especially a thought) with which we feel at peace (at least for the moment).

3.1.2.6 Displeasure (*domanassa*) has the characteristic of experiencing an *undesirable mind* object, the function of partaking of the undesirable aspect of the object, manifestation as mental affliction, and its proximate cause is the “heart-base.”

According to the Commentaries, **the heart** serves as the physical support for all consciousness (*citta*) other than the fivefold sense-consciousness and mental states; they each take their respective sensitivities (functions) as their bases. **The heart-base** is not expressly mentioned even in the canonical Abhidhamma. The closest hint, as such, is found in **the Paṭṭhāna** (the 7th and last book of the Abhidhamma),

which alludes to “that matter in dependence on which *the mind element and mind-consciousness element occur*”¹³ (Paṭ 1.4).

The Commentaries, however, subsequently specify “that matter” to be the core of the heart itself as **the heart-base**, a cavity situated within the physical heart.¹⁴

3.1.2.7 Equanimity (*upekkhā*) has the characteristic of being felt as neutral, the function of neither intensifying nor withering associated states, manifestation as peacefulness, and its proximate cause is consciousness without zest.

4 Early Buddhist aesthetics of feeling

4.1 THE BEAUTY OF THE DHARMA

4.1.1 “Beautiful in its beginning, beautiful in its middle, beautiful in its ending”

4.1.1.1 The Sāmañña,phala Sutta (D 2) records the Buddha as stating that “he teaches the Dharma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end” (*ādi,kalyāṇa majjhe,kalyāṇa pariyoṣanā,-kalyāṇa*).¹⁵ This phrase is often explained as meaning that the Buddha’s teaching comprises the 3 trainings—in moral virtue, in mental cultivation, and in wisdom—all of which are good or beautiful (*kalyāṇa*) since they train us in the wholesome (*kusala*). The teaching is also good in the sense of being valid and efficacious at all times: the past, the present and the future.

The phrase *kalyāṇa* is also found in the term *kalyāṇa,mitta*, “spiritual friend,” and its abstract noun, *kalyāṇa,mittatā*, “spiritual friendship.”¹⁶ This is a special term that refers to the “disciplinary” relationship between a teacher (especially a meditation teacher) and his or her pupil. “Disciplinary” here means both in keeping with moral virtue (the Vinaya discipline, for monastics, or the 5 precepts for the laity) and in terms of discipleship (training in the Dharma), that is, mental cultivation and the training in liberating wisdom.

4.1.1.2 In either case—as a description of the good dharma (*kalyāṇa,dhamma*) and as spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa,mittatā*)—the adjective *kalyāṇa* can also be rendered as “good” or “beautiful,” since what is *good* is also *beautiful*, and both describe those qualities that help to liberate us on the path of awakening. Hence, the Buddha tells Ānanda—who thinks that “half” of the holy life is beautiful friendship—that **beautiful friendship** is the whole of the holy life (that is, the 3 trainings).

Moral training is beautiful in the sense that it allows us to renounce the unwholesome aspects of the body: by not killing, not stealing, and not committing sexual misconduct, we train ourselves to cultivate qualities of boundless love, compassionate charity and joyful contentment. This training is not an end in itself, but forms the basis for **concentration training** (or mental cultivation), that is, the refinement of joy and happiness beyond the bodily senses to a full and pure mental level. The bliss here is profoundly beautiful in that we are simply no longer inclined to bodily or sense-based pleasures; we can, at will, for as long as we like, enjoy dhyanic bliss.

¹³ *Yam rūpaṃ nissāya mano,dhatu ca mano,viññāṇa,dhatu ca vattanti, taṃ rūpaṃ mano,dhātuyā ca mano,viññāṇa,dhātuyā ca taṃ,sampayuttakānaṃ ca dhammānaṃ avigata,paccayena paccayo* (Paṭ:Be 1:4, 7, 9, 10).

¹⁴ See Vism 8.111/256; SD 17.8c (7.2.2.4); SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4).

¹⁵ **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,40.2), SD 8.10.

¹⁶ See **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness**, SD 8.1; **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1.

Even without dhyana (*jhāna*), but with some working level of **mindfulness and awareness** (*sati, sam-pajañña*), we are able to feel and share boundless love, compassion, gladness and equanimity. Although these 4 divine abodes are sometimes called “positive emotions” (since they generate good karma), they are really *beautiful feelings* that naturally inspire us to be kind, compassionate, joyful and peaceful towards others.

4.1.2 Aesthetics as philosophy

Aesthetics, as a sub-discipline of philosophy, is concerned with the nature and expression of beauty, especially in the fine arts. To an extent, it overlaps with Buddhist aesthetics in experiencing or expressing “beauty” by way of *sights, forms, colours, sounds, words, music, silence, smells, tastes, touch and thoughts or ideas*. **Buddhist aesthetics** is able to transcend the senses and the mind. Hence, it is not of the world, but it can well make sense of the world, as well as express ideas that are not necessarily inherent in the world.¹⁷

Aesthetics can mean anything to artists, or academic to art historians, or nothing to an abstract artist.¹⁸ In a short sentence, such an arrogant critic deprived aesthetics from all artists. Fancying himself a revolutionary overthrowing traditional art at its base, he had hardly rippled its surface. He said, “Aesthetics is to artists what ornithology is to birds.”¹⁹ Birds have no idea of ornithology (they don’t need it); an artist is defined by aesthetics.

We could perhaps say something like “an artist creates beauty freely just as a bird flies.” **Buddhist aesthetics**, then, is not some “theory of beauty,” but a state or habit of living a beautiful life that does not desire the unattainable (objects of lust) but works for the attainable (the path and nirvana). However, the activity and state of a Dharmafarer, like the nature of birds, is not bound by an external system devised to categorize or explain things, but fly freely on the wings of wisdom and compassion.²⁰

4.2 PERCEPTION AS AESTHETICS

4.2.1 A feeling for beauty

It was earlier mentioned [2.1.2.4] that “we **perceive** (*sañjānāti*) feelings aesthetically as being *pleasant, unpleasant or neutral*, but we react no further to them, except to see them simply as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling [touching] or thinking. This is what the whole habit of **wise consideration** (*yoniso manasikāra*) trains us to do: we regard these experiences as being conditioned and impermanent. In this way, our response to them actually creates wholesome karma, since there is no greed, hatred or delusion present.”

This paragraph, in fact, succinctly gives a good (even literal) description of **early Buddhist aesthetics** (or hereon simply “Buddhist aesthetics”).²¹ The word **aesthetics** is rooted in the modern adaptation of Greek *aisthetikos*, “of or pertaining to *aistheta*, things perceptible by the senses, things material (as

¹⁷ See Leonard Koren, *Which ‘Aesthetics’ do you mean?: ten definitions*, Point Reyes: Imperfect Publ, 2010:8.

¹⁸ See eg Richard Woodfield, *The Art Bulletin* Sep 2001; review of Michael Kelly (ed), *Ency of Aesthetics* 4 vols, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1998. [[researchgate](#)]

¹⁹ Barnett Newman (1905-1970), an American artist critically regarded as one of the major figures of abstract expressionism, and one of the foremost color field painters, said this to Harold Rosenberg at the gallery reception in New York, 1948 (cited in B J Rush, “Aesthetics—Gone with Gregor? Letter to the editor,” *Studies in Design Education Craft & Technology* 6,2 1974).

²⁰ See SD 60.6 (2.2.1.2).

²¹ For a brief discussion on **Buddhist aesthetics** as the beauty of moral values: SD 59.14ab (1.2.3). See also: SD 46.5 (2.1.2); SD 50.16 (1.1.1); SD 60.1c (9.8.2 (6)). On Japanese Buddhist aesthetics, see SD 60.1c (19.6).

opposed to *noeta* things thinkable or immaterial), also ‘perceptible, sharp in the senses’; from the verb stem *aisthe-*, ‘feel, apprehend by the senses’.”²²

Modern conceptions of aesthetics have, of course, outgrown its etymological roots. However, since we are examining Buddhist aesthetics, this is an excellent historical background to begin with.

4.2.2 Beauty as feeling

Buddhist aesthetics, based on our understanding of the suttas and practice of Dharma, refers to the qualities or the study of qualities of what is beautiful (*subha, sundara*) and what has the attributes of pleasantness (*piya*), radiant joyfulness (*pasāda*), zest (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), peace (*santī*) and so on. Such qualities may be inherent in a person, a teaching or text, an object, in nature,²³ or a mental state. In terms of our own experience of *the aesthetic* or action that is *aesthetic*, it is said to be “good” (*puñña, kalyāna*) or “wholesome” (*kusala*) or “beautiful” (*kalyāna*).

Although we speak of the “good,” “wholesome” or “beautiful” as an experience or action, it is really a **feeling** (*vedanā*) that may arise through our senses or our mind. Such feelings may further be sense-based, hence more likely to be “sensual,” even “sensuous,” or they may be mental or supramundane. Although the sensual and sensuous forms of aesthetic feelings may arise from good karma, by the very nature of such feelings they are impermanent, and feed our desire for more.

Hence, Buddhist aesthetics also has a spiritual level, which is more than being “good karma”; it has the capability of liberating us from the sense-based level to the mental level, where we directly experience goodness and beauty. On this mental level, these wholesome states often work as the conditions for a calm and clear mind that is able to see fully and directly into true reality. This is the highest sense and purpose of early Buddhist aesthetics for those who seek or walk the path of awakening.

Hence, we may theoretically speak of such aesthetics as being instrumentally good, or intrinsically good, or both, or neither. Such differentiations, however, will make no sense of aesthetics when they are experienced by the liberated mind (that is, the Buddha or any arhat).

— — —

²² *Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd ed ver 4.0 2009:206 sv aesthetic.

²³ The Pali for “nature of things” is *dharmatā*; the natural physical world is *loka, esp okāsa,loka*, “the spatial world” [on the 3 worlds: SD 15.7 (3.5.1 (2)); SD 17.6 (3.1.3.2)]; reality, esp true reality, is *yathā, bhūta* or *tathatā* (“suchness”).

Aṭṭha,sata Sutta The Discourse on the 108

S 36.22

1 Bhikshus, I will teach you a Dharma presentation by way of a **metaphor of the 108**. Listen to it.

2 And what, bhikshus, is the Dharma presentation of the metaphor of the 108?

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) The metaphor of | the 2 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |
| (2) The metaphor of | the 3 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |
| (3) The metaphor of | the 5 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |
| (4) The metaphor of | the 6 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |
| (5) The metaphor of | the 18 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |
| (6) The metaphor of | the 36 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |
| (7) The metaphor of | the 108 kinds of feelings | has been taught by me. |

3 (1) And what, bhikshus, are **the 2 kinds of feelings**?²⁴

The bodily and the mental.

kāyikā ca cetasikā ca

These, bhikshus, are the 2 kinds of feelings.

4 (2) And what, bhikshus, are **the 3 kinds of feelings**?²⁵

Pleasant feeling,
unpleasant feeling,
neither unpleasant nor pleasant feelings.

*sukhā vedanā
dukkhā vedanā
adukkha-m-asukhā vedanā*

These, bhikshus, are the 3 kinds of feelings.

5 (3) And what, bhikshus, are **the 5 kinds of feelings**?²⁶

The pleasure faculty,
the pain faculty,
the joy faculty,
the displeasure [sorrow] faculty,
the equanimity faculty.

*sukh'indriya
dukkh'indriya
somanass'indriya
domanass'indriya
upekkh'indriya*

These, bhikshus, are the 5 kinds of feelings.

6 (4) And what, bhikshus, are **the 6 kinds of feelings**?²⁷

Feeling born of eye-contact,
Feeling born of ear-contact,
Feeling born of nose-contact,
Feeling born of tongue-contact,
Feeling born of body-contact,

*cakkhu,samphassajā vedanā
sota samphassajā vedanā
ghāna samphassajā vedanā
jivhā samphassajā vedanā
kāya,samphassajā vedanā*

²⁴ See SD 17.3 (4.2).

²⁵ See SD 17.3 (4.3).

²⁶ See SD 17.3 (4.4).

²⁷ See SD 17.3 (4.5).

Feeling born of mind-contact,
These, bhikshus, are the 6 kinds of feelings.

mano,samphassajā vedanā

7 (5) And what, bhikshus, are the 18 kinds of feelings?

The 6 explorations accompanied by joy,
The 6 explorations accompanied by displeasure,
The 6 explorations accompanied by equanimity.

cha somanass'upavicārā

cha domanassupavicārā

cha upekkhūpavicārā

These, bhikshus, are the 18 kinds of feelings.²⁸

8 (6) And what, bhikshus, are the 36 kinds of feelings?²⁹

The 6 types of joy of the household life,
The 6 types of joy of renunciation,
The 6 types of pain of the household life,
The 6 types of sorrow of renunciation,
The 6 types of equanimity of the household life,
The 6 types of equanimity of renunciation.

cha gehasitāni somanassāni

cha nekkhammasitāni somanassāni

cha gehasitāni domanassāni

cha nekkhammasitāni domanassāni

cha gehasitā upekkhā

cha nekkhammasitā upekkhā

These, bhikshus, are the 36 kinds of feelings.

9 (7) And what, bhikshus, are the 108 kinds of feelings?³⁰

The 36 feelings [§8] in the past,
The 36 feelings in the future,
The 36 feelings in the present.

atītā cha-t-tiṃsa vedanā

anāgatā cha-t-tiṃsa vedanā

paccuppannā chat-t-tiṃsa vedanā

These, bhikshus, are the 108 kinds of feelings.

This, bhikshus, is the Dharma presentation by way of a **metaphor of the 108**.

— evaṃ —

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²⁸ See **Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,8/3:217-219), SD 29.5. Further, each type of feeling becomes sixfold in terms of the 6 sense-objects. See also SD 17.3 (4.6).

²⁹ See SD 17.3 (4.7).

³⁰ See SD 17.3 (4.8).

60.13**Kappâvasesa**

Its meanings and usages in terms of the Buddha's lifespan

By TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2024

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1 Significance of the problem

1.1 AN EARLY PROBLEM

1.1.1 Extra-Buddhist account of life-extension

1.1.1.1 The belief in the power to extend one's life or immeasurable lifespan, even of immortality, is not uncommon in Indian religions, which are well known for allowing their gods, heroes, even holy men to have such powers. Like any faith-based religion—outside of early Buddhism, any Indian religion is, as a rule, faith-based—we hear all kinds of wonders, about one of their gods, a sectarian teacher or some local (even foreign) figure. The more fantastic or bizarre, the more attractive for the palm-clasping, glassy-eyed believers who are elated and content to just recite the prayers and perform any kind of ritual for a being to whom such attributions are made.¹

What can be explained, it seems, is worldly and intellectual: the words of humans. The unexplainable, the impossible, that even the inhuman are what raise a person or being to become divine and worthy of total faith. Notice that at any Guru Darshan (a gathering of faithfuls around their guru), one hears wave after wave of words and sounds drowning us. We hear the Guru's words but understand not a sound. But look at the faithful, blissfully lost in the crowd. The guru is like an open blaze that draws them close to him in the darkness of the ignorant world.

1.1.1.2 The Hindu holy books—such as the Vedas, the epics, and the Puranas—immortalize their deities and heroes. The avatars (*avatāra*, “descent (by way of incarnation)”) of the Hindu Godhead, in spite of their earthly existence, were considered free from the laws of birth and death. Such incidents were spoken of as appearances or assumptions, and these beings were but devices of the immortal God to work among mortals.

This extraordinary power over the laws of nature was, in a rare or limited way, shared even by human beings. Certain great sages like Bhisma (the Mahabharata hero and leader of the Kauravas) were attributed powers known as *icchā-marāṇa* (willful death), that is, dying only when one chooses to do so. Why to not die at all, or how this was accomplished, is neither asked nor stated. It is God's will; it is ungodly to explain things.

In the case of Bhisma, we are told that his great renunciation and vow of celibacy won for him a boon of such powers from his father Shantanu. How such a boon could prevent death is nowhere explained, but it is suggested that the laws of nature could be controlled by sheer force of character or mere will power of the godly individual.

There is a very simple explanation for all these amazing feats. The power of belief cancels the flow of knowledge and wisdom. After all, our foolishness is wisdom in God's eyes. The reality is that what is in our minds is more real than what is out there.

1.1.2 The Buddhist case of life-extension

1.1.2.1 The early Buddhists do, however, attempt to explain how the Buddha's will power works over the phenomenon of death. Such power over death, that is, the ability to extend life, has been attributed to the Buddha in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) in both Pali and Sanskrit. The post-Buddha Buddhists, however, refusing or unable to accept the Buddha's mortality, went a step further and advocated a doctrine of the Eternal Buddha, comparable to the avatars of the Hindu Gods or any God. The

¹ For an entertaining and informative study of how powerful men were seen as gods in history, see A Della Subin, *Accidental Gods*, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2021. (Thanks Matt Jenkins for suggesting this, 18 March 2024).

Buddhist texts, both Pali and Sanskrit, contain several controversies resulting from the criticism of such a belief in the nature of the Buddha.

1.1.2.2 A study of this controversy may help us better understand not only the development of such Buddhology but also the doctrine of karma which explains the phenomena of life and death. In this study, even though we will examine the problem of the Buddha's life extension with the Pali **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) as our key text, we will also do a comparative study with other texts and sources that helps us to better understand or envision the problem here.

2 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta account

2.1 THE BUDDHA'S COUNSEL WITH ĀNANDA

2.1.1 The Buddha's life-extension and its conditions

2.1.1.1 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta, chapter 2, records that the Buddha, having entered his last (that is, the 45th) rains retreat in a forest hut outside the village of Beḷuva, near Vesālī, is afflicted with severe, painful and deadly illness (probably dysentery).² Realizing that it is not fitting to pass away without addressing his followers and taking leave of the sangha, he resolves: "Now let me make an effort to ward off this illness and dwell, having determined the life-force."³

Through his sheer determination, he withstands it and recovers.⁴ Three months later, at the beautiful Cāpāla *cetiya* (tree shrine),⁵ the Buddha is with the elder Ananda, to whom he says:

3.3 Ānanda, whoever has cultivated and developed **the 4 bases of success** [2.2.2], made them a vehicle, made them the basis, pursued them, built them up, made them well even,⁶ could, if he so wishes, remain for his (current) lifespan (*kappa*) or for the rest of the lifespan (*kappâvasesa*).⁷

² The "severe illness" here [as at D 16,4.20] shows symptoms of dysentery. Winternitz (1939:9) says that this section [D 16,2.23] is amongst those that "bear the stamp of the greatest antiquity." At D 16,3.10 the Buddha however relinquishes his lifespan. See also §§2.25 & 5.13 f.

³ *Yan nunâham imam ābādham viriyena paṭippanāmetvā jivita,saṅkhāram adhiṭṭhāya vihareyyan ti* (D 16,2.23/-2:99,9-11). It appears that Nāgasena (Miln 141) and the Sarvāstivādins take this episode to mean that the Buddha is actually at the point of dying, and so by sheer will power extended his life for at least 3 more months (to the end of the rains retreat). Note, however, that no duration is mentioned here. But see D 16,2.22 n where this incident is said to be 10 months before the parinirvana; cf D 16,3.9.

⁴ **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.23 f), SD 9.

⁵ **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.2-3.10), SD 9.

⁶ "Cultivated and developed ... made very well even," *bhāvitā bahulī, katā yāni, katā vatthu, katā anuṭṭhitā paricitā susam-āraddhā* (D 2:104 x5, 115-118 x9, 3:248 f x5; S 1:116, 2:264 f x4, 4:200, 5:170, 259 f x4; **A 6.13**/3:290-292 x5 (SD 55.18), A 4:300 x2, 309 3x; U 62 f x4). All the terms are defined at Pm 1:172, here paraphrased: cultivated (*bhāvitā*): perfected by way of embracing dhyana, insight and path; developed (*bahulī, katā*): thoughts (*dhammā*) do not arise in excess; made them a vehicle (*yani, katā*): his calm and insight is ever ready; made them the basis (*vatthu, katā*): mindfulness is well-established; pursued them (*anuṭṭhita*): able to guide his mind; built them up (*pari, citā*), lit, well-accumulated: able to conquer bad mental states; made them well even (*susam-āraddha*), lit, "making beauty arise": overcoming defilements and attaining the goal. (Pm 3.173 f/1:172).

⁷ "For (his) lifespan ... or for the rest of the lifespan," *kappam vā ... kappâvasesam vā* (D 16,3.3/2:103, 3:77,25 f/3:77; S 51.10/5:259,20; U 6.1/62,21; cf Kvu 11.5/45; Divy 201): the Buddha died at 80 (current lifespan); the possible lifespan then was 100 or a little more (around 120); hence, he could have lived a further 20 years or more. On

Ānanda, the Tathāgata is one who has cultivated and developed **the 4 bases of success**, made them a vehicle, made them the basis [the ground], pursued them, built them up, made them well even, could, if he so wishes, remain for (his) lifespan or for the rest of the lifespan.

Ānanda, if the Tathāgata so wishes, he could remain for (his) lifespan or the rest of the lifespan.”

3.4 But even though the venerable Ānanda was given such a clear sign by the Blessed One, though he was given such a broad hint, he was unable to understand it. He did not beseech the Blessed One,

“Bhante, let the Blessed One stay on through the lifespan, let the Sugata [Wellfarer] stay on through the lifespan for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans”—to that extent his mind was seized [possessed] by Māra.⁸ (D 16,3.3-3.6), SD 9

2.1.1.2 I have taken special care in translating the controversial Pali phrase, *kappam vā ... kappavasesam vā*,⁹ to bring out the intended sense, that is, the Buddha will live up to this point, so to speak (since he is already 80 and has been seriously ill). It should be noted that the Buddha has been seriously sick on these 2 following occasions:

- 1st attack of dysentery at Bejuva during the last rains retreat (D 16,2.21 f);
- 2nd attack of dysentery after the almsmeal of Cunda the smith (D 16,4.20 f).

On account of the Buddha's health and age, his life will end in the next 3 months' time. This is his **current lifespan** (*kappa*) or technically, *jīvita* (the lived life). However, using his powers, the Buddha may, if he wishes, live out his **full lifespan**, that is, for what remains of it: this would be 120 years or so, or technically *āyu* (the liveable life).¹⁰

This meeting between the frail Buddha and Ānanda in between the Buddha's 2 bouts of serious sickness is also problematic. **Ānanda**, it seems, despite being asked thrice by Buddha whether he (the Buddha) should live out his full lifespan, is unable to see the significance of the statement to give any proper answer. He remains silent, it is said, because “**his mind was seized by Māra**.” This vision distracts him so that he does not hear the Buddha. The Buddha then dismisses Ānanda.

2.1.2 Ānanda and Māra's intervention

2.1.2.1 Now we go on to examine the incident where Māra appears to the Buddha and reminds him that it is time for him to attain *parinirvana* (D 16,3.7 f). The Buddha reassures Māra that he (the Buddha) will pass away at the end of 3 months. After Māra has departed self-satisfied, the Buddha deliberately and consciously relinquishes the rest of his natural term of life, that is, the time beyond the 3 months.¹¹

the Buddha's lifespan, see SD 9 (9.1 + 2) & on the *kappa*, see SD 9 (9.3). This is the tr followed by most modern translators.

⁸ *Yathā taṃ mārena pariyuṭṭhita, citto*. Comys say that Māra is able to seize any mind that has not totally given up all mental perversions (*vipallāsa*), and Ānanda has not done so. Being a streamwinner, he is still subject to the perversions of perception (*saññā, vipallāsa*) and of mind (*citta, vipallāsa*), though not of views (*diṭṭhi, vipallāsa*). Māra seized his mind by displaying a terrifying form, and when the elder sees it, he is unable to catch the hint dropped by the Buddha (DA 2:555 = SA 3:252). On the perversions, see **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss**, SD 13.1 (4.1a) & **Vipallāsa S** (A 4.49/-2:52), SD 16.11; Vism 22.68.

⁹ The phrase *kappavasesa* in the same context recurs at D 2:103,4-7 f = S 5:259,20-24 f (discussed at Miln 140,20-142,12 = A 4:309,7-11 f = U 62,20-22 f).

¹⁰ This is, in fact, how Nāgasena explains *kappam vā ... kappavasesam* (Miln 140,20-142,12).

¹¹ *Atha kho bhagavā cāpāle cetiye sato sampajāno āyu, saṅkhāram osajji* (D 16:3.9). See **Māra**, SD 61.8

2.1.2.2 Chapter 3 of the **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** gives the following detail:

Then, the Blessed One, at the Cāpāla shrine, mindfully and fully aware, relinquished his life-formation.¹² ...

The sage let go of the formation of existence, of life [the remaining lifespan], low and high. Delighting within and mentally concentrated, he broke the armour-like self-existence.

(D 16,3.10/2:106 f)

A thoughtful reader may wonder if the Buddha's relinquishment of his lifespan was actually an act of **suicide**. Further, it should be noted that the Buddha, already frail after an attack of dysentery, goes on to take a rich dish offered by Cunda the smith,¹³ not allowing anyone else to consume it, claiming that the dish is *not suitable for human consumption*, but only the Buddha may digest it properly, and the rest of the offering should be buried.¹⁴

2.1.2.3 The Milinda,pañha and the Commentaries add a fascinating mythical element [2.3.1.1] here. It is said that at every meal as the Buddha takes a morsel of food, a deva would sprinkle ambrosia or divine elixir (*dibbā ojā*) onto it. (Hence, no matter what food the Buddha takes, it is always nutritive, tasty and safe to eat.)¹⁵ However, for the Buddha's last meal, the Dīgha Subcommentary adds an interesting turn. Apparently, on account of the Buddha's frail, sick body, "that sprinkle of divine elixir worsened" the Buddha's condition.¹⁶

2.1.3 Ānanda is blameless (Buddhaghosa)

2.1.3.1 Both the commentators Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla give what we would today consider a psychological explanation to the episode of Ānanda being "blamed" for not entreating the Buddha to live on for his full lifespan of 120 years.¹⁷ They see it as a skillful means (*upāya*) the Buddha uses that will take effect posthumously,¹⁸ on account of Ānanda's devotion to the Buddha and other elder arhats.¹⁹

Buddhaghosa sees the Cāpāla shrine episode [2.1.4.1] as part of the Buddha's **skillful means** to lessen Ānanda's grief when the Buddha enters parinirvana.

¹² See D 16,3.10 n (SD 9). See S:B 819 n366.

¹³ Cunda the smith is said to be a streamwinner at that time (DA 2:399,15), and those who read *sūkara,maddava* as "the tender pork from a pig that is neither too young nor too old," view that it is "available meat" (already available at that time, ie, not specially killed for the occasion) (DA 568,13 f). Dhammapāla says that this is the view of the Mahā Aṭṭhakathā (UA 399,24 f). Some say that it is a recipe for soft-boiled rice with the 5 cow-products (*go,rasa*): milk, curds, butter, ghee, cream of ghee, Others, esp Dhammapāla say, that either (1) it is bamboo shoots that pigs have trampled on; or (2) it is mushroom or truffles growing in ground trampled upon by pigs or hogs. Cunda prepares the meal hoping: "Let the Blessed One not pass into parinirvana but live on!" (UA 399,25-400,4).

¹⁴ D 16,4.18-19/2:127 (SD 9).

¹⁵ Miln 231,21-31.

¹⁶ *Tam pana tatthāpakkhita,dibb'ojatāya garutaram jātaram* (DAṬ 2:218 @ 568,17).

¹⁷ See also SD 9 (9.2.3.7); SD 61.8 (2.1.4.7).

¹⁸ A well known posthumous skillful means is used by the Buddha on his ex-charioteer, Channa, for being arrogant towards the elders by placing the "supreme punishment" (*brahma,danḍa*), that of boycott, on him upon the Buddha's passing: Cv 1.18 (V 2:23 f); Cv 11.1.12-16 (V 2:290-292); SD 52.3 (1.3.5.4 f).

¹⁹ On Ānanda being emotionally troubled by Sāriputta's passing, see (**Sāriputta**) **Cunda S** (S 47.13/5:161-163), SD 110.5.

“Why does the Buddha address him up to three times?” Buddhaghosa asks and explains thus: “In order to lessen his sorrow by putting the blame on him, saying, ‘Yours is the wrongdoing; yours is the fault,’ [D 16,3.40] when, later on, he was asked by the elder, ‘Bhante, may the Blessed One live out the lifespan!’” (DA 2:555,25-28)

Dhammapāla, too, concurs with Buddhaghosa:

For the Blessed One sees thus, “This person has an extremely affectionate heart towards me. He will, later on, on hearing of the causes of an earth-tremor and my abandoning of my life-formation, ask me to live on for a long time. Then, I will put the blame on his head, saying, ‘Why did you not ask me before?’ For human beings are not so troubled by their own faults. Therefore, his sorrow will be assuaged.” (UA 325,22-28)²⁰

In other words, Ānanda is made to feel regret or guilt rather than sorrow at the Buddha's parinirvana, and in this manner, Ānanda's sorrow is assuaged by his mere regret!²¹ That is, for so long as Ānanda is still not yet an arhat.²²

We may, of course, dismiss this episode as being “cooked up” by some imaginative sutta reciter and leave it at that without any story left. There is also the problem that the Buddha would have known that Ānanda would by then (the time of the 1st council) have been an arhat—or would he not? A more useful question is, perhaps: how would such a question shape our quest for the path, if at all?

Furthermore, even if we take it as “religious fiction” (as a creative mental construct), the idea of compassion is a wholesome thought and feeling. It is certainly not against the Buddha's character to prevent another from suffering when he could do so. I think it's a story worth telling just to inspire kindness in others.

2.1.3.2 The problem of the Buddha's life prolongation seems to have another curious sequence of similar events. **The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) records the Buddha asking Ānanda a total of **16 times** about the option of extending the Buddha's life, and Ānanda is silent each time. There is no mention that Māra has a hand in this series of curious silences. The most likely explanation for Ānanda's silence when the Buddha asked him about the option of life prolongation was because these were **rhetorical questions**.

That the same question asked 16 times is likely to be rhetorical is further confirmed by the Buddha consoling Ānanda when the latter beseeched the Buddha to extend his life to the full term of 120 or so years, but the Buddha states that he has already made his decision. He consoles Ānanda, saying:

²⁰ *Passati hi bhagavā “ayaṃ mayi ativiya siniddha, hadayo, so parato bhūmi, cāla, karaṇaṃ ca āyu, saṅkhār’ossajjanaṃ ca sutvā mama cira-ṭṭhānaṃ yācissati, athāhaṃ ‘kissa tvaṃ puretaraṃ na yācasī ti tass’eva sīse dosaṃ pātes-sāmi, sattā ca attano aparādhena na tathā vihaññanti, ten’assa soko tanuko bhavissatī ti* (UA 325). On Ānanda's “extremely affectionate heart,” see eg D 16,5.13 (SD 9).

²¹ See An Yang-Gyu, “Buddhaghosa's view of the Buddha's lifespan,” 2000:140-142.

²² Comy explains that Māra possesses a person's mind who still has the 12 perversions (*vipallāsa*) [ie, perception (*saññā*), consciousness (*citta*) or view (*diṭṭhi*) as regarding (1) the impermanent as permanent, (2) the painful as pleasant, (3) what is nonself as a self, (4) what is impure as pure]. Ānanda has not given up a;; the 4 perversions [those of *perception* and *consciousness*, regarding what is painful as pleasant, and what is impure as pure (DAṬ 2:192,12-14)]. So Māra possesses his mind, ie, either he projects a fearful visible form or makes a fearsome sound. People, on hearing it or seeing it, then forget themselves and let their mouths open. “Māra then inserts his hand through the mouth and squeezes the heart.” (DA 2:555,12-28; UA 2:325,5-28). Reading between the lines of this commentarial narrative, we can easily imagine the psychological significance of such perversions. See **Vipallāsa S** (A 4.49/2:52), SD 16.11; Vism 22.53/683.

Ānanda, have I not told you before:

All those things that are dear and pleasant to us must suffer difference, separation and change [becoming other]?²³

What else do you expect? **Whatever is born, become, formed [compounded] is liable to decay; that it should not decay is impossible.**²⁴ (D 16,3.48), SD 9²⁵

Now that we have established (or at least examined the circumstances) that Ānanda is actually blame-free regarding the incident of the Buddha and his prolongation of life, we will go on to examine more closely how the Buddha actually relinquished his potential life, or technically his “lifespan-force” or simply, life-force. [3.1.1]

2.2 THE BUDDHA’S POWERS

2.2.1 The Buddha’s infirmity

2.2.1.1 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta, which records the events of the Buddha’s last days, is preserved both in Pali and in Sanskrit. Both accounts agree that the Buddha is advanced in age, that is, 80 years old at that time, and physically frail, worsened by bouts of dysentery. The Sutta records the Buddha as saying:

I have reached the sum of my days; I am turning 80.²⁶ Ānanda, just as an old cart is kept going by being held together with straps, even so, the Tathāgata’s body is kept going by being strapped up.²⁷ (D 16,2.25.3), SD 9

In this connection, it is also reported that after Cunda’s meal, the Buddha falls seriously ill again with dysentery, but he bears it with great composure. Cunda’s meal may have worsened the Buddha’s condition, but it certainly was not the cause of his death.²⁸

2.2.1.2 It is natural that the Buddha, like any human, would grow old, suffer sickness, and in the end die, that is, the body fails to support all the 5 aggregates and keep him alive. However, unlike others, streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and ordinary worldlings, an arhat (including the Buddha) will not be reborn after death. In other words, arhats (and only arhats) are not reborn because they have attained nirvana.

²³ This famous sentence is stock: **D 16:** 5.14/2:144 = 3.48/2:118 = 6.11/2:158 = 6.20/2:163; **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 2:192=194); **(Sāriputta) Cunda S** (S 47.13/5:163); Nm 1:123 qu D 16,5.14/2:144. Cf **Abhiṇha,paccavekhittaba S** (A 5.57/3:74), SD 5.12.

²⁴ *Na nu evaṃ Ānanda mayā paṭigacc’eva akkhātāṃ, sabbehi’ eva piyehi manāpehi nānā,bhāvo vinā,bhāvo aññathā,bhāvo? Taṃ kut’ ettha Ānanda labbhā? Yaṃ taṃ jātaṃ bhūtaṃ saṅkhātāṃ paloka,dhammaṃ taṃ vata mā palujjīti n’etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati.* This quote is stock: **D 16,**3.48/2:118 = 5.14/2:144 = 6.11.1/2:158 = 6.20/2:163. The sentence, *Taṃ kut’ ettha Ānanda labbhā?* lit tr “What can you get here, Ānanda?” As at D 16,5.6 + 6.11.

²⁵ Further see SD 61.8 (2.1.4.4), and on why Ānanda is blamed, see (2.1.4.5).

²⁶ *Ahaṃ kho paṇ’ānanda, etarahi jīṇṇo vuddho mahallako addha’gato vayo anuppatto, āsītiko me vayo vattati.* Traditionally, it is said that the Buddha passes away on his 80th birthday. However, if we accept that the Buddha passes away on Vesak day, then he would be 81. See “**Did the Buddha die on Vesak day?**” SD 9 (9.4). See this n at D 16 ad loc (SD 9).

²⁷ “By being strapped,” *veṭṭha,missakena*, following Norman and Bodhi. This seems to be like some kind of what we today call a “body-brace.” See Tha:N 143 n & S:B 1920 n141.

²⁸ On whether the Buddha was *poisoned*, see SD 9 (13.1).

A young ordinary person, says **the Mahā Sīha, nāda Sutta** (M 12), may have “the most lucid wisdom,” but when he grows old, “he loses that lucidity of wisdom.” In the case of the Buddha, as long as he lives—even when the body is incapacitated in some way, “like an old cart ... kept going by being strapped up” [2.2.1.1]—**his mind** is as *calm and clear* as the day he awakened until he passes away.

62.2 ... I am now old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and come to the last stage—my years have turned 80.²⁹

Now, Sāriputta, suppose that here I had 4 disciples,³⁰ each with a hundred years' lifespan, perfect in mindfulness, in assimilation, in memory and in lucidity of wisdom.³¹

62.3 Sāriputta, suppose that a **strong-bowed archer**, trained, tested and true master of archery,³² could easily shoot a light arrow through the shadow of a palm tree.³³

Even so, to that extent, they are perfect in mindfulness, assimilation, **[83]** memory and lucidity of wisdom.

62.4 Suppose that they continuously asked me about the 4 focuses of mindfulness, and that I kept answering them when asked, and that they remembered each answer of mine, and neither asked a secondary question nor paused except to eat, drink, chew and taste,³⁴ to urinate and defecate, and to rest in order to dispel sleepiness and tiredness.

62.5 Still, Sāriputta, the Tathagata's exposition of the Dharma, his explanations of words and phrases of the Dharma,³⁵ and his replies to questions would not yet come to an end before those 4 disciples of mine, each with a hundred years' lifespan, living out a hundred years, would have died at the end of those hundred years.

62.6 Sāriputta, even if you have to carry me about on a litter,³⁶ still there will be no change in the Tathagata's clarity of wisdom.³⁷ (M 12,62/1:82 f), SD 49.1

²⁹ Comy says that the Buddha gave this discourse during the year of his parinirvana (MA 2:51). **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.16) records Sāriputta's lion-roar before the Buddha that the latter is the wisest of all beings. Sāriputta dies a week later—on the fullmoon day of Kattikā (Oct-Nov)—in his home village of Nālaka (or Nālandā, Mvst 2:56) (SD 9). **Mahā Sīha, nādā S** records events before this period in Vesālī [§1]. This Vesālī visit by the Buddha is not the one at D 16,2.11, when Sāriputta has already passed away, but just before the events of D 16. On the problem of chronology, see D 16,16 n (SD 9).

³⁰ This appears to be a synecdoche for the 4 kinds of disciples—monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen—who are streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats.

³¹ The Pali for the 4 terms respectively are *sati, gati, dhiti, pañña, veyyattiya*. Comy explains *sati* as the ability to hold in mind a hundred or a thousand phrases as they are being spoken; *gati*, the ability to bind and grasp them; *dhiti*, the ability to recite them back; and *pañña, veyyattiya*, the ability to discern their meaning and logic. Ānanda is declared to be the foremost amongst monks with *sati, gati* and *dhiti* (A 1:24 f). The last quality—*pañña, veyyattiya*—is perhaps synonymous with *mahā, paññā*, in which Sāriputta is declared foremost (A 1:23).

³² “Strong-bowed archer, trained, tested and true master of archery” (*daḷha, dhammo dhanuggaho sikkhito kata, -hattho kat'upāsano*) is stock: see **Dhanu-g, gahā S** (S 20.6,2), SD 52.7.

³³ As at S 1:62, 2:265 f; A 2:48, 4:429; J 4:211. AA says that the “shadow” is a span and 4 fingers (about 8 ins or 20 cm) wide and so would be passed quickly. See A:H 4:288 n3.

³⁴ *Asita, pīta, khāyita, sāyitā*. These are the 4 modes of consuming food, namely: *eat* food; *drink* liquids; *chew* solid food, a toothstick, betel-nut, chewing gum; *taste* (or lick) sweets, ice-cream.

³⁵ “Words and phrases of the Dharma,” *dhamma, pada, vyañjana*.

³⁶ “Litter,” *mañcaka*, lit “small bed” (from *mañca*, “bed”).

³⁷ “Clarity of wisdom,” *paññā, veyyatiyaṃ*, alt tr “lucidity of wisdom”; as at **Cūḷa Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 27), where the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi questions the wanderer Pilotikā (who has great faith in the Buddha) what he thinks of the Buddha's “clarity of wisdom” (M 27,2.3/1:175), SD 40a.5.

Hence, one of the hallmarks of being an arhat is that one would never have any symptoms of mental deterioration, such as dementia. However, we cannot say the same of streamwinners, once-returners, or even non-returners. They may, for example, have symptoms of dementia (for example), but this does not mean that they have not attained the path. Perhaps it simply means that they are certainly *not* arhats, and their mental karma has ripened, and we should not be any more judgemental than that.³⁸

2.2.2 The 4 bases of success

2.2.2.1 Although the Buddha may be physically frail due to his age and bouts of severe illness, his mind remains calm and clear as the day he awakened [2.2.1.2]. Hence, he can easily get into the 4th dhyana to work on the bases of success (or power), with which he would be able to prolong his life if he wishes to. **The 4 bases of success** (or power) (*iddhi, pāda*; Skt *ṛddhi, pāda*) are as follows applied to the prolongation of life:³⁹

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---|
| (1) will | (<i>chanda</i>) | the intention or desire to prolong his life; |
| (2) energy or effort | (<i>virīya</i>) | the meditative state attained and then directed to that intent; |
| (3) thought or mind | (<i>citta</i>) | the resultant consciousness of a prolonged life as it arises; and |
| (4) mental investigation | (<i>vīmaṃsa</i>) | one's unbroken mindfulness and awareness in effecting that state. |

Properly, we should not say that this life prolongation is effected by “psychic powers” since, in this application, there is nothing “psychic” in the above 4 bases. The Buddha, if he had extended his life would have used his yogic powers (“yogic” in the sense of meditation and mental abilities).

2.2.2.2 The *iddhi, pādas* are so called because, on a simple worldly (*lokiya*) level, they refer to utter determination to attain a certain state of wholesome success, such as putting in the meditation to this effect, called “concentration of the will” (*chanda, samādhi*).⁴⁰ Then, putting in the effort to do so, keeping the mind in that effort and state, and then being mindful and aware of one's wholesome application of that state.

On a spiritual (*lok'uttara*) level—when the *iddhi, pādas* are applied by a saint of the path—they are developed in deep concentration, that is, the 4th dhyana, with the mind free of the body, with the unification of all the other 4 aggregates: *feeling, perception, formations and consciousness* (Vbh 217).⁴¹ Such dhyana is the basis for the development of the 10 kinds of psychic powers (or any of them), as explained in the Paṭisambhidā, magga (Pm 2:205-214).⁴² These are various mental powers or success (*iddhi*) at their spiritual best, ranging from the reflection on impermanence to the attainment of the traditional psychic powers.⁴³

2.2.3 The Buddha relinquishes his life-formation

2.2.3.1 Now we move on to briefly examine how the Buddha lets go of his life-formation: was it done gradually or all at once? The Commentaries tell us that the Buddha did not let go of his life-formation like

³⁸ For mentions of 2 related cases (of a Myanmar meditation teacher and a Thai meditation master), see SD 60.1f (6.7.2).

³⁹ D 3:77, D 3:213 = M 1:103 = 2:11; D 3:221; Vbh 216. See SD 9 (9.2.3) & also Gethin, *The Buddha's Path to Awakening*, 2001:94-97.

⁴⁰ Pm 2:205; Vbh 217; Vism 12.50-53/384.

⁴¹ Also at Vism 12.52/385.

⁴² Explained in Vism 12.22-45/378-384.

⁴³ Explained in detail at Vism 12.46-13.129/384-435.

a ball of clay from his hand. For exactly 3 months, he entered into the fruition attainment (*phala,samāpatti*), thinking, "I will not remain in them for any longer than that."⁴⁴ It should be noted, however, that this life-extension is different from the one mentioned earlier at the Cāpāla shrine [2.1.1.1].

In simple terms, "**fruition attainment**" refers to a deep meditation consisting of an experience of nirvanic bliss the Buddha enters into. Thus, fruition attainment is the profound experience of nirvana itself. The consciousness here is said to be "supramundane" (*lok'uttara*), experienced only by those who have attained the path, in this case, only the Buddha and the arhats.

2.2.3.2 To understand the nature of fruition attainment, it helps to know what cessation attainment is. While fruition attainment is a conscious state (which means that the Buddha is able to communicate with and teach others), in cessation attainment (*nirodha,samāpatti*) there is no consciousness present at all.

The **Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha** describes cessation attainment as starting with the 1st dhyana right up to the 4th dhyana, then:

Having proceeded thus, up to the base of nothingness, one then attends to the preliminary duties, such as the resolution, etc, and enters the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception. After two occasions of javana⁴⁵ in dhyana, the continuum of consciousness is suspended. Then, one is said to have attained **cessation** (*nirodha,samāpatti*). (Abhs 9.43)⁴⁶

Attainment of cessation is a meditative state where the stream of consciousness and mental factors are completely cut off temporarily. Cessation, however, can only be attained by non-returners or arhats. In special cases, even non-aryas, that is, ordinary people, who are able to go into deep meditation may experience suspension of consciousness, but these states are simply unconscious states during meditation; it is neither cessation nor fruition attainment.

The **Abhidhamm'attha,saṅgaha** describes **fruition attainment** thus:

The attainment of fruition (*phala,samāpatti*) is a meditative attainment by which a noble disciple enters into supramundane dhyana with nirvana as the object. It is attained for the purpose of experiencing the bliss of nirvana here and now. The cittas that occur in this attainment are the fruition cittas corresponding to the person's level of realization. Thus, each of the 4 types of noble individuals can enter their own respective fruition attainment—the streamwinner attaining the fruition attainment of streamwinning, and so on. The attainment is reached by first making the resolution to attain fruition and then developing in sequence the insight knowledges, beginning with knowledge of rise and fall (described in *Vism* 23.6-15/699-702).

A caveat about such awakening knowledge: such knowledge is to be deeply respected and best left to each person's provisional understanding and acceptance. Without awakening, it is not *valid* knowledge for us. As we progress in our practice and attainment, our growing wisdom will give us a better appreciation of such knowledges. For the moment, it is simply an amateur's admiration at best, and taken with a celebrative smile of open knowing.

⁴⁴ DA 556; SA 3:253; UA 327. For a different opinion, see Jaini 1958 (2001:193)

⁴⁵ *Jāvana* or "impulsion" is the active phase—that of full cognition—of the cognitive process. See SD 19.14 (2); SD 47.19 (3.2.2.3); SD 49.5b (1.0.4.6).

⁴⁶ See also Abhs 422.

2.2.3.3 This provisional knowledge may help us with a better understanding of the sutta phrase describing the Buddha relinquishing his **lifespan force** (*āyu,saṅkhāra*). Each section is followed by a brief commentary, as follows:

Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 16)

(1) (The Buddha resolves to relinquish the remainder of his lifespan. Earth-tremors.)

Atha kho bhagavā cāpāle cetiye sato sampājano āyu,saṅkhāram ossaji, ossaṭṭhe ca bhagavatp āyu,saṅkhāre mahā,bhūmi,cālo ahosi

“Then, the Blessed One, at the Cāpāla shrine, mindfully and fully aware, **relinquished his life-formation**.⁴⁷ And when the Blessed One had relinquished his life-formation, there was a great earth-tremor, terrifying and hair-raising, and thunder-peals [the sky-drums bursting forth].”⁴⁸

(D 16,3.10/2:106,21 f), SD 9

Commentary:

“Then, the Blessed One, at the Cāpāla Shrine, the Tathagata **relinquished his life-formation**.

Therein (in the text), the Blessed One relinquished his life-formation, not in the way one throws away a clod of earth with the hand. He thought, ‘I will attain the fruition attainment for 3 months only, and from then on I will not attain it any more’.” (DA 2:556,33-37)

Comments:

According to the Sanskrit Mahāparinirvānasūtra and Divyāvadāna (p203), the Buddha determined (*adhiṣṭhāya*) the *jīvita-saṃskāra* but gave up the *āyu-saṃskāra*. Jaini reads this passage thus: the Buddha produced the forces of *jīvita* (“new prolonged life”) but rejected the forces of *āyu* (“the existing life-force”). He defines *āyuh-saṃskāra* as a result of some past karma, and *jīvita-saṃskāra* as the new life-force which is produced by the *ṛddhi* which is yogic potency (Jaini 1958:547-549). However, adds An, some Chinese versions say that the Buddha kept his *jīvita-saṃskāra* going but rejected his *āyu-saṃskāra*. But the Dīgha Subcommentary (DAPṬ 2:196) does not distinguish between the two.⁴⁹

(2) (Māra invites the Buddha to pass away into parinirvana, and the Buddha consents; Māra leaves.)

Idān’eva kho ānanda ajja cāpāle cetiye tathāgatena sato sampājano āyu,saṅkhāram ossaji tathā-gatena satena sampajānena āyu,saṅkhāro ossaṭṭho

“Then, Ānanda, the Blessed One, right here at the Cāpāla Shrine, mindfully and fully aware, relinquished his life-formation.”

(D 16,3.37/2:114,33), SD 9

Bhūmi,cālā Sutta (A 8.70)

(3) (Māra invites the Buddha to pass away into parinirvana, and the Buddha consents; Māra leaves.)

Atha kho bhagavā cāpāla,cetiye sato sampājano āyu,saṅkhāram ossaji. Ossaṭṭhe bhagavatā āyu,-saṅkhāre mahā,bhūmi,cālo ahosi bhimsanako sa,lomohaṃso deva,duṇḍubhiyo ca phalimsu.

“Then, the Blessed One, at the Cāpāla Shrine, mindful and fully aware, relinquished his life-formation. And when the Blessed One had relinquished his life-formation, a great earth-tremor occurred, frightening and terrifying, and peals of thunder split the sky.”

(A 8.70/4:311,28 f)

⁴⁷ “Life-formation” (*āyu,saṅkhāra*; elsewhere *jīvita,saṅkhāra*) (M 1:295, 296; S 2:266; J 4:215). Cf §2.23 where the Buddha willfully extends his life. See S:B 819 n366. See SD 9 (9.2) on the Buddha’s life-span, SD 9 (9.3) on *kappa*, & SD 9 (9.6): Did the Buddha commit suicide?

⁴⁸ A similar phenomenon (*dhamma,niyāma*) follows immediately after the Buddha passes into parinirvana SD 9 [§6.10].

⁴⁹ Based on AN Yang Gyu 2003 95 n1.

Commentary:

“Having well set up mindfulness, having limited it by knowledge, he discarded, abandoned, his vital force. The Blessed One did not relinquish his vital force in the way one drops a clod of earth with one's hand, but he resolved, ‘I will enter fruition attainment for only 3 more months but not beyond that.’” (AA 4:152,12-18)

Āyu,saṅkhār'ossajjana Sutta (U 6.1)

(4) (The Buddha relinquishes his life-formation. Earth-tremors.)

Atha kho bhagavā cāpāle cetiye sato sampajāno āyu,saṅkhāraṃ ossajji, osaṭṭhe ca bhagavatā āyu,-saṅkhāre mahā,bhūmi,cālo ahosi bhimsanako sa,lomahaṃso deva,duṇḍubhiyo ca phalimsu.

Then, the Blessed One, at the Cāpāla Shrine, mindful and fully aware, relinquished his life-formation. And when the Blessed One had relinquished his life-formation, a great earth-tremor occurred, frightening and terrifying, and peals of thunder split the sky. (U 6.1/64,24 f)

Commentary:

“Having well set up mindfulness, having limited it by knowledge, he discarded, abandoned, his life-formation. Herein, the Blessed One did not relinquish his life-formation in the way one drops a clod of earth with one's hand, but he let the thought arise: ‘I will enter fruition attainment **for only 3 more months** but not beyond that’.

But why did the Blessed One, who was capable of remaining for the *kappa* or *what remains of the kappa*, remain for so short a time and then, as a result of Māra's entreaty that he attain parinirvana, relinquish his life-formation? It is not the case that the Blessed One relinquished his life-formation as a result of Māra's entreaty, nor is it the case that, as a result of the elder's entreaty, he would fail to relinquish his life-formation.

Rather, he relinquished his life-formation due to **the absence, beyond the 3 months, of those capable of being guided**. For the Blessed One remains only insofar as there is a need of guiding those capable of being guided. For what reason, indeed, should they remain? For had he attained parinirvana as a result of Māra's entreaty, he would have attained parinirvana much earlier.

For the fact has already been stated that his being entreated by Māra at the Bodhi,maṇḍa, and his giving that sign and making that hint both had the aim of **diminishing the elder's grief** [2.1.3.1]. His giving that sign and making that hint also had the aim of demonstrating **the power of buddhas**. For these same blessed Buddhas, who are of such great majesty, in remaining, remain solely in accordance with their own inclinations, just as they also, in attaining parinirvana, attain parinirvana solely in accordance with their own inclination.”

(UA 2:327,18-328,10)

While all the other commentarial passages say about the same things regarding the Buddha's relinquishing his life-formation, the last passage (UA 327 f) adds an interesting but rather deterministic detail. Dhammapāla (the author of UA) states that the Buddha decided to pass away because he knew that there would be no more of “those capable of being guided (*veneyyaka*),” in other words, no more likelihood, even possibility, of attaining arhathood. This is begging the question: if the Buddha had lived on, he would be able to inspire many to be guided! Or is Dhammapāla suggesting that the Buddha would teach them only if they are guidable—that the Buddha lacked the ability to convince or convert others if he tried?

3 Comparative study: Pali and Sanskrit sources

3.1 THE MAHĀPARINIRVĀNA SŪTRA (SKT)

3.1.1 Āyu, jīvita and saṅkhāra

3.1.1.1 AN Yang Gyu (2005:88 passim) has rendered *āyu,kappa* as “lifespan” and *āyu,saṅkhāra* as “life-impetus” (2005:94 f); however, I have retained the rendering of *āyu,saṅkhāra* as “life-formation,” which I have used in my older translations. *Jīvita* is “life,” that is, the duration lived or liveable. What we usually mean by “life” here is *jīvita,saṅkhāra*, the “life-force,” by which life is propelled which, when interrupted (such as during sleep or unconsciousness), is stabilised by making a link. The Abhidhamma says that this link is established by the surfacing of the latent life-continuum (*bhav’āṅga*) during the lapse of consciousness.⁵⁰

Saṅkhāra (Skt *saṃskāra*), “formation, force or volition” (including plurals), acts as fuel for the individual’s continuing existence. Formations are embedded in the psychological nature of beings, in their desire for survival and continued existence. In its broadest sense, *jīvita,saṅkhāra* comprises both the life lived so far plus the life-potential yet to be lived. This is how the *saṅkhāra* is used with *āyu,saṅkhāra* (lifespan force) and *jīvita,saṅkhāra* (life-force) [above]. A rule of thumb is that *āyu,saṅkhāra* is the dynamics of life; *jīvita,saṅkhāra* is the mechanics of life.⁵¹

The terminology here is far from perfect. However, the main word we will be using is actually life-formation (*āyu,saṅkhāra*); the other terms, however they are rendered, will work naturally according to their respective contexts.

3.1.1.2 The account of the Buddha’s rejection of his life-formation (*āyu,saṅkhāra*) is preserved in almost identical terms in both the Pali and Sanskrit versions of the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta. **The Sanskrit version**, however, has a few points of interest not found in the Pali. There it is said that before rejecting his life-formation (*āyuh-saṃskāra*),⁵² the Buddha thought that there were only two persons, namely, Supriya the King of the Gandharvas and Subhadra the wanderer,⁵³ who would be taught by the Buddha himself at their attaining maturity of insight within a period of 3 months. Thinking thus, the Buddha attained *samādhi*, by which he mastered the life (*jīvita*) and rejected the predetermined forces of ageing (*āyuh*) that is, the existing life-force.⁵⁴ We can find no support for this novel story in any of the Pali texts.

3.1.2 Controversies

The Sarvāstivādins, on the basis of this passage, hold that the life of **3 months** was indeed to be an extension of life. The Buddha prolonged his life for only this short period: there was no purpose in

⁵⁰ On *bhavāṅga*, see SD 17.8a (6.1); SD 32.1 (3.8); SD 48.1 (9.2.1.3).

⁵¹ See Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, London 1996:78. Cf Divy 203.

⁵² On the Māhāyāna view of karma, esp the role of *jīvita* or *āyu,saṃskārah*, see (3.1.3.1).

⁵³ The Pali does not mention Supriya (Suppiya) but does mention Subhadra (ie, Subhadda) at D 16,5.23-32 + SD 9 (9.5).

⁵⁴ *Yannv ahaṃ tadrūpān ṛddhyabhisamkārān abhisamkuryām yathā samāhite citte jīvitasamkārān adhiṣṭhāyāyuh-samkārān utsrjeyam*. Waldschmidt, *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* 16.13, 1950:210. Also Divy 203. There’s no Pali parallel of this passage. [Archive] Note: Such Skt passages are from Jaini 1958, with a minor editing and updating of sources.

prolonging it, as the two new converts mentioned above would have become his disciples by that time. Moreover, the Buddha must have done this to show his control over the forces of life and death.⁵⁵

Thus, **the life-extension episode** of the Buddha in the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta and the Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra became a source for several controversies among the Buddhists. The Sthaviravādins (mainstream “elders,” Skt *sthavira*, P *thera*; early ancestors of the Theravāda) and the Sarvāstivādins agreed on the various powers of the Buddha. The prolongation of the lifespan was indeed a splendid miracle, which they would gladly have attributed to him.

When the Pali Commentators (*aṭṭhakathācariya*) and the Sanskrit Abhidharma masters (*vibhāṣā-saṣṭrī*) set about explaining this text-passage, they were confronted with various doctrinal difficulties. The main question was: how to account for the Buddha's new life and how to reconcile it with the accepted teachings on karma?

3.1.3 Karma

3.1.3.1 According to the Mahāyāna teaching on **karma**, the lifespan of any single existence (*nikāya-sabhāga*) is determined by the individual's karma at the moment of his conception (*pratisam̐dhi*, “relinking”). This is illustrated by the analogy of an arrow. The destiny of an arrow and the time it will take to reach its destination are determined at the moment of its shooting. Similarly, karma determines the lifespan of the individual (that is, by way of the 5 aggregates) at the moment of his conception.

Further, in Māhāyāna, *jīvita* or *āyu,saṁskārah* is described as “a force which at the time of birth forecasts the moment of death, just as the force with which an arrow is discharged forecasts the moment when it will fall down.”⁵⁶ This seems deterministic, unless we accept the possibility of some force or condition (like rain hitting the arrow, or another arrow shot at it) changing its course.

3.1.3.2 Karma, in Mahāyāna, generates a force (*saṁskāra*) known as *āyu*, which keeps the series of the 5 aggregates intact for a certain period. When this particular force is exhausted, we call it *āyuh-kṣaya*, “life-termination” or death. It is therefore maintained that *āyuh* is a karmic fruit (*vipāka*), a result of some past karma. If the phenomenon of life-prolongation is accepted, we have to account for a new life-force. This, as suggested by the Buddha's declaration, is possible by assuming that the yogic powers (*ṛddhi*) (mastery of the will through meditation) produce such a *new* life-force. Thus, it seems, we find 2 kinds of life, the original one generated by the karma and the other by yogic powers!

There is thus a significant difference between the Mahāyāna view of karma—as deterministic (such as suggested by the common Chinese term 缘分 *yuán fèn* (chance, fate, predestination)—and the early Buddhist teaching and Dharma-based view as “volition or formative action” that can or must occur even now, as in the case of right effort. This present force, properly, wholesomely and habitually generated, can change our situation, even our destiny.

3.2 THE DEFENCES OF THE STHAVIRAS

3.2.1 Āyu,kappa

3.2.1.1 The Sthaviravādins not only rejected the Mahāyāna interpretations of *kappa*, *āyu* and so on, but were careful to interpret the Buddha's statement in D 16 [2.1.2.1] without violating his teaching on

⁵⁵ *Marana,vaśitva,jñāpanārtham ... traimāsyam eva nordhvam vineyakāryābhāvāt ...* . Yaśomitra, *Abhidharma-kośa-vyākhyā* (Dwarikadas 1998:44.14-16; Wogihara & Karshim 1932-36:105; Tib 96a).

⁵⁶ Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, London: Royal Asiatic Soc, 1923:105.

karma. If we accept the idea that meditative (or any kind of) power is able to generate *new life* or extend it to the whole *world-period*, it would go against the textual teaching on karma.

Hence, the Sthaviravadins took *kappa* in the Sutta passage not to mean a *mahā,kappa* or aeon but as *āyu,kappa*, that is, the “lifespan or age” of human life (how old we *are*). The possible length of normal human life, that is, the liveable duration, is called *jīvita,kappa* or the average “life” of a human; this includes the current life lived plus the possible liveable life to come (how old we *can be*). [3.1.1]

The Pali texts, as a rule, take *āyu* (“age”) and *jīvita* (“life”) as synonyms; hence, it does not distinguish between *āyu,kappa* and *jīvita,kappa*. The two terms are used interchangeably, or *āyu,saṅkhāra* is used or meant as a rule. As a rule, we often see very little technical discrimination over such worldly terminology which tends to be more elaborate in the Commentaries and in the later writings. [3.1.1.1]

3.2.1.2 Now the *āyu,kappa* [3.1.1] is considered as the average lifespan of a human being here. It is, as the Buddha himself said (in a different context), “a hundred years, more or less.”⁵⁷ Since the Buddha had reached his normal limit (80 years), he did live for a *kappa* but renounced the rest of the *jīvita,kappa* (that is, his possible lifespan up to 120 or so years). The matter of the world-period (*mahā,kappa*) naturally does not factor here at all.

3.2.1.3 The Sthaviravādins were aware of the doctrinal difficulties involved in this belief. Indeed, in **the Kathā,vatthu**, where for the first time we see this controversy, the Sthaviravādins argue against the Mahāsaṅghika’s claim that the Buddha could have lived for a *mahā,kappa*. The main argument is that the new lifespan (*āyu*), the new destiny (*gati*), the acquisition of a new individuality is a result of yogic power.⁵⁸ The Mahāsaṅghika cannot affirm this, for it is committed to the theory that the *āyu* is a *kamma,vipāka*, not a result of yogic power.

Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on this controversial passage in the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 16), maintains that the *kappa* here means only “lifespan” (*āyu,kappa*).⁵⁹ He further explains that a person like the Buddha, or anyone having mastery over the bases of success (*iddhipāda*), can avert any obstructions to life, whereas others are not able to do so. When, therefore, the Buddha claims that he can live for a *kappa*, what this really means is that he has the power to avert any premature or untimely death.⁶⁰

3.2.2 Commentarial explanations

3.2.2.1 The Pali texts, however, make no suggestion at all that the Buddha extended his life even for a short period of 3 months; this was a novel belief of the Sarvāstivādins. The Milinda,pañha, too, notes that the “3 months’ limit”—the Buddha simply lived this period; it is not an extension—and that *āyu*,

⁵⁷ *Ettha ca kappan ti āyukappam, tasmim tasmim kale yam manussānam āyu-p,pamānam hoti tam paripuṇṇam karonto tiṭṭheyya, kappāvasesan ti: ‘appam vā hiyyo ti vutta,vassa,satato atirekam vā* (DA2:554).

⁵⁸ *Iddhi,balena samannāgato kappam tiṭṭheyyā ‘ti? āmantā. Iddhi,mayiko so ayu, ... sā gati ... so atta,bhava,paṭi-lābho ti? na h’evam vattabbe ...* . Kathā,vatthu 11.5.

⁵⁹ The current human lifespan (during the Buddha’s time) is said to be 120 years. According to Buddhist cosmology, the human lifespan evolves between a minimum of 10 years to as long as 80,000 years: **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,14-23), SD 36.10; **Mahā’padāna S** (D 14,1.7-1.16/2:3-11), SD 49.8. Mythical humans (such as Makha,deva and his lineage down to Nimi) lived over 3 x 84,000 years); **Makha,deva S** (M 83,6+9+11+19), SD 60.8.

⁶⁰ “But what here distinguishes one who has psychic power? Is it not that even one who has no such power might live on for a world cycle?” This is the distinction: one who has this power, can, by it ... avert ... an untimely death. One without psychic power cannot so avert.” (*Ko pan’ettha iddhimato viseso, nanu aniddhimā pi āyu,kappam tiṭṭheyyā ti? ayam viseso, iddhimā hi ... akāla,marañam nivāretum sakhoti, aniddhimato etam balam n’atthi.* KvuA 11.5/131 f).

kappa is simply his “lived” life⁶¹ [2.1.2.1]. There may, however, be exceptions, where even the Theravādins come up with a bizarre view, as noted by Buddhaghosa.

In the commentary on the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, **Buddhaghosa** mentions the view of an elder, Mahāsiva Thera.⁶² This elder maintained that the Buddha does not utter “the impossible” (*aṭṭhāne*): since the Buddha had suppressed the deadly pains for 10 months at Bejuva, “so he should be able to continue to live on in this fortunate (or auspicious) aeon⁶³” (*imam bhadda, kappam eva tiṭṭheyya*) by his psychic powers.

But he did not live on because the physical body is subject to the laws of decay (like the teeth decaying), and the Buddhas pass away without showing any severe effects of it. Moreover, all his chief disciples would have attained parinirvana by that time, and the Buddha living to the end of the *kappa* would have been left with a poor following of novices! (DA 554 f)

3.2.2.2 This remark sounds sadly modern. It sounds almost like a morally virtuous version of Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (1891)! The reality is that throughout human history, no human is historically known to have lived for a world-period (one who's still alive today). Buddhaghosa rightly dismisses this view without any comment and simply states that according to the Commentaries, the *kappa* here means only the *āyu, kappa*, not the *mahā, kappa*. (DA 2:554 f)

3.2.3 The Vinaya Culla, vagga account

3.2.3.1 These commentarial explanations do not seem to take notice of a Vinaya passage. In **the Culla, vagga** ch 9, the section dealing with the 1st council presided over by Mahā Kassapa, who censured Ānanda for his failure to request the Buddha to live on for the world-period (*kappa*) (the 4th sangha-act against Ānanda), it is recorded:

*Idam pi te āvuso ānanda dukkaṭaṃ
yaṃ tvaṃ bhagavatā oḷārike nimitte
kayiramāne oḷārike obhāse kayiramāne
na bhagavantam yāci: tiṭṭhatu bhagavā
kappam tiṭṭhatu sugato kappam*

“This too is an offence of wrong-doing for you,⁶⁴ avuso Ānanda, in that you, (although) a broad hint was given, a clear sign being made, did not ask the Blessed One to remain for the *kappa*,⁶⁵ **let the well-farer remain for the lifespan** for the welfare of the

⁶¹ “... or for the remainder of the lifespan. And the limit of 3 months was spoken of. But this *kappa* is said to be the lived (*āyu*) lifespan. And maharajah that psychic power of the Blessed One exists ... The Blessed One, maharajah, has no desire for all becomings.” (*kappâvasesam vā ti. te. māsa, paricchedo ca bhāṇito. so ca pana kappo āyu, kappo vuccati. vijjati ca taṃ mahārāja iddhi, balam bhagavato anattiko mahārāja bhagavā sabba, bhāvehi ...*, Miln 141 f). Jaini, in his “Buddha's prolongation of life,” 1958:549, seems to have misread this passage, prob due to accepting Horner's mistr of *kappa* there as “full lifespan” instead of “(lived) lifespan.”

⁶² There are a number of elders named Mahāsiva [DPPN sv], such as Gāmanta, pabbha, vāsī Mahāsiva Thera who lived in Sri Lanka during King Duṭṭhagāmanī Abhaya's reign (161-137 BCE) and Dīgha, bhāṇaka Tipiṭaka Mahāsiva, Thera (also called Dīgha, bhāṇaka Mahāsiva Thera, Tipiṭaka Mahāsiva Thera, or simply Mahāsiva Thera), who lived during King Vasabha's time (CE 65-109) (Sodo MORI, “Mahāsivatthera as seen in the Aṭṭhakathas,” *Sri Lanka J of Buddhist Studies* 1, 1987:124). Prob the 2nd is meant here (AN Y G 2003:89 n7). Although Buddhaghosa quotes him, sometimes he prefers the Aṭṭhakathā views than that of the Thera (eg DA 2:543; DhsA 266).

⁶³ “Fortunate aeon” (*bhadda, kappam*) refers to our world-cycle, one of 5 “filled aeons” (ie, not empty,” *asuñña, kappas*), and during which one or more buddhas arise (BA 191; DA 2:411). The 5 buddhas of this aeon are Kakusan-dha, Konāgamana, Kassapa, Gotama (our Buddha), and Metteyya (the next buddha). On the 5 buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3.1.2.1).

⁶⁴ Cf A 8.70/4:309 f; D 16,3-4-3.6/2:103, 113, 115; S 51.10/5:259; U 6.1/62.

⁶⁵ Comys call it “lifespan” (*ayu, kappa*), and say whatever is the length of human life at this and that time, bringing that to the full, let him remain (AA 4:149= SA 3:251 = UA 323).

*bahu.jana,hitāya bahu.jana,sukhāya
lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya
deva,manussān ti. desehi taṃ dukkaṭan ti.*

many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, the welfare, the happiness of devas and humans. Confess to [Show] that offence of wrong-doing.”

Cv 11.1.10 (V 2:289,16-21)

Ānanda’s response was, “Bhante, at that time, my mind was so possessed by Māra that I did not beseech the Blessed One ... “ (*ahaṃ kho bhante pariyuṭṭhita,citto na bhagavantam yācim*). I do not see that as an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkata*), yet out of faith in the venerable ones, I confess to that as an offence of wrong-doing.” (*nāhaṃ tam dukkaṭam passāmi, api cāyasmantānam saddhāya desemi taṃ dukkaṭan ti*).

The commentary on the Culla,vagga, however, makes no mention of this incident at all.

3.2.3.2 The above legalistic passage has been reproduced to show the significance of sangha act (*saṅgha,kamma*). In an important way, the matter has to be brought up so that the decision of the sangha elders is clear on it. Ānanda could not have given a better answer, considering that while sitting with the Buddha, Māra appeared to Ānanda. Hence, it was not Ānanda’s mistake, but, in his deep humility and faith in the sangha, he accepted it as a “wrong-doing” (that is, he could have done it rightly, given a choice). This serves as a very good example for the monastics to “keep faith in the sangha,” even on issues of mere technicalities, so that their **faith** will keep the sangha strong and the community, ordained and lay as a whole, united in faith.⁶⁶

Technically, it may be argued that surely if *kappa* meant only an *āyu,kappa* (a lifespan), and if the power of the Buddha was only limited to avert any premature death, there was no point in censuring Ānanda for his lapse in the first place. Still, it is clear from the records of early Buddhism that there is no reference made by the Buddha regarding extending his life for the whole world-period. Common-sense-wise, it goes without saying!

4 The views of some Sanskrit masters

4.1 VAIBHĀṢIKA VIEWS

4.1.1 The Buddha’s prolongation of his lifespan

4.1.1.1 The Pali commentaries are silent on the manner in which the life-force is rejected or is prolonged. This topic is only fully discussed in the works of **the Sarvāstivāda**. Vasubandhu, in his *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣyā* (ch 2, the indriyas), gives several Vaibhāṣika views on this topic.⁶⁷ He tells us that according to the *Vibhāṣā-śāstra*, karma is of 2 kinds, that is:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| (1) <i>āyur-vipāka-karma</i> | the karma which at the moment of conception determines the <i>āyuh</i> ; |
| (2) <i>bhoga-vipāka-karma</i> | a sum total of all past karmas in the series of consciousness, which continuously yields its fruits (other than <i>āyuh</i>) during samsaric existence. |

⁶⁶ During the early 21st-century socially engaged forest monk, Brahmavamso, was excommunicated by the sangha of the head monastery, Wat Pah Pong, NE Thailand. It would have been for our happiness and welfare if he had followed Ānanda’s example of humility and faith in the sangha: SD 1.9 (8-10).

⁶⁷ L de la Vallée Poussin, *L’Abhidharma-kośa de Vasubandhu*, ch 2, kā 10; Eng tr Abhk:Pr 1:167 f.

According to the Vaibhāsikas, the human arhat, having full mastery over the *rddhipādas*, can, by his strong resolution, transform the *bhoga-vipāka* karma into an *āyur-vipāka-karma*. This transformed karma then produces the new *āyu*. If he wishes to reject his already established lifespan (*āyuh-saṁskāra*), he transforms his *āyur-vipāka-karma* into the *bhoga-vipāka-karma*.

4.1.1.2 This explanation is unsatisfactory because, at the time when the *āyu* is rejected, the *āyur-vipāka-karma* is no longer potentially existent since it has already fruited. Therefore, some teachers held different views, that is, the karmas of the past birth, as yet unripe, are ripened and made to yield their fruit by the power of meditation. The difficulty here is that in the case of an arhat, there is no possibility of any new potential *āyur-vipāka-karma* since, at the attainment of arhathood, he has ceased rebirth. In all these explanations, we can see a sustained but unsuccessful attempt to relate the new (that is, the prolonged *āyu* to some form of karma).

4.1.2 Ghoṣaka

Vasubandhu further says that the Tocharian **Ghoṣaka** (2nd cent CE), a Vaibhāsika master, goes a step further. He holds that an altogether new body consisting of the material elements (*mahā-bhūtāni*) of the form world (*rūpa-loka*) is produced by the yogic powers and can live for a *kalpa*. We can see here an allusion to the Buddha's Assumed (or Projected) Body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*, a Mahāyāna notion). We are, however, not told here how such a body can continue to exist when the original body has ceased at the end of the *āyu*.

4.2 VASUBANDHU CRITICIZED

Vasubandhu, after giving the above views on the Vaibhāsikas and on Ghoṣaka, gives his own. He says that such an arhat has yogic powers with which he can cut short or put aside the lifespan cast by past karma and produce a new lifespan by the sole power of his meditation. Consequently, this new life-force would be a result of samadhi and not of karma. This view takes us back to the controversy raised in the Kathāvatthu. Vasubandhu's view is identical with the Mahāsaṅghika view condemned by the Sthaviravādins as contrary to the laws of karma.

This unorthodox view of Vasubandhu is severely criticised in a 5th century CE work known as **the Abhidharma-dīpa**,⁶⁸ representing the orthodox Vaibhāsika school. The work's autocommentary labels this view unbuddhistic, reaffirms the doctrine of karma, and accuses the Kośakāra⁶⁹ of entering the portals of Mahāyāna Buddhism:

"For surely, if the Blessed One, by the powers of meditation, could at will produce a new living personality or could create a new lifespan independent of karma, then indeed, the Buddha would be turned into a Nārāyaṇa.⁷⁰ Moreover, he would never attain parinirvāna, such being his compassion for worldly

⁶⁸ The urtext of this work was discovered in Tibet by Pandit Rahula Sankrtyayana in 1937; ed P S Jain, *Abhidharma-dīpa with Vibhāṣāprabhāvṛtti*, Patna: Tibetan Sanskrit Works 4, K P Jayaswal Research Institute, 2nd ed 1977. [JainFoundation]

⁶⁹ *Kośa, kāra*, "the Kośa creator," ie, the author/s of the Abhidharmakośa and its related works; it has been theorized that there are 2 Vasubandhus. See M Kapstein, "Who wrote the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa?" *J of Indian Philosophy* 46,2 2018:3 f. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02503277/document>.

⁷⁰ One of the forms and epithets of Vishnu (the Hindu God of preservation) in the triumvirate of Brahmā (creator), Viṣṇu and Śiva (destroyer).

beings. Therefore, this view deserves no consideration (as the Kośakāra here is) following the Vaitulikaśāstra⁷¹ [*vaitulya*].⁷² (Abhdī:Jaini 101)

5 Mahāyāna developments

5.1 DOCETIC BUDDHISM

5.1.1 Buddha Avatars

The Abhidharma-dīpa autocommentator's critical remark [4.2] is vitally significant. It anticipates the development of **the *avatāravāda***—the docetic doctrine of “descents” or emanations of *nirmāṇa-kāya* Buddhas from some kind of Ādi-buddha, Original Buddha—in Mahāyāna Buddhism and reasserts the orthodox theory of the human Buddha. It also points to the Mahāyānist origins of the belief in the Buddha's power of prolonging his lifespan [5.2.1]. We have already seen that the Kathāvatthu [3.2.1.3] attributes this belief to the Mahāsaṅghikas, the forerunners of the Mahāyāna, who were the first to fall away from the orthodox stream.

5.1.2 Buddha as God

The Mahāvastu, a Vinaya text of the Lokottaravādins, a branch of the Mahāsaṅghika, contains the earliest reference to the doctrine of the supermundane (*lokottara*) Buddha. It is said there that the Buddhas are not subject to the effects of old age. Nor are they subject to the laws of karma. The following verse (Mvst 1:169) seems to refer to the belief in the Buddha's power of life prolongation and yet his passing away as a human being :

*prabhūś ca karma vārayitum karmaṃ deśayanti ca jinā
aiśvaryaṃ vinigūhanti eṣā lokānuvartanā.*⁷³

The Pali commentators and the Sanskrit Abhidharmikas had to account for the laws of karma, which even the Buddhas could not escape. Hence their argument that the Buddha wished to pass away while his body was still unaffected by old age. The Lokottaravadins placed the Buddha above the laws of karma and thus paved the way for the Mahāyānist doctrine of a Transcendent Buddha, Buddha as God.

5.2 THE ONE BUDDHA AND THE ALMIGHTY BUDDHAS

5.2.1 The Buddha of Immeasurable Life

⁷¹ A name used in **Abhidharma, dīpa** (“lamp of Abhidharma,” 450-550 CE) to allude to a Mahāyāna devotee or sympathizer. A Skt Abhidharma treatise written anonymously, by one Dīpa, kāra (“writer of the Dīpa,” prob Vimalamitra). The work itself is in verse (*kārikā*) with an autocommentary (prob by the same author) who borrows freely from Abhidharmakośa but criticizes Vasubandhu (whom he calls *kośa, kāra*) for his Sautrāntika tendencies. Its concern is a systematic Abhidharma and a strong polemic defence of Sarvāstivāda.

⁷² *tathāpi tu yuktimaduttaramucyate | yadi bhagavān samādhībalena svecchayāpūrvam sattvaṃ savijñānakam sendriyamutpādayet, svātmano vā jīvitamanākṣiptam prākkarmabhīryogabalenākṣipet, tato buddho bhagavān-nārāyaṇīkṛtaḥ syāt apūrvasattvanirmāṇāt | sa ca kāruṇikatvānneva parinirvāyāt, śāsanasambhedasamdehaṃśca cchindyāt | tasmādvaitulikaśāstrapraveśadvāramārabdham tenabhadantenetyadhyupekṣametāt |*

⁷³ “Although they could suppress the working of karma, the Conquerors let it become manifest and conceal their sovereign power. This is mere conformity with the world” (tr J J Jones, Mvst 1:133). For other similar doctrines of the Lokottaravādins, see J Masuda, “Origin and doctrines of early Indian Buddhist schools,” Leipzig: Verlag der Asia Major, 1925.

5.2.1.1 Once the supremacy of the Buddha over the laws of karma was accepted, there remained no great difficulty in assuming a limitless life, even immortality, and limitless power, even almightiness (omnipotence), for the Buddha. The best known amongst such Sutras are three that form a triad, all called Sukhāvati Sūtra, that is, the Longer (or Larger) Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra, the Shorter Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra (better known as the Amitābha Sūtra) and the Guan Wuliangshou Jing (*Amitāyurdhyāna Sutra).⁷⁴ These 3 sutras are the key devotional texts of the Pure Land traditions that started and flourished in East Asia.

Both the Longer and the Shorter Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtras were written around the 3rd century CE. Considering their popularity in East Asia, it is likely that they were composed in China or Central Asia. The Longer Sutra is extant in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Khotanese, Uighur and Xixia, and is likely to have been composed in Central Asia.

5.2.1.2 The Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha opens with a familiar but far more dramatized claim of the Buddha.⁷⁵ “If the Tathagata wished, O Ananda, he could live for a whole kalpa on one [morsel of] alms-gift, or for a hundred kalpas, or for a thousand kalpas, or for a hundred thousand kalpas, to a hundred thousand nayutas of kotis of kalpas, nay, he could live beyond, and yet the faculties of the Tathagata would not perish, the color of his face would not be altered, nor would the color of his skin be injured.”⁷⁶

5.2.1.3 The Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra is indeed devoted solely to highlight this one aspect, clearly evident in the glorified conception of the Buddha **Amitāyus** (無量壽 *wú liàng shòu*), the Buddha (or Bodhisattva) of Immeasurable Life, that is, the Eternal Buddha. Originally identical with Amitābha, he evolved into his own, especially with Tantric Buddhists. He is often depicted as a Bodhisattva, decked in princely finery, holding a vial (*kalāśa*) of ambrosia (representing eternal life). His colour is red, signifying the west (the setting sun). We see here the rise in symbolism and magic as this form of Buddhism becomes more ritualised and externalised.

As **Amitābha**, he has his own Paradise or Buddha-field (*buddha-kṣetra*), Sukhāvati, located in the West, that is, west of China, from where India is regarded as the “holy land,” and pilgrims famously “go west” to gather scriptures or to visit the holy places. Sukhāvati is visualized in the form of a *maṇḍala*, a meditative psychocosmogram. Merely but habitually reciting the name “Amitābha” (in any language) promises one rebirth in Sukhāvati for eternal bliss. Nirvana is now reachable by a mere word.

5.2.2 Philosophy of Emptiness

5.2.2.1 The rise of the absolutist schools like **the Śūnyavāda** brought an even greater revolution. Here, the Buddha was considered not only a supermundane Person, but the very essence of phenomena, comparable to the Godhead of the Hindu religion. The theological conception of the **trikāya** (“three bodies”) of the Buddha is explained on the basis of this doctrine. It led to the doctrine of the identity of samsara and nirvana.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Briefly *Guan Jing* (“Visualization Scripture”); it has neither Skt nor Tib recension; Uighur versions exist but are trs of Chin version. It shows specific Chin influences, such as refs to earlier Chin trs of Pure Land materials and other visualization sutras. All this suggests that it is likely to be an indigenous Chin composition.

⁷⁵ *Akaṁkṣann ānanda, tathāgata eka-piṇḍapātena kalpaṁ va tiṣṭhet, kalpaśatam vā, ... tato vottari tiṣṭhet, na ca tathāgatasendriyāṅy upanaśyeyur na mukhavarnāsyānyathātvaṁ bhaven nāpi chavivarṇa upahanyeta. Sukhāvati-vyūha* (ed Müller & Nanjio, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Aryan ser 1,2), 1883:4; Vaidya 1961:222.

⁷⁶ <https://huntingtonarchive.org/resources/downloads/sutras/04amitabhaPureland/SV%20Long.doc.pdf>.

⁷⁷ For a close study, see T R V Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London, 1955:284 ff.

Theologically, this is a very inviting idea—to imagine that Buddha and Māra are one and the same! It is a good place to start a discussion on Māra: “I” is Māra, “me” is Māra, “mine” is Māra. This makes good sense in terms of early Buddhism: the primary defilement and fetter is that of self-identity view. The danger comes when we philosophize it all and end up with bad spiritual grammar, saying, “I *am* Māra.” True as this may be, it is only virtual reality.

5.2.2.2 The statements in the Prāṅṅāpāramitā texts or the Saddharma-puṅḍarīka Sūtra,⁷⁸ such as that “the Buddha never attained nirvana,” are to be understood in the background of this philosophical development. The historical or human Buddha of the Hīnayāna was considered by the Emptiness masters and their followers here, as one of the many incarnations of the Absolute (Eternal) Buddha, his descent on earth in the *nirmāṇa-kāya* or Assumed body. It’s for our benefit, of course, whether we like it or not. Dharma has become Theology.

5.2.2.3 In this amazing inner journey of words and thoughts, we started by examining the belief in the Buddha’s power of **prolongation of his lifespan**. Gradually, this belief led some Buddhists to attribute to him powers that he had himself neither spoken of nor suggested. In time, such imaginings and hopings led to a more theistic conception of the Buddha with immeasurable life and to further apotheosis until we have the Transcendent and Immanent Buddhas.⁷⁹

— end —

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⁷⁸ *Nirvāṇabhūmiṃ cupadarśayāmi vinayārthasattvāmi vadamy upāyarn na cāpi nirvāmy ahu tasmi kāle ihaiva co dharmu prākāśayāmi*. Ch 15.3 (*Tathāgatāyuspramāṇaparivartaḥ*), p 323; Vaidya 193. Also cf *Na buddhaḥ parinirvāti dharmo'ntarhiyate na ca, sattvānam paripākāya nirvāṇam tūpadarśayet*. (Qu in *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* [Haribhadra’s comy on Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra], p 132.) For several views on this topic, see (tr) E Obermiller, *History of Buddhism by Bu-ston* 2:67 ff.

⁷⁹ See “Cosmic Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Buddhist theism,” see SD 36.2 (7).

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