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## The Great Commission

The world's 1<sup>st</sup> missionary faith | **Mahāvagga 1.7-11**  
 Theme: The story of Yasa; the sending of the first missionaries  
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### 1 The “problem” of Yasa

**1.1** Although **Yasa** was converted almost immediately after the awakening of the group of 5 monks and was one of the first 60 missionaries, he does not figure prominently in the Canon. He is not even mentioned in the list of foremost disciples (*agga,sāvaka*) in **the Eka Nipāta** of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.

**1.2** In fact, he is hardly mentioned in the Pali Tipiṭaka except in the **Vinaya** story (Mv 1.7-11) and the **Thera,gāthā** (Tha 117). In the latter, he is listed as elder (*thera*) **no. 117** in the Eka Nipāta (the books of ones, that is, elders with a with a single verse). The Thera,gāthā Commentary gives a very brief standard native gloss (ThaA 1:243 f), where Dhammapāla also hints that his verse is identical with that of Sabba,-dāyaka (the one who give all) of **the Apadāna** (Ap 1:333 f).

<p><i>Suvilitto suvasano  sabb'ābharaṇa,bhūsito  tisso vijjā ajjhagamim  katam buddhassa sāsanam ti</i></p>	<p>(Tha 117)</p>	<p>Well-anointed, well-dressed,  adorned with all my ornaments,  I have won the 3 knowledges.  The Budha's teaching has been done.</p>
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**1.3** In the Commentaries, Yasa is usually mentioned as a “boy” (*dāraka*),<sup>1</sup> that is, one not older than a teenager, or as a “son of family” (*kula,putta*), that is, coming from a well-to-do family.<sup>2</sup> The rule that a candidate for ordination (*upasampadā*) should be at least 20 “full years” (V 4:130) has not been introduced at this early stage in Buddhist monastic history.

**1.4** There is a possibility that the Yasa here is the **Yasa Kākaṇḍaka,putta** who was instrumental in the convening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Buddhist Council (at Vesālī).<sup>3</sup> If this were the case, then he would be some 165 years old. His father's name would then be Kāk'aṇḍaka or Kāk'aṇḍa (“Crow's egg”).

### 2 The conversion of Yasa's family

**2.1** After **Yasa's father**, the first 3-refuge layman [Mv 7.10.3], had become a streamwinner, he invited the Buddha and the venerable Yasa to his house for alms. After hearing the Buddha's teaching, **Yasa's mother and his former wife** took the 3 refuges and became the first laywomen.<sup>4</sup>

**2.2** Buddhaghosa, in his Anguttara Commentary, says that Yasa's mother was the lady **Sujātā**, the name by which she is known after her refuge-taking (DA 1:239; AA 1:403). This raises a problem<sup>5</sup>—Yasa was

<sup>1</sup> Eg AA 1:100, 147.

<sup>2</sup> Eg V 1:15 ff; DhA 1:88; BA 19.

<sup>3</sup> VA 1:33 ff; Dīpv 4:45 ff; Mahv 4:9 ff. See **Monastics and Money**, SD 4.19-23.

<sup>4</sup> V 1:19; cf A 1:26; J 1:68 ff, SnA 154; D 2:135; AA 1:401 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Sujātā offers the Bodhisattva's last meal during the morning of the great awakening (J 1:68 f; DhA 86,1): this is in Apr-May (of year 1 of the ministry). The Buddha then fasts for 49 days (7 weeks) [SD 63.1]. Then, in Jun-Jul, the first 2 discourses are given to the 5 monks. Yasa meets the Buddha on the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> discourse.

converted 5 days after the 1<sup>st</sup> discourse<sup>6</sup> (Āsāḷha full-moon day), that is, on the day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> discourse,<sup>7</sup> when all the 5 monks became arhats.<sup>8</sup> If we follow the Aṅguttara Commentary, Yasa would then be *about 3 months* in Sujātā's womb!

Clearly then, either there are 2 Sujātās of the suttas—one from Senani and the other from Benares—or there are (at least) 2 Yasas: Yasa \*Seṭṭhi,putta and Yasa \*Sujātā,putta. More research is needed to differentiate them.

### 3 A curious story

**3.1** While I was doing my monastic training in Thailand, I was told an apocryphal story behind the birth of Yasa. A man, distressed because he had no child, at the instigation of his wife, **Sujātā**,<sup>9</sup> turned to “a tree-spirit” (or arboreal deity) believed to haunt a large Indian fig tree<sup>10</sup> and who was known to grant such requests made to him. The man promised to build the spirit a shrine in exchange for the fulfillment of his wish; but the desperate wife threatened to cut down the tree if she failed to get a child!

The terrified tree spirit, it was said, found himself in a quandary, for the request was beyond his powers. But fearing Sujātā's desperation, he sought the help of **Sakra**, leader of the devas, who reassured him of his help. There happened to be among the devas of the heaven of the 33 gods, one of whom who was reaching the time for rebirth. So long as he had to fall from the deva state, he might as well be reborn in the womb of the merchant householder's wife.<sup>11</sup>

**3.2** That deva, it is said, was born into the merchant householder's family, amidst great joy, and the child was brought up in the lap of luxury. His mind, which remained pure, did not allow him to be stained by sensual existence, the vanity of which he soon saw. Many experiences similar to those of the Bodhisattva were attributed to him, and he, too, left home under the cover of darkness.<sup>12</sup>

**Sakra**, remembering his promise to Yasa before the latter's rebirth, then led him to the Buddha's residence on the far side of the river Vānara. The young man left his golden slippers on the near bank, forded the river and fell at the Buddha's feet. The rest of the story is as found in the Vinaya account here.

<sup>6</sup> Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S (S 56.11), SD 1.1.

<sup>7</sup> Anatta Lakkhaṇa S (S 22.59), SD 1.2.

<sup>8</sup> DhA 1:87,8-12; J 1:82,19-22.

<sup>9</sup> A certain Sujātā is the daughter of Senāni, a land-owner of a village of the same name near Uruvelā. The meal she gives the Bodhisattva is his last before the Awakening (D 2:183; VA 5:1119; DA 2:572; UA 405). There are at least 5 women named Sujātā during the Buddha's time: a laywoman of Nātikā (D 2:92; S 5:356 ff); the youngest sister of Visākhā (A 4:91 f; J 2:347 ff); a maiden of Benares identified as Rāhula's mother in **Maṇi,cora J** (J 2:125); Sujātā Therī, daughter of a merchant of Sāketa (Thī 145-150; ThīA 136 f), and Yasa's mother (AA 1:403,22-404,16). On Sujātā, see also DA 1:58,2, 173,25; DhA 1:86,1 f; J 1:68,5-70,3.

<sup>10</sup> This is the same species as the Bodhi tree. Comys however says that Sujātā went to a banyan tree (*nigrodha*) (MA 2:182; BA 7).

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note here that this deva is able to choose his own rebirth, as does the Bodhisattva (according to popular Buddhist hagiography), in his last rebirth as the future Buddha (Miln 193; DA 2:428, 430, 651; MA 4:171, 173; AA 1:114, 122; DhA 1:84; UA 149, 277; ItA 1:133; BA 54, 79; SnA 1:198, 222, 264; J 1:48; ApA 53, 54; DhsA 33). Apparently, it is usu possible for a deva to choose a lower birth rather than a higher one. Other devas, if they are not some kind of saint (at least as streamwinners), would fall (*cavati*) into a subhuman birth, ie, incl hell itself: see (**Nānā,kaṛaṇa**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123/2:126-128), SD 23.8a.

<sup>12</sup> However, in a well-known passage in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26, SD 1.11), the young Bodhisattva leaves home in broad day-light before his weeping parents (M 26.14/1:164).

There is, however, no mention here of the name of Yasa's mother nor that of his wife. There is no mention that Yasa's mother made any food offering to the Bodhisattva. Unfortunately, I am unable to ascertain the exact source of this apocryphal story.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4 Yasa's life as a model

The 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the **Mahā Khandhaka** of the Pali Vinaya called the "Account of the Going-forth" (*pabbajjā kathā*) contains the details of Yasa's luxurious life and his subsequent renunciation (V 1:15 ff). **T W Rhys Davids and H Oldenberg** are of the opinion that "a well-known scene of the Bodhisatta has evidently been represented after the model of this story .... Nowhere in the Pali Pitakas is the story told about the Bodhisatta himself." (V:RDO 1:102 n2)

The account is indeed a stereotype passage, but it is found in the Pali Piṭakas in reference to the Bodhisattva<sup>14</sup> and also in the Commentaries (eg J 1:58). Therefore, it is not true to say that Yasa's luxurious life was replicated as or used as a model superimposed onto the Bodhisattva's life (pace Thomas 1949: 90 n 1). This stock passage is also found in the account of the past Buddha Vipassī (D 2:21).

#### 5 Did Yasa exist?

We may now ask whether the Vinaya account of Yasa's life was modelled along that of the Buddha? No such account of the Buddha is, however, found in the Canon. This seems more probable, for we find the stock passage again in relation to Anuruddha's early life (V 2:180). It is likely that, after the Buddha's time, in an attempt to compile a more complete Buddha-life, the redactors decided to include this stock account in it.

Although Yasa is mentioned only a couple of times in the Canon, it would be wrong to conclude that he never existed. On the contrary, we might ask why he is mentioned at all, especially with such scanty details about him. It is very likely that some canonical details about him have been lost. As complete as the Pali Canon may be, it does not contain all the accounts of the Buddha's 45 years of public ministry.

#### 6 Sending of the first missionaries

The closing section here [SD 11.2(11)] is the most important passage, the locus classicus, of **Buddhist missiology**, that is, the passage on the great commission (*mahā, cārika*), the sending out of the 1<sup>st</sup> missionaries to spread the Dharma. This declaration testifies to Buddhism as *the 1<sup>st</sup> world missionary religion*. It has a wealth of details that gives the key points of mission and the missionary. In short, it is a public declaration of the Buddha as a world-teacher of wisdom and compassion, that is, the 1<sup>st</sup> world teacher of the path of awakening and freedom.

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<sup>13</sup> This story, if it exists, may be found in one of the hagiographical biographies of the Buddha written in Sri Lanka or SE Asia. If you know the source of this story, please contact me at [dharmafarer@gmail.com](mailto:dharmafarer@gmail.com) or the SD editor (quoting "SD 11.2 (3).")

<sup>14</sup> M 1:504; A 1:146; Mvst 2:115 f.

**SD 11.2(7)****Yasa Pabbajjā<sup>15</sup>**

Yasa's Going-forth | Mv 1.7.1-15 (V 1:15-18)

Themes: Yasa's samvega, renunciation, awakening, and the first 3-refuge layman

Yasa's renunciation

[15] 1 At that time in Benares, there was a **seth's son**,<sup>16</sup> a delicate son of family named **Yasa**.

He had 3 mansions:<sup>17</sup> one for the cold season, one for the hot season and one for the rains. In the rains mansion, during the 4 months of the rains, he was waited upon by only female musicians,<sup>18</sup> and did not come down to the ground floor of the mansion<sup>19</sup> during those months.<sup>20</sup>

And then, while Yasa, the son of family, was given over to the pleasures of the 5 senses, engrossed in them,<sup>21</sup> being attended to with such care,<sup>22</sup> he fell asleep, and his attendants, too, fell asleep, and an oil-lamp burned all night.<sup>23</sup>

2 Then, Yasa, the son of family, having woken suddenly (before the rest),<sup>24</sup> saw his own attendants sleeping,

<sup>15</sup> This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition), but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

<sup>16</sup> "A merchant's son," *setthi,putta*. Horner says that he is so called while his father, the *setthi*, is alive, but after whose death, he would inherit that professional title (V:H 4:xlvi, 42 n4). A *setthi* is a financier, fund manager or entrepreneur: see SD 3.15 (1.1.2); also Chakravarti 1987:10.

<sup>17</sup> A *pāsāda* is prob a long storied mansion (S 51.14/5:270; VA 654; see V:H 2:16 n5, n6). **Jonathan S Walters**, in his journal article, "Suttas as History: Four approaches to the *Sermon on the Noble Quest* (Ariyapariyesanasutta)" (*History of Religions*, 1993) notes that the sutta "is full of startling silences: here we have no Suddhodana, no Mahā, māyā, no Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, no Yasodharā and Rāhula, no pleasure palace, no women of the harem, no four signs..." (1993:276). The story of Suddhodana as a powerful and wealthy king is very likely a later legend: it is clear from the suttas that the Sakyas were vassals (*anuyuttā*) of king Pasenadi of Kosala (D 27,8/3:83). In **Pabbajjā S**, the young ascetic Siddhattha tells Bimbisāra that he (Siddhattha) is a "Kosala-dweller" (*Kosala nicketino*), connoting that the Sakyas are a part of Kosala (Sn 422). Furthermore, in **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89), Pasenadi tells the Buddha, "The Blessed One is a kshatriya and I am a kshatriya; the Blessed One is a Kosalan (*Kosalaka*) and I am a Kosalan" (M 89, 19/2:124). **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3, SD 21.3) gives a clear hint of the republican system of the Sakyas followed by a delightful analogy of the quail (D 3.1.13 f/1:91). See AK Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 1970:45. As such, it is better to translate *pāsāda* as "mansion" rather than "palace."

<sup>18</sup> "By only female musicians," *nippurisehi turiyehi*, lit "unmanned music," possibly "divine music." The Thai trs give it as ไม่มีมนุษย์เจือปน, "with no humans involved" (BUDSIR, Dhammadāna). However, from the context of the following para [2], it is clear that women are meant. Comy says that not only the musicians, but all duties in the mansion, incl door-keepers, were filled by women. His father had provided him with these three mansions and the harem of women hoping to keep him in the home life and distract him from any thought of renunciation. (DA 2:455 = MA 3:215 f). See D:R 2:18 n1.

<sup>19</sup> "Did not come down to the ground floor of the mansion," *na heṭṭhā ... pāsādam orohati*: see DPL: heṭṭhā. Alt tr "did not come down from the mansion."

<sup>20</sup> This passage on the 3 mansions is also found in **Mahāpādāna S** (D 14,38/2:21), SD 49.8a.

<sup>21</sup> "Given over to ... engrossed in," *samappitassa samaṅgībhūta*. These are very powerfully suggestive words in this context: *samappita* is pp of *sam + appeti* (to hand over; to pour, flow into); *samaṅgī* is *sam + aṅgī* ("endowed with limbs," endowed with, possessing, enjoying); *bhūta* here simply shows a state of being.

<sup>22</sup> "With such care," *paṭikacc'eva*. See foll n.

<sup>23</sup> This small detail that a single "oil-lamp burned all night," suggesting a dimly lit atmosphere, is vital in creating a surrealistic vision that appears before Yasa when he suddenly awakens in the middle of the night.

one with a lute (*vīṇā*) under her armpit,  
 one with a tabour<sup>25</sup> at her neck,  
 one with a drum<sup>26</sup> under her armpit,  
 one with dishevelled hair,  
 one drooling, one muttering—  
 one would think it was a charnel ground within the arm's reach!<sup>27</sup>

2.2 Seeing this, he felt the danger [wretchedness],<sup>28</sup> his mind was set in revulsion.<sup>29</sup>

Then, Yasa, the son of family, uttered a solemn utterance:<sup>30</sup>

**“Oh what trouble indeed! Oh what affliction indeed!”** *upaddutaṃ vata bho, upassatthaṃ vata bho* [§4.2]

3 Then, Yasa, the son of family, having put on his golden sandals, approached the door of his house. Non-humans opened the doors,<sup>31</sup> thinking,

*“Let there be no hindrance for his going forth from the household life into homelessness!”*

Then, Yasa, the son of family approached the city gate. Non-humans opened the gate, thinking,

*“Let there be no hindrance for his going forth from the household life into homelessness!”*<sup>32</sup>

Then, Yasa, the son of family, went to the Deer Park at Isipatana.

### Yasa's realization

4 Now at the time, the Blessed One, having risen from the night, early at dawn, was walking up and down in the open.<sup>33</sup> The Blessed One saw **the son of family, Yasa**, coming in the distance.

Having seen him, the Blessed One stepped out of the walk-way<sup>34</sup> and sat down on a prepared seat.

4.2 Then, Yasa, the son of family, when he was near the Blessed One, made the solemn utterance:

**“Oh, what trouble indeed! Oh, what affliction indeed!”**

4.3 Then, the Blessed One made this inspired utterance<sup>35</sup> to Yasa, the son of family:

<sup>24</sup> “Suddenly” (Be Se *paṭikacc'eva*, Ce Ee *paṭigacc'eva*) also “first, previously”; both readings are absol of *paṭikaroti*, “counteract; anticipate.” Either word has 2 senses; for the 1<sup>st</sup> sense, see prec n.

<sup>25</sup> “Tabour,” *mudiṅga* (Skt *mṛdaṅga*), ie the mirutangkam, a kind of barrel drum. For discussion on this instrument, see **Aṅi S** (S 20.7.2) n, SD 11.13.

<sup>26</sup> “Drum,” *āḷambara*, a drum with a deep resounding sound, like thunder; see CPD.

<sup>27</sup> “Within the hand's reach,” *hattha,paṭṭaṃ*. The whole sentence, *hattha,paṭṭaṃ susānaṃ maññe* lit, means “one would think that one's hand has touched a charnel ground.” A related expression is *hattha,pāsa*, lit “the side of the hand,” ie within arm's length: close enough to entail an offence (V 3:200, 4:47, 82, 95, 221, 230). When monks are performing a sangha-act, they must sit close together *hattha,pāsa*-wise. It is defined by Vinaya,vinicchaya Ṭikā as *aḍḍhateyya, ratana-p, pamāṇa, desaṃ*, 2½ ratanas (ie 2½ cubits), probably meaning from the shoulder-joint to the middle finger-tip: see Ñāṇamoli 1994: 141.

<sup>28</sup> “Danger,” *ādīnava*.

<sup>29</sup> *Nibbidā*: see **Nibbidā**, SD 20.1.

<sup>30</sup> “Uttered a solemn utterance,” *udānaṃ udānesi*. UA explains that *udāna* usu denotes an inspired statement of joy (*pīti*), but here refers to an expression of religious emotion (*samvega*), of shock and revulsion (UA 2,15-23). Cf **Udāna** (U), the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 15 books of the Khuddaka Nikāya. On *samvega*: SD 1.11 (3); SD 9 (7.6).

<sup>31</sup> “Non-humans” (*amanussā*) here refers to the devas of the heaven of the 33 (*tāva, tiṃsa*). This fascinating detail concurs with the tradition that Yasa was a deva of the 33 gods in his previous life. See Intro 3.

<sup>32</sup> The devas' intercession may be understood as the ripening of Yasa's good karma.

<sup>33</sup> This walking is both a meditation as well as a mild exercise.

<sup>34</sup> “Walk-way,” *caṅkamā*, or ambulatory, which could also be a cloister or arcade (V 1:15, 182, 2:220; D 1:105; S 1:212; A 1:114, 183, 3:29, 4:87), also tr as gerund “walking” (S 4:104).

<sup>35</sup> “Inspired utterance,” *udāna*, same word as for “solemn utterance” [§2.2]. Notice their contextual senses.

“**This, Yasa, is no trouble, indeed; this is no affliction!**” *idaṃ kho yasa anupaddutaṃ, idaṃ anupassatthaṃ*  
Come, Yasa, sit down: I will show you the Dharma.”

5 Then, Yasa, the son of family, thought:

“I hear that this is no trouble, I hear that this is no affliction,”

joyful, uplifted, he took off his golden sandals, approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

While Yasa, the son of family, was seated at one side, the Blessed One gave him a **progressive talk** (on the Dharma), that is to say:

he presented		( <i>pakāsesi</i> )
a talk on	giving,	<i>dāna,katha</i>
a talk on	moral virtue,	<i>sīla,kathā</i>
a talk on (the joys of)	heaven,	<i>sagga,kathā</i>
and explained to him the dangers of	sensual pleasures,	<i>kāmānaṃ ādīnaṃ</i>
its degrading nature,		<i>okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ</i>
the advantages of	renunciation.	<i>nekkhamme ānisaṃsaṃ</i>

6 When the Blessed One [16] knew of Yasa, the son of family, that his mind was malleable, pliable, free from hindrances, uplifted, clear, [§6] he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas:  
suffering, its arising, its ending, the path.<sup>36</sup>

#### YASA ENTERS THE PATH

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye,  
even so, just as he sat right there, the stainless, spotless **Dharma-eye**<sup>37</sup> arose in him, thus:  
“Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

### The first 3-refuge layman

7 Then, **the mother of Yasa** [*yasa,mātā*],<sup>38</sup> the son of family, having gone up the mansion and not seeing Yasa, the son of family, approached the merchant houselord [*yasa,pitā*].<sup>39</sup> Having approached the merchant houselord, she said:

“Houselord, your son, Yasa, is not to be seen.”

Then, the merchant houselord, having sent messengers on horseback in the 4 quarters, went himself to the Deer Park at Isipatana.

The merchant houselord saw the tracks of the golden sandals and followed them.

8 The Blessed One saw the merchant houselord coming in the distance, and it occurred to the Blessed One:

“What if I were to create a psychic wonder so that the merchant houselord, seated here, would not see Yasa, the son of family, seated here?”

Then, the Blessed One created a psychic wonder to that effect.

<sup>36</sup> ie. The 4 noble truths. For details, see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.

<sup>37</sup> “Dharma-eye,” *dhamma,cakkhu*, ie one of the first 3 paths, usu streamwinning (*sotāpatti*) (DA 1:237, 278).

<sup>38</sup> Notice that *no name* is mentioned, only her relationship to Yasa.

<sup>39</sup> “Merchant houselord,” *seṭṭhi,gahapati*, a leading and wealthy businessman, financier or entrepreneur, with a large number of people in his employ. See Chakravarti 1987:77-79.

9 Then, the merchant houselord approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, has the Blessed One seen Yasa, the son of family?”

“Well then, houselord, sit down. Perhaps sitting here, you may **see**<sup>40</sup> Yasa, the son of family, sitting here.”

Then, the merchant houselord, thinking:

“I hear that if I were to sit here I might see Yasa, the son of family, sitting here,” joyful, uplifted, he saluted the Blessed One and sat down at one side.

10 As **the merchant houselord** was seated at one side, the Blessed One gave him a **progressive talk** (on the Dharma), that is to say: [§5]

he presented

a talk on

giving,

a talk on

moral virtue,

a talk on (the joys of)

heaven,

and explained to him the dangers of

sensual pleasures,

its degrading nature,

the advantages of

renunciation.

10.2 When the Blessed One knew of the merchant houselord, that his mind was malleable, pliable, free from hindrances, uplifted, clear, [§6]

he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas:

suffering, its arising, its ending, the path.

YASA’S FATHER ENTERS THE PATH

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye,

even so, just as he sat right there, the stainless, spotless **Dharma-eye** arose in him, thus:

“Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

10.3 Then, the merchant houselord, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having immersed himself in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won moral courage, independent of others in the Teacher’s teaching,<sup>41</sup> said this to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante!

Just as if, bhante, 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 the Blessed One has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I, bhante, go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.

<sup>40</sup> There is a beautiful wordplay on **see** as spoken by the merchant houselord and by the Buddha.

<sup>41</sup> “Having seen the Dharma ... in the Teacher’s teaching,” *diṭṭha, dhammo patta, dhammo vidita, dhammo pariyo-galha, dhammo tiṇṇa, vicikiccho vigata, katham, katho vesārajja-p, patto apara-p, paccayo satthu, sāsane*. As at **Am-baṭṭha S** (D 3,2.22/1:110). This shows that Yasa’s father has become a learner (one of the first 3 paths). This is confirmed in §12: “What do you think, houselord, that Dharma seen by Yasa, the son of family, with the knowledge of one with the training, with the vision of one with the training, even so it is by you.”

May the Blessed One remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge  
from this day forth for life.”  
So he became the first 3-refuge layman<sup>42</sup> [17] in the world.

## Yasa’s arhathood

**11** Then, while the father of Yasa, the son of family, was being taught the Dharma, he [Yasa] was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known, his mind was **freed from the mental influxes**,<sup>43</sup> freed from clinging.

Then, this thought occurred to the Blessed One:

“While the father of Yasa, the son of family, was being taught the Dharma,  
he [Yasa] was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known,  
his mind was freed from the mental influxes, freed from clinging.

Now, Yasa, the son of family, having turned away from the low life,  
is one incapable of enjoying sensual pleasures as he formerly did as one living in a house.

What if I were to put an end to the psychic wonder?”

Then, the Blessed One put an end to the psychic wonder.

**12** Then, the merchant householder **saw** Yasa, the son of family, sitting down.

Seeing Yasa, the son of family, he said this to him:

“Dear Yasa, your mother, filled with grief, has been crying. Give life to your mother.”

### KNOWLEDGE AND VISION OF THE TRAINING

Then, Yasa, the son of family, looked towards the Blessed One.<sup>44</sup>

12.2 Then, the Blessed One said this to the merchant householder:

“What do you think, householder, that **Dharma has been seen by Yasa**, the son of family,  
with the knowledge of the training, with the vision of the training,<sup>45</sup> even so have you, too.

As he [Yasa] was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known,  
his mind was freed from the mental influxes, freed from clinging.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> “Three-refuge lay follower,” *upāsako ... te, vāciko*, lit “a lay follower by the 3-word formula.” With the group of 5 monks becoming arhats, the sangha is established in the world.

<sup>43</sup> “Mental influxes,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints”, RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

<sup>44</sup> Out of respect for the Buddha, his new found teacher, Yasa awaits the Buddha’s instruction and reply.

<sup>45</sup> “With the knowledge of the training ... the vision of ...” (*sekhena ñāṇena sekhena dassanena*) (all MSS). Technically, *sekhena* should read *asekhena*, ie, “the non-learner’s” knowledge and vision, since Yasa is now an arhat. My understanding is that at this nascent stage, the Buddha does *not* distinguish between *sekha* [*sekkha*] and *asekha* [*asekkha*], ie, “the training” (*sikkha*) is taken as a whole, that Yasa has *fulfilled* the training. On *sekha* + *asekha*, see Sadd 331,14 (§15.82); **Sekha S** (M 53), SD 21.14 (2); (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S** (A 3.85), SD 3.3(2). See §12.3b n.

<sup>46</sup> Sāriputta similarly attained arhathood as the result of listening to the Buddha teach another, ie the Vedanā,-pariggaha S (ie **Dīgha,nakha S**, M 74), SD 16.1, to Dīgha,nakha; Nanda the cowherd, while listening to **Dāru-k,khan-**



What do you think, houselord, is one who has turned away from the low life  
capable of enjoying sensual pleasures as he formerly did as one living in a house?”  
“No indeed, Blessed One.”

12.3 “The Dharma, houselord, has been seen by Yasa, the son of family,  
With **the knowledge of the training**, with **the vision of the training**, even so it is by you.<sup>47</sup>  
He was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known,  
his mind was freed from the mental influxes, freed from clinging.  
Now, Yasa, the son of family, having turned away from the low life,  
is **one incapable of enjoying sensual pleasures** as he formerly did as one living in a house.”

**13** “Blessed One, it is a gain for Yasa, the son of family, a good gain, bhante, for Yasa, the son of family, in that his mind is freed from the mental influxes, freed from clinging!

Bhante, may the Blessed One consent to a meal from me tomorrow, with Yasa, the son of family, as attendant?”

The Blessed One consented by his silence.

Then, the merchant houselord, having received the Blessed One’s consent,<sup>48</sup> rose from his seat, saluted the Blessed One and, keeping his right side towards him, left.

### Yasa’s going-forth

**14** Then, not long after the merchant houselord had left, Yasa, the son of family said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, may I receive the going forth before the Blessed One. May I receive the ordination?”<sup>49</sup>  
“**Come, bhikkhu!**” said the Blessed One, “**Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life!**”<sup>50</sup>  
This **[18]** was the venerable’s ordination. There were then 7 arhats in the world.<sup>51</sup>

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**dha S 1** (S 35.200/4:181) being addressed to the monks, requests right there to join the Order: he prob had attained streamwinning (SD 28.5).

<sup>47</sup> *Sekhena nāṇena sekkena dassanena dhammo diṭṭho seyyathā’pi tayā*. In the trs, apparently only Rhys Davids & Oldenberg (1885) noticed this Pali difficulty here, noting that *sekha* is “a person who has attained to any stage in the Noble Eightfold Path (such as *sotipattiphala* etc) inferior to the higher (Arahatship)” (V:RO 1:107 n1). The usual (later canonical) meaning of *sekha* is “learner,” ie, any of those who have attained the path short of an arhat (ie a streamwinner, a once-returner or a non-returner). See §12.2c n.

<sup>48</sup> “Received the ... consent,” *adhivāsanaṃ viditvā*, lit “having known the consent.” Alt tr: “having known that ... has consented.”

<sup>49</sup> *Labheyyāhaṃ bhante bhagavato santike pabbajjāṃ, labheyyāhaṃ upasampadaṃ*. SD 45.16 (0.1.4, 1.2.2).

<sup>50</sup> The ordination formula reads: Se **Ehi bhikkhu. Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma, cariyāṃ**, but Be, Ce, Ee add: *sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāya* (“for the utter ending of suffering”). Se notes: “Some places (editions) have added ‘*sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāya*’ here, but the venerable has done away with suffering. As such, this (phrase) is out of place, since there is no further task (of working towards liberation) for him (*imasmim̃ ṭhāne katthaci sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāyā ti pakkhittāṃ | tam pana yasmā ten’āyasmātā dukkhassanto kato ahosi n’atthi tassa uttarim̃ karaṇiyāṃ tasmā atirekanti daṭṭhabbāṃ*).” Cf Mv 1.7.14 (SD 11.2(7)); Mv 1.9.4 (SD 11.2(9)); Mv 1.10.4 (SD 11.2-(10).) On other **ehi, bhikkhu** ordinations, see **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86,6.5/2:100 = Tha 870, SD 5.11; MA 3:334; ThaA 3:69); **Sela S** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), Comy (MA 3:405 f; SnA 2:455 f); **Sunīta** (Tha 625). See also VA 1:240-243; AA 1:190; AAT:Be 2:69-74; SnA 1:294; 2:569; DhA 1:87, 2:32; ThaA 3:203; ApA 87, 270; BA 19 f; J 1:82. Cf §§9.4 & 10.4 below on the ordination formulas there. On *ehi, bhikkhuṇī* ordination, see ThīA 297 f. See also **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86,6 = Tha 870) n, SD 5.11. On the ehi, bhikkhu formula, see SD 45.16 (1).

<sup>51</sup> That is, the group of 5 monks, Yasa, and the Buddha himself.

**SD 11.2(8)****Paṭhama Te, vacikā Upāsikā<sup>52</sup>**

The First 3-refuge Laywomen | Mv 1.8.1-4 (V 1:18)

Theme: The conversion of Yasa's family, and the first 3-refuge laywomen

**1** Then, the Blessed One, having dressed himself in the morning and taking robe and bowl, with venerable Yasa, the son of family, as attendant, went to the merchant houselord's house for alms. Having gone there, he sat down on the prepared seat.

Then, **the venerable Yasa's mother and his former wife** approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, they saluted him and sat down at one side.

**2** The Blessed One gave them a **progressive talk** (on the Dharma), that is to say: [Mv 1.7.5] he presented

a talk on	giving,
a talk on	moral virtue,
a talk on (the joys of)	heaven,
and explained to them the dangers of	sensual pleasures,
its degrading nature,	
the advantages of	renunciation.

**2.2** When the Blessed One knew that they were ready, that their minds were malleable, pliable, free from hindrances, uplifted, clear, [§6] he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas: suffering, its arising, its ending, the path.

## YASA'S MOTHER AND EX-WIFE ENTER THE PATH

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as they sat right there, the stainless, spotless **Dharma-eye** arose in them, thus: "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end."

**3** Then, they, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having found a fully firm footing in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won moral courage, independent of others in the Teacher's Teaching, said this to the Blessed One:

"Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante!

Just as if, bhante, 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 the Blessed One has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

We, bhante, go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.

May the Blessed One remember us as laywomen who have gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life."

So they became the first 3-refuge laywomen<sup>53</sup> in the world.

<sup>52</sup> This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition) but is inserted here following the scribal tradition.

<sup>53</sup> "Laywomen," (*upāsikā*). See V 1:19; cf A 1:26; J 1:68 ff; SnA 154; D 2:135; AA 1:401 ff.

4 Then, the venerable Yasa’s mother and father and his former wife, having served the Blessed One and the venerable Yasa with their own hands, having offered them excellent food, hard and soft, until they [the Blessed One and the venerable Yasa] stopped them,<sup>54</sup> and when the Blessed One had finished his meal and removed his hand from the bowl, sat down at one side.

Then, the Blessed One, having instructed, the venerable Yasa’s mother and father and former wife with a Dharma talk, inspiring them, firing them with enthusiasm and gladdening them, rose from his seat and left.<sup>55</sup>

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## SD 11.2(9)

## Catu Gihi,sahāyaka Pabbajjā<sup>56</sup>

The Going-forth of the 4 Laymen Friends

Mahā,vagga 1.9.1-4 @ V 1:18 f

Theme: The first 11 arhats

1 Now **4 lay friends** of the venerable Yasa, the sons of various merchants [great and small]<sup>57</sup> of Benares—Vimala, [19] Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, Gavampati—heard:

“It is said that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness.”

Hearing this, they said:

“Now this is no mean Dharma and Vinaya, no mean going-forth, such that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness!”

2 They approached the venerable Yasa. Having approached the venerable Yasa, they saluted him, and stood at one side.

Then, the venerable Yasa brought these 4 lay friends to the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, they saluted him and sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the venerable Yasa said this to the Blessed One:

“These, bhante, are 4 lay friends of mine, the sons of various merchants of Benares: Vimala, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, Gavampati. May the Blessed One advise and teach them.”

2.2 The Blessed One gave them **a progressive talk** (on the Dharma), that is to say: he presented

<sup>54</sup> The “stopping” (*sampavāretvā*) refers to the initial servings of food in the monastic bowl. Traditionally, monastics would only accept what they need, halt the serving and then start eating their meals, the food all mixed up.

<sup>55</sup> “Having instructed, ... with a Dharma talk, inspiring them, firing them with enthusiasm and gladdening them,” *dhammiyā kathāya sandassetvā samādapetvā samuttejetvā sampahamsetvā*. This action sequence reflects the basic structure of **the Buddha’s teaching method**: (1) the Dharma is shown (*samdassetvā*); (2) the listener/s are filled with enthusiasm (*samādapetvā*); (3) they are fired with commitment (*samuttejetvā*); and (4) filled with joy (*sampahamsetvā*). Comys explain that by instructing, the Buddha dispels the listener’s **delusion**; by inspiring him, **heedlessness** is dispelled; by rousing him, **indolence** is dispelled; and by gladdening, brings the practice to a **conclusion**. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to **bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and joy** to the listener. These four qualities are, in fact, the sixth or last of the ideal skills of a Dharma speaker ((**Pañcaka**) **Udāyi S**, A 5.159, SD 46.1).

<sup>56</sup> This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition), but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

<sup>57</sup> “Various merchants [small and great],” *setṭhānusetṭhi*. See V 1:18; J 5:384 (*mahā, setṭhi* and *setṭhi*, vI *anusetṭhi*); see also *Vinaya Texts* 1:102 n3.

a talk on giving,  
 a talk on moral virtue,  
 a talk on (the joys of) heaven,  
 and explained to them the dangers of sensual pleasures,  
 its degrading nature,  
 the advantages of renunciation.

**3** When the Blessed One knew that they were ready,  
 their minds malleable, pliable, free from hindrances, uplifted, and clear,  
 then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas:  
 suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.

#### THE 4 FRIENDS' STREAMWINNING

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye,  
 even so, just as they sat right there, the stainless, spotless **Dharma-eye** arose in them, thus:  
 "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end."

**4** Then, they, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma,  
 having found a fully firm footing in the Dharma,  
 having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty,  
 having won moral courage, independent of others in the Teacher's teaching,  
 said this to the Blessed One:

"Bhante, may we receive the going forth before the Blessed One. May we receive the ordination?"

4.2 "**Come, bhikkhus!**" said the Blessed One, "**Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life for the utter ending of suffering!**"<sup>58</sup>

This was the venerables' ordination.

4.3 Then, the Blessed One advised and taught these monks with a Dharma talk.

Being advised and taught by the Blessed One with a Dharma talk, the minds of these monks **were freed of influxes**, freed of clinging.

So there were then 11 arhats in the world.

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## SD 11.2(10)

## Paññāsa Gihi,sahāyaka Pabbajjā<sup>59</sup>

The Going-forth of the 50 Laymen Friends | Mv 1.10.1-4 @ V 1:20

Theme: The first 61 arhats

[20]

**1** Now **50 lay friends** of the venerable Yasa, those of leading families and of families coming after them,<sup>60</sup> in the country, heard:

<sup>58</sup> Their ordination formula reads: *Ehi bhikkhu. Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma,cariyaṃ, sammā dukkhassa anta,kiriyāya*, which is the fuller formula since they have not yet attain arhathood. Cf SD 11.2(7) §14 n ad loc.

<sup>59</sup> This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition) but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

<sup>60</sup> "Of leading families and those coming after them," *pubbānupubbakānaṃ kulānaṃ*, ie of the oldest and next to the oldest family lines (VA 966).

“It is said that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness.”

Hearing this, they said:

“Now this is no mean Dharma and Discipline, no mean going-forth, such that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness!”

**2** They approached the venerable Yasa. Having approached the venerable Yasa, they saluted him, stood at one side. Then, the venerable Yasa brought these 50 lay friends to the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, they saluted the Blessed One, and sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the venerable Yasa said this to the Blessed One:

“These, bhante, are 50 lay friends of mine, those of leading families and of families coming after them, in the countryside. May the Blessed One advise and teach them.”

2.2 The Blessed One gave them **a progressive talk** (on the Dharma), that is to say: he presented

a talk on	giving,
a talk on	moral virtue,
a talk on (the joys of)	heaven,
and explained to him the dangers of	sensual pleasures,
its degrading nature,	
the advantages of	renunciation.

**3** When the Blessed One knew that they were ready, their minds malleable, pliable, free from hindrances, uplifted, and clear, then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas: suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.

#### THE 50 FRIENDS’ STREAMWINNING

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as they sat right there, the stainless, spotless **Dharma-eye** arose in them, thus: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

**4** Then, they, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having found a fully firm footing in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won moral courage, independent of others in the Teacher’s teaching, said this to the Blessed One: “Bhante, may we receive the going forth before the Blessed One. May we receive the ordination?”

4.2 “**Come, bhikshus!**” said the Blessed One, “**Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life for the utter ending of suffering!**”<sup>61</sup>

This was the venerables’ ordination.

Then, the Blessed One advised and taught these monks with a Dharma talk. Being advised and taught with a Dharma talk, the minds of these monks were freed of influxes, freed of clinging.

There were then 61 arhats in the world.

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<sup>61</sup> Their ordination formula reads: *Ehi bhikkhu. Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma, cariyarū, sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāya*, which is the fuller formula since they have not yet attain arhathood. Cf SD 11.2(7) §14 n ad loc.

**SD 11.2(11)****\*Mahā,cārika<sup>62</sup>**

The great commission (The great going-forth)  
Or, **Carikā Anujānana**, The Assent for Going Forth (into the world)<sup>63</sup>

Mahā,vagga 1.11.1 @ V 1:21,1-8<sup>64</sup>

Theme: The first propagation of the Dharma by the monks

- 1 Then, the Blessed One addressed the monks:<sup>65</sup>
  - 2 “Freed am I, bhikshus, from all snares, divine and human! You too, bhikshus, [21] are freed from all snares, divine and human.
  - 3 **Go forth**, bhikshus, on a mission<sup>66</sup> for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good and happiness of the gods and humans.
  - 4 Let not two of you go the same way.
  - 5 Teach the Dharma, bhikshus, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter.
  - 6 Declare the holy life in its whole<sup>67</sup> and complete purity.
  - 7 There are beings with little dust in their eyes who, not listening, would be ruined.
  - 8 They will grow if they understand the Dharma.<sup>68</sup>
  - 9 I will myself, bhikshus, go to Senānigama<sup>69</sup> near Uruvelā to teach the Dharma.”
- (Mv 11.1 @ V 1:20 f) = (**Māra**) **Pāsa S 2**, S 4.5/1:105 f; Mvst 3:415 f)

— evaṃ —

**Aftermath**

At Uruvelā, the Buddha converts the group of 30 young men (V 1: 23 f) and the 3 matted-hair fire-worshipping ascetic Kassapa brothers (V 1:24-35) together with their 1000 disciples, then teaching them **the Āditta Pariyāya Sutta**.<sup>70</sup> All these events happen in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the ministry.

In **the 2<sup>nd</sup> year**, the Buddha meets with rajah Bimbisāra (V 1:35-39), who donates the Bamboo Grove (the first forest monastery). In due course, the Buddha ordains the 2 chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna (V 1:39-43).

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<sup>62</sup> This section is originally part of the preceding story, but is titled separately due to its significance. The title is a constructed one.

<sup>63</sup> See **Mahā’padāna S** (D 24,3.27), SD 49.8.

<sup>64</sup> The Pali texts call this section *Māra Kathā*, “the Māra episode.” Here only the section on the great commission, the first half, is given.

<sup>65</sup> This whole passage appears verbatim in **Pāsa S 2** (S 4.5/1:105 f). For the Skt parallel, see Mvst 3:415 f = Mvst:J 3:416 f. See S:B 413 n273.

<sup>66</sup> “Mission,” *cārikāṃ*, usu tr as “moving or walking about, wandering, roaming; pilgrimage; journey” (DPL).

<sup>67</sup> “Whole,” *kevala*, ie unadulterated, entire, not mixed with anything else.

<sup>68</sup> “If they understand the Dharma,” *dharmassa aññātāro*, lit “if they are knowers of the Dharma.”

<sup>69</sup> Senānigama = Senāni nigama, by way of haplology, ie, the loss of one of the syllables *-ni-*. See Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, rev Norman, Oxford, 2000: §65.2. This is the original name as found in the Canon (eg V 1:21; M 1:166. 240; A 1:106). The Comys give it as Senānī,nigama, the market town of Senānī, on the Nerañjarā bank near Uruvelā, and where Sujātā gives milk-rice to the Bodhisattva, which is his last meal before the awakening J 1:68; MA 2:173; SA 1:172; AA 1:401; BA 7; ApA 72; DhsA 34). **Lalita,vistāra** calls it Senāpati,grāma (Lalv 311.248).

<sup>70</sup> V 1:35 f; S 35.28.

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