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(Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta

The Discourse to Saṅgārava | M 100

Theme: Do gods exist?

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Saṅgārava

1.1 Brahmin youth. The Dictionary of Pali Proper Names (DPPN) gives seven Saṅgārava Suttas.¹ It is possible that the different Saṅgāravas of these suttas were brothers. The Saṃyutta Commentary says that the Dhanañjanī clan was reputed to be the highest of the brahmin clans. They believed that while other brahmins had been born from Brahma’s mouth, they themselves had issued from the top of his head. The brahminee Dhanañjanī was a stream-winner, but her husband was staunchly opposed to the Buddha’s teaching and would block his ears whenever she spoke in praise of the Three Jewels (SA 1:226).

In our sutta, Saṅgārava,² a learned brahmin youth (*mānava*) of Caṇḍala,kappa,³ very likely the same learned brahmin youth of **the (Nīvaraṇā) Saṅgārava Sutta** (S 46.55).⁴ Buddhaghosa says that Saṅgārava was the youngest of the Saṅgārava brothers of Dhānañjānī’s husband (MA.2:808). One day, Saṅgārava sees the brahminee Dhānañjānī (his sister-in-law), who having stumbled and fallen down, exclaims three times, “Homage to the Buddha, the arhat, the perfect self-awakened one!” He faults her for extolling a shaveling monk in this manner. However, when she tells him of the Buddha’s marvellous qualities, he feels a desire to meet him.

Later, when the Buddha comes to Caṇḍala,kappa and stays in Todeyya’s mango grove, Dhānañjānī informs Saṅgārava who visits him and questions him on his (the Buddha’s) views on brahmins. The Buddha replies that he has great regard for brahmins who have here and now won the goal, having independently discovered for themselves the Dharma unheard before, of which he himself is one.

1.2 Dhanañjanī Sutta (S 7.1). The opening of the Saṅgārava Sutta [§2] is also found in the **Dhanañjanī Sutta** (S 7.1/1:160), where the name is spelt **Dhanañjanī**. In the Dhanañjanī Sutta, however, she makes this inspired utterance before 500 brahmins, whom her husband has invited for a banquet. On the previous day, her husband, the brahmin Bhāradvāja,⁵ had pleaded with her not to disgrace him by praising the Buddha before his peers. When Dhanañjanī stumbles over a stack of firewood while serving food to the brahmins, she then kneels down and the inspired utterance honouring the Buddha. Scandalized, the brahmins reviled her husband and walked out without even finishing their meal.

The exasperated Bhāradvāja then tells Dhanañjanī that he is going to humiliate the Buddha by refuting his doctrine. He meets the Buddha and throws his challenge:

- 613 Having slain what one sleeps happily?
 Having slain what does one not sorrow?
 What is that one thing,
 O Gotama, whose killing you approve of?
- 614 Having slain anger, one sleeps happily.
 Having slain anger, one sorrows not.
 Anger, with its poisonous root

¹ See **(Nīvaraṇā) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12 (2). Se (M:Se 2:667 = 13/667/724) gives the title as Sagārava S, and reads Sagārava throughout.

² See **(Nīvaraṇā) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12 (1).

³ A village (*gama*). Be, MA 3:450 *canjali,kappa*; Ce *maṇḍala,kappa*; Ee *caṇḍala,kappa*; Ke *Se paccala,kappa*. For other vll, see Ee 2:209 n8.

⁴ See SD 3.12 (2003).

⁵ The suttas mention Saṅgārava (M 100/2:209-213) & Asur’indaka (S 7.3/1:163 f) as his younger brothers. Comy adds that he is the eldest of the Bhāradvājas, and brother of Akkosaka Bhāra,dvāja, who also joins the order and becomes an arhat (S 7.2/1:161-164; SA 1:229; MA 3:452), as do the younger brothers, Sundarika (Sn 3.4; S 7.9) and Piṅgala(ka) Bhāra,dvāja (S 1:164) (MA 3:452). See **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 3.4), SD 22.2 (1).

And honeyed shoot, O brahmin,
 their killing, the noble ones praise:
 for having slain them, one sorrows not. (S 7.1/1:161 = 1.71 = 2.3)

Bhāradvāja is impressed, takes refuge and asks for admission into the Order. In due course, he becomes an arhat. (SA 1:226-228).

Apparently, the brahminee Dhānañjānī is in the habit of making the inspired utterance. As such, the narrative here could be a separate incident, or it could be on the same occasion as the Saṃyutta narrative.

2 Types of recluses and brahmins

2.1 TYPES OF HOLY MEN. In the Saṅgārava Sutta (M 100), we find the Buddha classifying **holy persons** before and during his time in terms of their ways of knowing in three classes [§7], namely:⁶

- (1) **The traditionalists** (*anussavikā*), who, on the basis of oral tradition, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The traditionalists derive their knowledge and claims wholly from divine revelation, scriptural tradition and interpretations based on it. Prominent amongst the traditionalists are the brahmins who upheld the authority of the Vedas.⁷
- (2) **The reasoners and inquirers [metaphysicians and speculators]** (*takkī vīmaṃsī*), who, speculate entirely on the basis of mere faith. Using reasoning and speculating to reinforce that faith, they proclaim their dogmas and ideas. The reasoners derive their knowledge and claims through reasoning and speculations without any claim to extrasensory perception. The speculators of the early Upaniṣads, the skeptics, the materialists and most of the Ājīvakas come under this class. [§2.1]
- (3) **The experientialists**, who, in things not heard before, having directly known the Dharma for themselves (*sāmaṃ yeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya*),⁸ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The experientialists depend on direct personal knowledge and experience, including extrasensory perception on the basis of which their theories are founded. Many of the thinkers of the middle and late Upaniṣads, some of the Ājīvakas and Jains can be put in this class. The materialists, as empiricists (those who advocate reality as known only through personal experience, that is, the senses), may also be classed here, “if not for the fact that they denied the validity of claims to extrasensory perception.”⁹ The Buddha declares himself to be a teacher in this category.¹⁰

The categories here are clearly based on the model of the three types of wisdom (*paññā*) mentioned in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 324), that is, namely:

- (1) wisdom arising through listening (*suta, maya paññā*), ie, received wisdom, academic learning;
- (2) wisdom arising through thinking (*cinta, maya paññā*), ie, reflective or philosophical wisdom;
- (3) wisdom arising through cultivation (*bhāvanā, maya paññā*), ie, spiritual wisdom, gained through mental development. (D 33, 1.10(43)/210; Vbh 324)

The three classes of holy persons are not rigid or mutually exclusive categories, but reflect tendencies found in the respective groups of seers and teachers. The traditionalists, for example, sometimes gave a place to perception and reason. While the materialists did away with scripture, the reasoners of the early Upaniṣads did not entirely do so. The Ājīvakas and later the Jains, too, held their scriptures in high regard.

⁶ Much of the nn here are taken from Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963, which discusses them in greater detail (esp ch 4).

⁷ See eg **Caṅkī S** (M 95.10-15/1:168-171), SD 21.15.

⁸ This phrase, notes Bodhi, “emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life.” (M:NB 1304 920).

⁹ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:170.

¹⁰ M 100.7/2:211.

The experientialists of the middle and late Upaniṣads similarly had very little place for scripture but did not discard reason altogether.

“So what we can claim for this grouping,” concludes **Jayatilleke**, “is that when we consider the epistemological standpoints of these groups as a whole, the essential or final knowledge claimed by them is said to be derived mainly if not wholly from each of the sources of knowledge emphasized by each group.” (1963:170).

The Buddhist criticism of the traditionalist notions of divine revelation and related views are found in **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95), where the key passage says:

There are five things, Bhāra,dvāja, that may turn out in two different ways here and now. Now something may be fully accepted out of faith (*saddhā*), yet it may be empty, hollow and false; but something else may be not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true and unmissaken. Again, something may be fully approved of (*ruci*)...well handed down through the oral/aural tradition (*anussava*)...we thought out (*ākāra,parivittakka*)...well reflected upon (*ditṭhi,nijjhānā-k,khanti*), yet it may be empty, hollow and false; but something else may be not well reflected upon, yet it may be factual, true and unmissaken.

As such, it is not proper for a wise man, safeguarding the truth, to come to the definite conclusion, “Only this is true, everything else is wrong.” (M 95,14/2:16 f)

The Sandaka Sutta (M 76) similarly says:

Again, Sandaka, here some teacher is a traditionalist, one who regards the oral tradition (*anussava*) as truth. He teaches a Dharma by oral tradition, by legends handed down, by what is handed down in the scriptures. But when a teacher is a traditionalist, one who regards the oral tradition as truth, some is well handed down and some badly handed down, some is true and some otherwise. (M 76.24/1:520)

The Sandaka Sutta (M 76) further criticizes the theories of the reasoners, based on reasoning (*takka*) or logical argument (*naya*), thus:

Again, Sandaka, here a certain teacher is a reasoner, an inquirer [speculator]. He teaches a Dharma put together by reasoning, following a line of inquiry as it occurs to him. But when a teacher is a reasoner, an inquirer, some are well reasoned and some are wrongly reasoned, some are true and some otherwise. (M 76,27/1:520)

2.2 REASONING AND SPECULATING THROUGH MERE FAITH. The Sutta’s definition of the second kind of holy men may appear confusing at first, as it suggests that those who rely on faith make use of reasoning and thinking:

Bhāra,dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who, entirely on the basis of mere faith (*kevalam saddhā,mattakesu*), proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. Such are the **reasoners and investigators**. [§7(2)]

As Bodhi, in his Majjhima translation, notes,

It is puzzling that the reasoners and investigators (*takkī,vīmaṃsī*) are here said to rely on the basis of mere faith (*saddhā,mattakena*). Elsewhere faith and reasoning are contrasted as two different grounds of conviction (M 95.14), and “mere faith” seems more closely allied with reliance on oral tradition than with reasoning and investigation.¹¹

¹¹ M:ÑB 1304 n919. See **Sandaka S** (M 77,27-29/1:520).

Indeed, in a number of suttas,¹² faith (*saddhā*) and investigative reasoning (*ākāra, parivitatka*, or investigation and reasoning) are two of the five sources of knowledge.¹³ As such, it would be curious to find these two, listed as distinct varieties of knowing (as faith and reasoning would be mutual opposites), to be used in the same expression.

The confusion is unjustified when we look at **the Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1),¹⁴ where the synonymous expression, “reasoners and investigators” (*takkī hoti vīmaṃsī*), listed as the fourth kind of eternalist¹⁵ and the fourth kind of partial-eternalist.¹⁶ The other grounds for eternalist views are listed as direct experience (that is, the memories of the past life in the Brahmā world). **Analayo** says:

As the exposition of the grounds for eternalist views is meant to be comprehensive, the Brahma, jāla Sutta’s presentation entails that all those who hold an eternalist view do so either based on direct experience or else based on “thinking and reasoning.” Thus all those who have faith in an eternal god without having had a direct experience of this god would fall under the category “thinking and reasoning.” Hence in the eyes of the early Buddhists “faith” and “thinking and reasoning” may not have been as different from each other as one may at first sight have assumed, in the sense that thinking and reasoning may turn out to be merely tools to rationalize beliefs.
(*A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (draft), 2005, at M 2:211)

3 Saṅgārava Sutta highlights

3.1 A case of arctic hysteria (latah)S? The Sutta opens with a curious incident of the brahminee Dhānañjānī stumbling and uttering “an inspired utterance” [§2]. For some, this clearly hints at a case of arctic hysteria, startle matching, or latah, which is a culture-specific syndrome of hypersensitivity or severe reaction to sudden fright resulting in a dissociative or trance-like behavior, where they lose control of their behavior, mimic the speech (echolalia) and actions (echopraxia) of those around them and obey any commands (command obedience) given them. Latahs are generally not considered responsible for their actions during these episodes.

Arctic hysteria is also the name for those with the condition, which is found, in Malaysia, mainly in middle-aged women. As a culture-specific syndrome, it is has various names: amurakh, irkunii, ikota, olan myriachit, and menkeiti (Siberian groups); baah-ji (Thailand); imu (Ainu & Sakhalin, Japan); latah (Malaysia and Indonesia); mali-mali and silok (Philippines); piblokto (Unuit).¹⁷ However, it should be that in the various accounts of Dhānañjānī, she would often *consciously* chant the udana, and they are often *consistently* uttered. Arctic hysteria or latah are involuntary and the words uttered are usually expletives and are not always consistent words. It should be noted that Dhānañjānī is a stream-winner, a saint who is characterized with great faith. Even if she suffers from latah (which is no sign that she is less spi-

¹² For example, **Caṅkī S** (M 95,14/2:170), SD 21.15, **Devadaha S** (M 101,11/2:218), SD 18.4, **Pañca-t, taya S** (M 102,15/1:234).

¹³ The 5 sources of knowledge here are: faith (*saddhā*), approval (*ruci*), aural tradition (*anussava*), investigative reasoning (*ākāra, parivitatka*), and reflective acceptance of a view (*diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti*) (M 95.14/2:170, 101.11/2:218, 102.15/1:234).

¹⁴ SD 25.

¹⁵ Ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṃsī...sassata, vādā (D 1,34/1:16), SD 25.1.

¹⁶ Ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṃsī...ekacca, sassatikā ekassa, asassatikā (D 1,49/1:21), SD 25.1.

¹⁷ Sources on arctic hysteria incl: (1) “Latah: A Culture Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex.” (38 min, VC 4651; 1978). (Video segment 8:25 min, 1978) Indiana University Instructional Support Service Documentary on Malaysian culture’s focus on the startle reflex. (2) G Metzger. “Sakit Latah,” *Globus* 52 (1882):381-83. (3) R Neale. “Miryachit or Latah,” *The British Medical Journal* 1 (May 3, 1883):884. (4) HA O’Brien. “Latah,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1883): 143-53. (5) Robert L Winzeler, “The study of Malaysian latah.” and <http://cip.cornell.edu/DpubS/Repository/1.0/Disseminate/seap.indo/1107019145/body/pdf>. (6) Robert L Winzeler, *Latah in South-East Asia: The History and Ethnography of a Culture-bound Syndrome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

ritual), it is very mild and innocuous, probably an old reflex.¹⁸ Another well known case of arctic hysteria or *latah* is that of the woman shocked at seeing a monk in the dark of night by a lightning-flash, as recorded in the **Laṭukikopama Sutta** (M 66).¹⁹

3.2 An early life of the Buddha. The Saṅgārava Sutta (M 100) contains one of the most comprehensive canonical accounts of the Buddha’s life from the great renunciation to the great awakening [§§9-41], all of which are found elsewhere in the Canon:

	<u>M 100</u>	<u>Parallels (sutta no + paragraph)</u>
1 The Bodhisattva’s disillusionment with the household life and subsequent renunciation of the world	§§9-10	M 26,13-14 = M 36,12-13
2 Ālara Kālāma	§11	M 26,15 = M 36,14
3 Uddaka Rāmaputta	§12	M 26,16 = M 36,15
4 “An agreeable spot” at Senānigama near Uruvelā	§13	M 26,17 = M 36,16
5 Similes of the fire-sticks	§§14-16	M 36,17-19
6 The Bodhisattva’s self-mortification	§§17-27	M 36,20-31
7 Recalling the 1 st dhyana while father is “working”	§28	M 36,31
8 Wholesome pleasure: the 4 dhyanas	§§29-34	M 36,32-37
9 The great awakening	§§35-41	M 36,38-44
10 (The knowledge of the destruction of the influxes)	§39	D 2,97
M 26 Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta	SD 1.11	
M 36 Mahā Saccaka Sutta	SD 49.4	
M 100 (Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta	SD 10.9	
D 2 Sāmaññaphala Sutta	SD 8.10	<u>Table 3.2</u> The Buddha’s early-life sutta parallels²⁰

3.32 Do gods exist? Saṅgārava then asks whether there are gods [§42]. The Buddha replies that “supergods” (*adhidevā*) do exist, so that, by implication, we can say that the gods or God do exist. The Buddha does not merely answer “yes” because, firstly, it is common knowledge that the masses *believe* in their existence. The subtle humour here is often missed: the *deva* not only means “god or God” (gods through rebirth, *upapatti, deva*) but also the rajah or king (gods by convention, *sammuti, deva*).

Secondly, and more importantly, he wants to impress on Saṅgāra that the existence of gods or God is *neither useful nor necessary for the spiritual life*, and that it is possible to rise above them and be “super-gods” through our own spiritual liberation. The reference here is clearly to the arhats, the “gods through purity” (*visuddhi, deva*).²¹

As K R Norman puts it, the Buddha, “so far from conceding the existence of the brahmanical devas as Saṅgārava presumed, was merely saying that there were in the world earthly princes who were by convention called devas, but there were others, Buddhas like himself, who were superior to these” (1977: 336). Saṅgārava is pleased and goes for refuge in the Three Jewels [§43].

For the rest of this Introduction [§§4-7], we will examine the question whether devas exists [§42]. The same question—whether devas exists—is asked in the **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala Sutta** (M 90),²² but there the Buddha, according to K R Norman, merely concedes that there are “super-gods” (*adhidevā*) by birth

¹⁸ See **Anabhirati S** or **Arati S** (S 8.2), comprising Vaṅgīsa’s self-admonitions against his dissatisfaction (*ana-bhirati*) with his teacher Nigrodha,kappa. The latter was a residential solitarian (*vihāra, garuka*)—he placed importance (*garuka*) on keeping to his cell—as soon as he returned from his alms-round, he would enter his cell and not emerge until evening or the next day. This disaffected Vaṅgīsa, but he quelled through self-admonition (S 1:186; SA 1:169 f). He also had doubts about Nigrodha,kappa’s awakening as he had seen him sleeping with his arms moving about involuntarily (*hattha, kukkucca*). Generally this was unbecoming of an arhat, but in his case it was an old habit (of no new karmic consequence). (S 8.2/1:186 f). See (**Vaṅgīsa**) **Ānanda S** (S 8.4), SD 16.12 Intro.

¹⁹ M 66,6f/1:448 f @ SD 28.11.

²⁰ For a more detailed collation, see SD 49.4 (Table 7).

²¹ The 3 kinds of “gods” (*deva*), see Nc 307; KhpA 123.

²² SD 10.8.

(*upapatti, devā*), “but he refuted (or rather, Ānanda, speaking on his behalf, refuted) the idea that their pre-eminent nature was of any importance” (M 90.14) (Norman 1981:154).²³ [8]

4 Problem readings

4.1 In 1977, K R Norman wrote an interesting paper, “The Buddha’s view of devas” (1977),²⁴ where he discusses the Saṅgārava Sutta. In 1981, Norman published another paper, “Devas and adhidevas in Buddhism” (1981),²⁵ a piece of scriptural “detective work” by piecing together an acceptable reading for corrupt passages in **the Kaṇṇaka-t,thala Sutta** (M 90/2:125-133).²⁶ Norman’s views have been summarized here and in the Introduction to the Kaṇṇaka-t,thala Sutta. He thinks that the existing editions and translations of Saṅgārava Sutta²⁷ are unsatisfactory, and in this paper [1977] we will examine the relevant portion of the sutta [§14], in the hope of throwing new light upon it. Norman adds that

[t]he circumstances in which the brāhmaṇa Saṅgārava asks the Buddha about the existence of devas are not clear in the PTS edition of the sutta, for the details are omitted there and readers are merely referred back to a parallel passage in another sutta. In fact the question is asked immediately after the Buddha’s statement that devatās had approached him and shown him great concern about his weak condition during his pre-enlightenment ascetic stage. The purpose of Saṅgārava’s question can only be to ascertain the Buddha’s view on the eternal reality of devas, since the story he had told about the devatās necessarily implies that he admitted some sort of existence for them.

(Norman, “The Buddha’s view of devas,” 1977:331)

4.2 In this translation, I have rendered all the stock omissions (*peyyāla*) in full for easier reading and understanding. In our examination of the relevant section on the existence of gods (*deva*) [§14], we shall follow K R Norman’s prefixed Pāli text of §14 of the sutta (with Norman’s reconstructions in **bold** print):²⁸

- (A) *kin nu kho, bho gotama, atthi devā ti.*
 (B) *ṭhānaso me taṃ [better m’etaṃ], bhāra,dvāja, viditaṃ yadidaṃ atthi **(adhi)**devā? ti*
 (C) *kin nu kho, gotama, atthi devā ti puṭṭho samāno, ṭhānaso me taṃ [better m’etaṃ], bhāra,dvāja, viditaṃ yadidaṃ atthi **(adhi)**devā ti vadesi²⁹*
 (D) *nanu, bho gotamo, evaṃ sante tucchā musā hoti?*
 (E) *atthi devā ti, bhāra,dvāja, puṭṭho samāno, atthi **(adhi)**devā ti yo vadeyya, ṭhānaso viditā [better to omit viditā] me viditā ti yo vadeyya, atha khv-ettha viññū,purisena ekamsena niṭṭham gantabbam yadidaṃ atthi devā ti.*
 (F) *kissa pana me bhavam gotamo ādiken’ eva na byākāsī ti*
 (G) *ucce sammataṃ kho etaṃ, bhāra,dvāja, lokasmim yadidaṃ atthi devā ti. (M 100,42/2:212 f)*

4.3 Robert Chalmers’ translation (1927)

“Now, are there gods?”

“I knew offhand there were gods.”

“Why do you give that answer to my question, Gotama? Is it not false and untrue?”

²³ This question is examined in more detail in **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90) & SD 10.8 Intro.

²⁴ Beiträge zur Indienforschung: Ernst Waldschmidt zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet. Berlin, 1977:329-336. Repr in Collected Papers vol 2, 1991d:1-8.

²⁵ *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 9, 1981:145-155. Repr in 1991:162-171. See **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8 (2005).

²⁶ M 90/2:125-133 = SD 10.8.

²⁷ Norman refers to the PTS Pāli text and translations by R Chalmers (1927) and by I B Horner (1957). I have added the Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi tr below.

²⁸ Norman’s reconstruction is summarized in the next section.

²⁹ Comy support this reconstruction with the gloss, *devā pana adhidevā [vl atidevā] nāma*, “devas are called superior devas” (MA 3:454).

“Anyone who, when asked if gods there be, answers that there are gods and that he knew offhand there were,—why, anyone of intelligence must come irresistibly to the conclusion that there are gods.”

“Why did you not make this clear at the outset, Gotama?”

“The world is loud in agreement that there are gods.” (M:C 2:122 f)

4.4 I B Horner’s translation (1957)

“But now, good Gotama, are there devas?”

“Certainly, Bhāradvāja, it is known to me that there are devas.”

“But why do you, good Gotama, on being asked is there are devas say that it is certainly known to you that there are devas? Even if this is so, good Gotama, is it not a vain falsehood?”

“If on being asked, Bhāradvāja, ‘Are there devas?’ one should say, ‘There are devas’ and should say: ‘Certainly they are known to me,’ then the conclusion to be reached by an intelligent person is indubitable, namely, that there are devas.”

“But why did not the revered Gotama explain this to me at the beginning?”

“It is commonly agreed in the world, Bhāradvāja, that there are devas.” (M:H 2:401 f)

4.5 Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi translation (1995, 2nd ed 2001)

“But how is it, Master Gotama, are there gods?”

“It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods.”

“But how is this, Master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods?’ If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?”

“Bhāradvāja., when one is asked ‘Are there gods?’ whether one answers, ‘There are gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be the case [that there are gods],’ a wise man can draw the definite conclusion that there are gods.”

“But why didn’t Master Gotama answer me in the first way?”

“It is widely accepted in the world, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods.” (M:ÑB 821)

4.6 In all these translations, the underlined passages clearly are puzzling.³⁰ For when the Buddha is asked if there are devas, and he says that there are devas, then Bhāradvāja reply that his answer is false makes no sense. The Majjhima Commentary says that Saṅgārava thinks that the Buddha is speaking without actually knowing, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech (MA 3:454). “The sequence of ideas in this passage,” notes Bhikkhu Bodhi “is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt” (M:ÑB 1304 n921).

4.7 M M J Marasinghe, in his *God in Early Buddhism*, notes the difficulties in the Buddha’s answer, and proposes a solution by taking *ṭhānaso* to mean “on the spot,” “in a moment,” “in its causal occasion”—basically referring to the place of occurrence—as it is used elsewhere in the Canon. Applying this meaning to the sutta passage, he concludes that it means “in the above circumstance” or “in the above context,” that is, of the devatās approaching the Buddha (1974:126-129).

5 Views of Norman and of Analayo

5.1 NORMAN’S RECONSTRUCTION. K R Norman, disagreeing with Marasinghe, says

This interpretation does not seem entirely satisfactory, because it does not explain why the Buddha’s answer at first seemed to the questioner to be false, but was later accepted. I cannot see that *ṭhānaso* has anything other than its usual meaning of “completely, certainly” here. The ending *-so* is not the ablative ending as PED supposes [sv *ṭhāna*], but the adverbial suffix *-so* (Skt *-śas*). The word therefore means “from the point of view of place, basis,” ie “basically,” “fundamentally,” and then “completely, certainly.” The other usage with *hetuso* “causally” reflects the use of *ṭhāna* in the sense of *kāraṇa* “cause.” Although the commentaries frequently explain *ṭhānaso* as *khaṇen’ eva* “immediately, in a moment,” the aṭṭhakathā makes no comment here.

³⁰ The German tr by K E Neumann, vol 2, Leipzig, 1900:649 f, closely resembles the English tr, and offers no help with the problem (Norman’s fn).

I should like to suggest that a pointer towards the solution of this problem lies in the variant reading *adhidevā*, which occurs in place of *devā* in Chalmer’s Burmese MS B^m throughout (according to his critical apparatus),³¹ and once in his Sinhalese MS S^k (in [G]). As will be seen below [1977:334], the aṭṭhakathā³² includes the word *adhidevā* (or *atidevā*) in its commentary, which indicates the presence of the word somewhere in the sutta. The Burmese [Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā] edition reads *adhidevā* in place of *atthi devā* in (B) and (C) [vol 2 p438]. According to this reading, when Saṅgārava asks, “*atthi devā?*”, the Buddha replies, “*ṭhānaso m’ etaṃ viditaṃ yadidaṃ adhidevā.*” (Norman 1977:332 f)

Norman suggests that *yadidaṃ* here should be followed by a finite verb to be—*yadidaṃ atthi*—although not found neither in the Pāli-English Dictionary (sv *ya*^o) nor the Critical Pāli Dictionary (sv *ayaṃ*), nor could he “at present quote it from any text other than those mentioned here, although the usage with a verb is common.”

The usage with a verb seems to be an extension of the Sanskrit use of *yad* especially after verbs of saying, thinking etc, often introducing an *oratio directa* [direct speech] with or without *iti*.³³ The use of the construction *yadidaṃ atthi* with *niṭṭhaṃ gantabbaṃ* in (E), with *sammataṃ* in (G), and with *ñātaṃ* in the ṭīkā’s explanation of this, viz, *ñātaṃ etaṃ yadidaṃ atthi devā*, suggests that sentences (B) and (C) with *viditaṃ* should also include *atthi*. This not only makes the construction consistent throughout the passage, but also enables us to give an explanation for the corruption which has crept into the text of the sutta and caused the whole problem.

(Norman 1977:333)

When we reconstruct (B) and (C) as *viditaṃ yadidaṃ atthi adhidevā* (or *atidevā*) (“superior devas”), following Norman’s suggestion, then “the corruption whereby *atthi* or *adhi-* disappeared in the different scribal traditions becomes intelligible (1977:333). Similarly, using the Commentaries and Majjhima Porāna Ṭīkā (ancient sub-commentary), Norman suggest that (E) should read: *atthi adhidevā ti yo vadeyya*, and that in (G) the reading *atthi devā* is correct.³⁴

I suggest therefore, that the text of the sutta should be corrected by changing *atthi devā* to *atthi adhidevā* in the three sentences (B), (C) and (E). It will be seen that the passage is then no longer puzzling. The Buddha is asked, “Do devas exist?” He replies, “I know for a fact that adhi-devas exist.” Saṅgārava’s anger is understandable. Is the answer not off the point? The Buddha replies, “If anyone is asked if devas exist, and replies that super-devas exist, then anyone with sense can deduce that devas must exist (for super-devas are superior to them). Saṅgārava then asks why the Buddha did not say in the first place that devas exist. The Buddha answers that (it was unnecessary because) it is firmly³⁵ accepted in the world that devas exist. Saṅgārava is satisfied with this reply.

(Norman 1977:335)

5.2 ANALAYO’S FINDINGS. Analayo, in his comparative study of the Majjhima Nikāya, however, finds that **the Madhyama Āgama** as preserved in the Chinese translations does not support Norman’s reconstructions of the Kannaka-t.thala and the Saṅgārava Suttas. Both the Pali version³⁶ and the Chinese

³¹ Although in view of the [Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā] edition’s readings it is possible that in some places *adhidevā* replaces *atthi devā* (Norman fn).

³² That is, MA 3:454,9-12; MA:Be (Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā) 2:309; MAṬ (Porāna Ṭīkā) 2:200.

³³ See Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, sv *yad* (Norman’s fn).

³⁴ See §1 for the Pāli text and reconstructions.

³⁵ *Ucce* < Skt *uccaiḥ*. For the meaning see Monier-Williams, sv *uccais*. I think that *ucce* is the correct reading, and the vl *uccena*, which is preferred by the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana ed, has entered the text from the gloss *uccena saddena* (Norman’s fn).

³⁶ M 90.13/2:130,13.

Āgama³⁷ version of the sutta presents rajah Pasenadi as simply asking if “there are devas”—*atthi devā* (M 90.13) and 有天耶 *yǒu tiān ye* (MĀ 212)—which leads Analayo to conclude:

Thus the Chinese version does not support the emendation to *atthi adhideva* suggested by Norman [1981]. The same is also the case for M 90 at M 2:132,2: *atthi Brahmā*, where MĀ 212 at T1.795a20 reads: 有梵耶 [*yǒu fàn ye*], thus not supporting Norman’s emendation to *atthi adhibrahmā*. While M 90 at M 2:132,26+29 reports king Pasenadi using the expressions *adhideve* and *adhibrahmānaṃ* when expressing his appreciation of the Buddha’s replies, according to the corresponding passage at MĀ 212 at T1.795b9 Pasenadi did not refer to his discussion on devas at all, but in relation to the discussion on the Brahmās he again spoke of 有梵 [*yǒu fàn*]. This suggests that the Indic original based on which MĀ 212 was translated had in this instance the same wording as in the actual question earlier, a wording corresponding to *atthi brahmā* in Pāli.

(Analayo 2005 at M 2:130n)

6 Three types of devas

We now have to work out what the Buddha *means* by his answer, “Certainly, Bhāra,dvāja, it is known to me to be the case, that there are <superior> gods”³⁸ (*thānaso me’ taṃ, Bhāra,dvāja, viditaṃ yad idaṃ atthi adhi,devā ti*). Again here, Norman clarifies the problem:

It is, however, by no mean that the Buddha had in fact conceded the point which Saṅgārava, as a brāhmaṇa, had been seeking to make. In the first place, when giving the answer, “I know that adhidevas exist,” he was doubtless referring to himself and other Buddhas, for in the Theragāthā the Buddha is called *atideva* [Tha 489], and in the Culla Niddesa this is amplified to: *Bhagavā sammuti-devānaṃ ca upapatti-devānaṃ ca visuddhi-devānaṃ ca devo ca atidevo ca devātidevo ca* [Nc §307/173,16-18], while in the Aṅguttara-nikāya the Buddha’s *ñānadassana* is called *adhideva-ñānadassana* [A 4:304,23]. Moreover, although we do not find the tripartite division of *sammuti-*, *upapatti-*, and *visuddhi-devas* in the first four nikāyas of the Pāli canon, its presence in the Khuddaka-nikāya shows that it is nevertheless old. It seems very probable that the Buddha’s use of the words in answer to Saṅgārava was well chosen, and the employment of *sammataṃ* was a direct reference to a definition of *deva* which included the word *sammuti*. (Norman 1977:335)

The Khuddaka Nikāya reference that Norman mentions, is evidently the Culla Niddesa, which speaks of **3 kinds of devas**, namely, devas by convention (*sammati,devā*), devas by birth (*upapatti,devā*) and devas by purity (*visuddhi,devā*):

Who are devas by convention? Kings, princes, and queens: they are called devas by convention.

Who are devas by birth? The Four Great Kings [*Cātum,mahārājā*], the 33 Devas [*Tāvātimsa*], the Yāma devas, the Tusita devas, the devas who delight in creation, the devas who lord over the creations of others, the devas of Brahma’s Host, and devas beyond them: these are devas by birth [born devas, congenital devas].

Who are devas by purity? The Tathāgata’s disciples who are arhats whose mental influxes are destroyed and the pratyeka Buddhas: these are devas by purity.

“The Blessed One is the deva beyond devas” (*devātideva*) means that, by having known, weighed, recognized [judged], understood, and by having made clear, (knows) by superknowledge (*abhiññā*), he is a superior deva (*adhi,deva*) amongst conventional devas, by superknowledge he is “superior deva” amongst the devas by birth, by superknowledge he is “superior deva” amongst the devas of purity. (Nc:Se 30/312/653; Nc:Be 226; cf Vbh 422)³⁹

³⁷ MĀ 212 = T1.794c8.

³⁸ The words with <angle brackets> refer to a corrected or preferred reading.

³⁹ See **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8 (4) (2005) for Pāli text and further details.

If this interpretation is correct, then the Buddha, “so far from conceding the existence of the brahmanical devas as Saṅgārava presumed, was merely saying that there were in the world earthly princes who were by convention called devas, but there were others, Buddhas like himself, who were superior to these” (1977:336). On the other hand, in **the Kaṇṇaka-t,thala Sutta** (M 90), the Buddha merely conceded that there were “superior devas” (*adhidevā*) by birth (*upapatti,devā*), “but he refuted (or rather Ānanda speaking on his behalf refuted) the idea that their pre-eminent nature was of any importance” (Norman 1981:154).

7 Saṅgārava’s question on the gods

7.1 The most interesting and puzzling passage in this sutta is perhaps §42 on Saṅgārava’s questioning **whether gods exist**, and the Buddha’s reply. The passage is here fully quoted:

42 When this was said, the brahmin youth Saṅgārava said to the Blessed One:

“Steadfast⁴⁰ indeed is Master Gotama’s striving; of a true person⁴¹ is Master Gotama’s striving—just like that of an arhat, a fully self-awakened one!

But how is it, master Gotama, are there gods?”⁴²

“Certainly, Bhāra,dvāja, it is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are <superior> gods.”⁴³

“But how is this, master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘Are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are <superior> gods?’ If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?”⁴⁴

“Bhāra,dvāja, when one is asked, ‘Are there gods?’ [213] whether one answers, ‘There are <superior> gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be so,’ a wise man can draw the definite conclusion that there are gods.”

“But then why didn’t master Gotama answer me so in the first place?”⁴⁵

“It is widely accepted in the world, Bhāra,dvāja, that there are gods.”⁴⁶ (M 100,42/2:212 f)

7.2 A number of scholars⁴⁷ have noted that it is curious that Saṅgārava should ask the Buddha this question since he is himself a devout and learned young brahmin before meeting the Buddha. After all, the Sutta recounts, it is on account of disapproving of the brahminic Dhānañjānī’s faith in the Buddha that he decides to confront the Buddha [§3]. Suttas that recount Saṅgārava’s brahminical background include:

(Udaka Suddhika) Saṅgārava Sutta (S 7.21/1:182):

he undertakes ritual purification by washing in water;

⁴⁰ “Steadfast...striving,” *aṭṭhita...padhānam*, which should read *aṭṭhita,padhānam*. I B Horner that this is a tmesis (M:H 2:401 n3), ie a separation of the parts of a cpd word by intervening word(s), eg “what things soever” (for “whatsoever things”). This occurs in Pāli as follows: (a) traces of the autonomy of preverbs: *ajjha so vasi* (Sadd 627,12-17); (b) insertion of *ca, eva, su* and forms of *atthi* or *bhavati* after the first member of a nominal cpd (Sadd 202 n(e), 481 n12, 627 n13, 767,17-22, 781,7-11). See CPD 1:33* sv.

⁴¹ Horner also notes this as a tmesis (M:H 2:401 N 4).

⁴² Cf **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 2:130 = SD 10.8; MA 3:359); also A 1:210, 3:287, 313, 316, 5:331, 334.

⁴³ On the preferred reading *adhideva* in the foll 3 paras, see Intro (3-5), esp (5) above.

⁴⁴ *Ucce sammataṃ kho etaṃ Bhāradvāja lokasmim yadidam atthi devā ti*. “Certainly,” *ucce*, “intensely, very much, emphatically” (CPD). Comy: *uccena saddena sammataṃ* (v1 *sammā*) *pākaṭaṃ mataṃ lokasmim*, “with a loud sound commonly agreed upon in the world” (MA 3:454). Comy says that Saṅgārava thinks that the Buddha is speaking without actually knowing, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech (MA 3:454). “The sequence of ideas in this passage,” notes Bodhi “is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt” (M:ÑB 1304 n921).

⁴⁵ *Kissa pana me bhavaṃ Gotamo ādiken’eva na vyākāsīti*.

⁴⁶ On this apparently puzzling section, see Intro 7 above.

⁴⁷ Eg I B Horner, M 2:xx (1957); K R Norman, 1981; Analayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikaya* (draft), 2005 (study of M 100).

(Nīvaraṇa) Saṅgārava Sutta (S 46.55/5:121 = A 5.193/3:230):

he shows interest in memorizing brahminical mantras; and

(Yañña) Saṅgārava Sutta (A 3.60/1:168):

he is a performer of Vedic sacrifices (which would presuppose his belief in devas).

All this suggests that he is deeply involved in brahminical beliefs and practices, which makes it highly improbable that he would have doubted the existence of gods. As such, there is no reason that Saṅgārava would be questioning the Buddha on a widely held belief in ancient India, namely, the existence of gods.

7.3 Furthermore, in his autobiographical teachings, such as that which follows [§§9-41], the Buddha mentions the gods a number of times. Here is a list of the Buddha's references to the devas in his autobiography:

Bhaya Bherava Sutta (M 4)	A being not subject to delusion benefits many, bringing happiness to both gods and humans (M 4,21/1:21).
Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26)	He relates how Brahmā Sahampati invites him to teach the Dharma (M 26,20-21/1:168 f), SD 1:11.
Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36)	He relates the devas intervene when he collapses during his self-mortification (M 36,26-27/1:244 f = M 100,23-24), SD 1.12.
Saṅgārava Sutta (M 100)	He relates the devas intervene when he collapses during his self-mortification (M 100,23-24/2:212 = M 36,26-27), SD 10.9.

7.4 SANSKRIT VERSION OF THE SUTTA

7.4.1 Analayo, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikaya*, gives this helpful summary of the problem in the light of what we have the Sanskrit version of the Deva Saṅgārava Sutta:

The Saṅgārava Sutta continues with an autobiographical account of the Buddha's awakening.⁴⁸ After this account, Saṅgārava asked the Buddha about the existence of *devas*.⁴⁹ The Sanskrit fragments indicate that the discussion on *devas* occurred in their version at an earlier junction of events.⁵⁰

This difference results in quite a different dynamic of the discourse as a whole, as in the Sanskrit version the question on *devas* appears to have been the opening question of the discussion between Saṅgārava and the Buddha.⁵¹ Another fragment indicates that the discussion on the sources of knowledge formed the end of the Sanskrit discourse.⁵²

Based on these indications, the following sequence suggests itself: In reply to Saṅgārava's inquiry about *devas*, the Buddha affirmed his knowledge of their existence. Such an affirmation would naturally lead over to an inquiry on what sources of knowledge the Buddha based himself.

⁴⁸ The PTS ed in M 100/2:212,14 mentions only the first 3 dhyanas in the account of the Buddha's awakening, so that on following this presentation he did not develop the fourth dhyana before attaining the three higher knowledges. This is however merely a mistake in this ed, as the corresponding passages in M:Be 2:437; M:Ce 2:756 and M:Se 2:686 do mention the fourth dhyana. (Analayo's fn)

⁴⁹ M 100/2:212,25: *atthi deva?* The corresponding Skt fragment, Hoernle fragm 149/Add.32 in Hartmann 1991: 260 has preserved too little of this passage to allow verifying the emendation suggested by Norman 1977:333 to *atthi adhideva*. Norman 1985:150 suggests a similar emendation of the same question *atthi deva* found in M 90/2:-130,13, which is not born out by the corresponding Chinese version MĀ 212 = T1.794c8, whose phrasing corresponds to M 90: 有天耶. (Analayo's fn)

⁵⁰ Hartmann 1992:44 n87.

⁵¹ Hoernle fragm 149/Add 32 Re in Hartmann 1991:260 refers to the discussion on *devas*: *santi dev[ā]s*, which it follows in the next line, Rf, by what appears to be the beginning of the discussion on ways of arriving at knowledge: *santi bho gauta[ma e]ke śramana(b)r(āhmanāh)*. This indicates that the discussion on *devas* preceded the other topics discussed between Saṅgārava and the Buddha. (Analayo's fn)

⁵² Cat no 165 fragm 26 V in SHT IV:200 has preserved parts of the discussion on the different sources of knowledge corresponding to M 100/2:211. The backside of the same fragment has however the beginning of another discourse. This suggests that the discussion on the different sources of knowledge stood at the end of the Skt version. (Analayo's fn)

In reply, the Buddha would then have given an autobiographical account of his awakening as an exemplification of the fact that whereas others may base a claim to knowledge (among others about the existence of *devas*) on oral tradition or faith, what the Buddha said and taught was based on his personal realization. Thus from the perspective of the discourse as a whole, the dynamics proposed by the Sanskrit fragments yield a meaningful sequence.

(Analayo 2005 on M 2:212; reparagraphed)

7.4.2 The Buddha goes on to clarify to Saṅgārava that for him (the Buddha) the existence of *devas* is a matter of personal experience, not mere belief.⁵³ Saṅgārava apparently misunderstands this reply and even thinks that the Buddha is speaking falsehood.⁵⁴ The Buddha corrects Saṅgārava's misunderstanding, saying that his reply is meant to affirm that there are *devas*.⁵⁵ **Analayo then concludes,**

The rather strong reaction evinced by Saṅgārava would also seem to fit better to the beginning of their discussion, when Saṅgārava may still have had the feelings of disdain he had voiced earlier to the brahmin woman (M 2:213). The sequence suggested by the Sanskrit fragment would also more naturally lead up to Saṅgārava's taking of refuge.

In the Pāli version, Saṅgārava's decision to become a lay disciple comes at the end of the discussion on *devas*.⁵⁶ As this discussion involves a misunderstanding that even caused Saṅgārava to wonder if the Buddha was speaking the truth, it comes a little surprising when right after this misunderstanding has been clarified Saṅgārava takes refuge. In contrast, it would seem more natural to imagine the same taking place at the end of a full account of the Buddha's approach to awakening as a corroboration of the fact that what he taught was based on personal realization.

(Analayo 2005 on M 2:212)

7.5 The (Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta has no Chinese parallel. However, it has a Sanskrit version, which as we have noted [7.4] is significantly different from the Pali version. We are uncertain which school the

⁵³ M 100,42/2:212,26: *ṭhānaso me taṃ...viditaṃ yadidaṃ 'atthi devā 'ti* (M:Be 2:38 reads: *yadidaṃ adhidevā 'ti*) a reply Horner tr as: "certainly,...it is known to me that there are *devas*" (M 2:401) and Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi tr as: "it is known to me to be the case [that there are gods]" (M:ÑB 82). Marasinghe discusses this passage and suggests it to mean that "in the above context...I have found that there are gods" (1974:127). The implications of the ablative *ṭhānaso* in the present passage remain unclear, as in other contexts *ṭhānaso* indicates that something happens "immediately" or "on the spot," cf eg V 3:70,23; S 8.8/1:193,6; S 45.156/5:50,7; S 54.9/5:321,25; S 55.26/5:381,29; A 5.194/3:238,6; A 7.16/3:298,2; A 8.46/4:263,4; A 10.60/5:108,29. Yet such a meaning does not fit the present context, as it would make little sense for the Buddha to answer that he "immediately" or "on the spot" knew that there are *devas*. Perhaps *ṭhānaso* in the present context was intended to underline the expression *vidita* as a pointer to the personal realization of the Buddha. Perhaps the Buddha's use of the word *ṭhānaso* in a somewhat unusual manner was what caused Saṅgārava's misunderstanding. Hoernle fragm 149/Add 32 Rb+d in Hartmann 1991:260 reads: *[tr]e [dā]nīm naikāṃṣena vyā and yena na ekāṃṣe[na] vyākarosi samt(i devāḥ)*, indicating that in the Skt discourse, too, a similar misunderstanding took place. (Analayo's fn, normalized)

⁵⁴ M 100,42/2:212,30: "If that is so, isn't what you say empty and false?" *nanu ... evaṃ sante tucchā musā hoti?* According to Comy, "the young Brahmin spoke thinking 'the perfectly awakened one declared this without knowing it,'" *māṇavo ' sammāsambuddho ajānanto 'va pakasesīti saññāya āha* (MA 3:454). This explanation would however not fit the Pāli version too well, as here the Buddha had already described his knowledge of the existence of *devas* in his autobiographical account. (Analayo's fn)

⁵⁵ According to M 100,42/2:213,2, the Buddha clarifies that on hearing his earlier statement "a wise man should draw the clear conclusion that there are *devas*," *atha khvettha viññū,purisenā ekāṃṣena nitthaṃ gantabbāṃ yadidaṃ 'atthi devā 'ti*, thereby implicitly suggesting that it was Saṅgārava's lack of wisdom that has caused him to misunderstand the Buddha's reply. (Analayo's fn, normalized)

⁵⁶ M 100,43/2:213,14. (**Paṭihāriya**) **Saṅgārava S** (A 3.60) also concludes with Saṅgārava taking refuge (A 3.60/-1:173,7). Horner (without knowing the Skt fragment) comments: "it is a little disconcerting to find Saṅgārava, at the end of this tremendous dissertation [ie, the autobiographical account of the Buddha's awakening],...hurrying on to ask him if there were *devas*...I find the sudden introduction of this question about *devas* rather perplexing" (M 3:xx). (Analayo's fn, normalized)

Sanskrit belongs to, but it is possible that it is the Mūla,sarvāstivāda.⁵⁷ Even then, it is clear that this is a much later text than the Pali.

As such, we can safely surmise that the Sanskrit reflects a later development in the sutra compiler's attitude towards the nature of the Indian gods. Of course, it might be possible that the Sanskrit version is a work based on an ancient text that was as old as the Pali or even older. This does change in any way affect our understanding the the early Buddhist attitude towards the gods. We can still accept that even in the discussion in the Sanskrit version, the Buddha is not declaring that the gods exists.

Here, the Buddha is only saying that, *it is through his own direct knowledge*, he knows of the existence of the gods. He does not, however, elaborate what kind of gods these were. In the Pali version, however, he does refer to them as *adhideva*, “superior gods or supergods” [8.1.3]. This is of course of great significance, as we will see.

8 Do gods really exist?

8.1 SUPERGODS

8.1.1 The saints as gods. Apparently, from the reconstructed §42 (based on Norman's findings) [7], the Buddha does *not* give any indication that gods exist. He is merely indicating the fact that the belief in gods is a popular notion. But what does the Buddha say here? He says that there are the “supergods” (*adhidevā*), the gods above the gods. They are the real “gods” (pure by realization), neither mythical nor theistic beings. They are the arhats, and more broadly, the other three kinds of saints: the non-returners, the once-returners, and the streamwinners.

8.1.2 The Buddha's silence. What does the Buddha *not* say. He does not directly say there are no gods. This would be too big of a quantum leap for a congenital, and we might say professional, god-believer like the brahmin Saṅgārava, and like many of us today who simply cannot let go of the God-concept. There are those of us who still need our familiar security blanket like Linus van Pelt in the Christian-themed cartoon, Peanuts.⁵⁸

The Buddha gives a similar response to Vaccha,gotta when he asks about the abiding soul (*attā*; Skt *ātman*), as recorded in **the (Ānanda) Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (S 44.10). The Buddha remains silent, not answering Vaccha,gotta's asking the “10 questions,” which include those concerning the soul.⁵⁹ The Buddha rejects all notions and discussion on such a self as being unhelpful and unrelated to the spiritual goal.⁶⁰

8.1.3 A provisional answer. In the case of Saṅgārava's question whether gods exist [§42], the Buddha does not remain silent, but does given a “provisional” (*pariyāya*) answer,⁶¹ here giving Saṅgārava “the benefit of the doubt.” The Buddha does not directly declare say that there are gods. He says that there are “superior gods” or “supergods” (*adhideva*). If we take the prefix *adhi-* and *abhi-* to be equivalent (at least here),⁶² then we can render *adhideva* as “concerning the gods,” in the sense of doing what the gods would do, such as cultivating the divine abodes. In other words, it means that we can become god-like. Such a theme is important and common in the suttas.⁶³

If the Buddha were to affirm to Saṅgārava that gods exists, he would be going against his own teachings and entrenching Saṅgārava in his old brahminical theistic beliefs strongly refuted in such discourses as **the Te,vijja Sutta** (D 13 = SD 1.8). If the Buddha were to give a straightforward denial of the existence of gods, Saṅgārava would probably be religiously traumatized by such a radical answer. So the Buddha gives him a provisional “middle way” answer that there are “superior gods.”

⁵⁷ See Analayo 2011:10.

⁵⁸ The comic strip is by Charles M Schulz, and first appeared in 1952. Linus is also the intellectual, philosopher and theologian of the comic sypri, often quoting the Bible.

⁵⁹ S 44.10/4:140 f = SD 2.16(5). Cf **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72.7-14/1:484-486), SD 6.15.

⁶⁰ See **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1.

⁶¹ See *Pariyāya Nippariyāya*, SD 68.2.

⁶² For cases where *adhi* sometimes alternates with *abhi-*, see words beginning the *abhi-* in PED, CPD or DP.

⁶³ See esp **Te,vijja S** (D 13,76-79 + 80-81), SD 1.8. Note esp the Buddha's remarks in §§80-81 here and his criticism of the brahminical God-idea, §§12-36. For other related suttas and teachings, see *Brahma,vihāra*, SD 38.5 esp (1.2).

Such an answer allows Saṅgārava (and those of us still holding on to a God-belief) a common ground to stand on—a ground that tolerates false notions or personal ideas, as it were—which, at the same time, prepares us for a higher or less theistic vision of personal divinity and selfless sainthood in due course.

8.2 THE 5 REALMS AND ALIENS

8.2.1 A mind-made universe? If we accept as a fact that the Buddha denies the existence of gods, that they are merely mythical figures used in didactic stories, and that they are not external realities but only our own mental constructions—how do we explain, for example, the sutta teaching on the 5 realms (*pañca,gati*)—that is those of devas, humans, animals, pretas and hell-beings?⁶⁴ Some scholars have suggested a few solutions, which are worth our consideration.

Rune Johansson, one of the pioneers of modern Buddhist psychology, for example, interprets the canonical passages on “the world” (*loka*)⁶⁵ thus: “There is no independently existing world. The world is a dynamic process, constantly being produced and deliberately constructed by our senses, our thoughts and our desires.”⁶⁶ This view would be correct if we only speak of the internal “world” of our thought-processes.

8.2.2 Independent worlds. However, it is clear from the early texts that the external world exists independent of our minds. For that reason, lightly put, if we were to close our eyes and walk around the room, we would stumble into some furniture, or the wall, or someone else. And if we were to go away from our home or country, it is still there when we return.

The Tithh’āyatana Sutta (A 3.61), for example, says, “Based on the six elements [earth, water, fire, air, space, consciousness], there is conception [‘descent into the womb’]” (A 3.61/1:176). In other words, says Peter Harvey in *The Selfless Mind*, the six elements “are seen as the basic ingredients for the production of a being in the womb, from the time of conception, before any active thoughts exist.”⁶⁷

Furthermore, **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) speaks of three kinds of physical form (*rūpa*), here summarized with **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**’s explanation within [square brackets]:

- (1) visible and reacting [resisting] (*sanidassana sappatigha*) [the sphere of visible objects];
- (2) invisible and reacting [resisting] (*anidassana sappatigha*) [the spheres of the other four physical sense-objects, and the five [sic] physical sense-organs];
- (3) invisible and non-reacting [non-resisting] (*anidassana appatigha*) [the remaining aspects of physical form, such as the faculties of femininity and masculinity and life, all of which are included in the sphere of mind-objects]. (D 33,1.10(34)/3:217; Dhs 751-756, 980)

This shows that early Buddhism accepted that there were types of “material form” [*rūpa*] that could not be known by the physical senses, but only by the mind. The only way that one can differentiate such a thing from a pure fantasy, as an object of mind, is to say that it *exists* as a type of “material form” known either by direct meditative intuition or by reasoning, just as eg electrons are imperceptible but known to exist by reasoning (aided by certain instruments).

(Harvey 1995:81 f)

8.2.3 Other worlds

8.2.3.1 BEYOND THE SENSES. From what we have discussed so far, we can summarize and say that there is no evident, or not enough support, from the suttas (of early Buddhism), to clearly suggest that the gods (and demons) exist they way we exist. Even if this were the case, there should be no significant change in the way we practise the Dharma (if that is our aim, in the first place). Early Buddhism is not merely stories of gods and demons, but about personal development. Even if we are to relegate such stories to the realm of literature and fiction (such as the movie series Star Wars and TV series Star Trek), our meditation practice is in no way affected by such non-belief.

⁶⁴ A 9.68 = SD 2.20.

⁶⁵ S 1:61 = A 2:48 f, S 2:17, 4:95, 5:304; A 1:268 f, 4:430.

⁶⁶ Rune Johansson, *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*, 1979:28 f.

⁶⁷ Harvey 1995:81, cf 118.

For meditators, the “other world” is the suprasensual world, the dhyanas that transcend the limits of our human senses and even the divine qualities to attain supradivine states of the formless attainments. We are limited by our own senses—how we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think—and yet these very senses when understood can become tools for inspiring others to understand them so that they can be able to breath through these sense-limits for higher worlds, even nirvana.

8.2.3.2 PARALLEL UNIVERSES. Even if we reject the notion that the gods exist, we are not saying that only humans and the visible world exist. We are today keenly aware of the vastness of our universe and the possibility of other lives out there in the remoteness of outer space. This is not science fiction, because the Buddha himself has clearly declared that there are parallel universes, world besides ours, such as in **the Kosala Sutta 1** (A 10.29):

Bhikshus, as far as the sun and the moon revolve, illuminating the quarters with their light, there extends **the thousandfold world-system**.⁶⁸ (A 10.29,2/5:59 f), SD 16.15; Kvu 13.1/476

In that thousandfold world-system there are, continues the Buddha, there are a thousand moons, suns, “Sineru” (axes mundi or galaxies), worlds like ours, heavens (with their gods) like ours, in systems “where Mahā Brahmā is regarded as the foremost.”

Yet even in Mahā Brahmā *there still is uncertainty, there is change*. Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple is revulsed with that.

Being revulsed with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is the foremost, not to speak of the inferior. (A 10.29/5:59 f), SD 16.15; Kvu 13.1/476

It is clear here that although the Buddha speaks of the gods, even of God, he is only reflecting popular beliefs. He certainly does not say in any way that we should worship them or that they have any power at all over our destiny. Indeed, if they exist, they too are all part of the evolving, changing universe and the life within it. For to exist is to change; there is no existence without change.

8.4 IS IT WRONG VIEW NOT TO BELIEVE IN GODS?

8.4.1 What wrong views do. A wrong view is like reading a wrong map for the place we plan to go to. It might be a high-quality map or device with the best printing or technology, but it is a map of our actual journey. So we would not be really going anywhere, or worse, we could end up in a place that is much worse than what we are now. A wrong view is also a clue to what we are right now, or is troubling us deep inside. We could say that our view of a person turns him into a god; our mistreatment of another turns him into an animal; our exploiting others turns them into an asura; our lack of love for another turns him into a preta; our violence towards others turns them into hell-beings.

But who does the viewing, the mistreating, the exploiting, the unloving, the violence? We are ourselves the source of that pain and suffering. I’m using *ourselves* as examples because it is easier to see how *we* can help or better *ourselves* than to do this to others. Furthermore, if we are emotionally healed and healthy, we would be more effective in helping others.

8.4.2 The right view pericope. Rightly viewing ourselves, others and our environment (the world) is the beginning of our journey towards spiritual wisdom and liberation. As our convenient guide, the suttas give us this famous “right view” pericope:

- (1) There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed.
- (2) There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions.
- (3) There is no this world, there is no next world;
- (4) there is no mother, no father;
- (5) there are no spontaneously born beings;
- (6) there are no recluses or brahmins who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.

(D 2 = M 41 = 76 = 117)⁶⁹

⁶⁸ A good intro to ancient Buddhist cosmology is Gethin 1998:112-132 (ch 5).

Simply put, these wrong views—wrong and unhelpful ways of looking at things (with a psychological or philosophical example given)—are (1) that there is no good in giving or charity (selfishness); (2) that there is no karma (amoralism); (3) that there is no hereafter (self-centred pragmatism); (4) that we are unconnected as humans (individualism); (5) that there is no rebirth (materialism); and (6) that humans lack potential for goodness and happiness (pessimism).⁷⁰

What is significant here is that there is no mention of gods, God or even heaven (sentence (3) here refers to the notion of life after death or rebirth). This right view perspective, in other words, asserts that our actions have consequences (they are significant), that this is not our only life, that we are not alone here, and above all, we are capable of bettering ourselves. There is no need for any belief in gods or even God. Beliefs are often reflective of our past, failures and desires; realities are what we have to actually deal with. To do so effectively, we need to break through our beliefs, which are often self-limiting. A belief, even faith, can also be very harmful, that is, when a belief distracts use from truth and reality or habituates us to deny them.⁷¹

8.4.3 The world out there. The Apanṇaka Sutta (M 60) clearly states that the external world exists in these words:

Since there is actually another world (*para loka*) [rebirth in this world or the next world],
 one who holds the view “there is no other world” has wrong view.
 ...one who intends, “there is no other world,” has wrong intention.
 ...who declares, “there is no other world,” has wrong speech.
 Since there is actually another world,
 one who holds the view “there is another world” has right view.
 ...one who intends, “there is another world,” has right intention.
 ...who declares, “there is another world,” has right speech. (M 60,9+11/1:402, 403 f)

In this passage, “world” (*loka*) does not refer to the physical world (*okāsa loka*, “space world”) but “the world of formations” (*saṅkhāra loka*).⁷² However, since the Pāli texts speak of various “worlds of beings” (*satta, loka*) into which one can be reborn, this statement, taken in the light of “the three kinds of physical form” of **the Saṅgīti Sutta**, implicitly means that the external world exists in the sense that they are independent of our internal senses.

8.4.4 The Pātāla Sutta (S 36.4) records an important statement by the Buddha on the nature of other worlds. Although the Buddha makes this statement specifically regarding “a bottomless abyss” (*pātāla*)

Bhikshus, when the uninstructed ordinary person makes the statement:

“In the great ocean there is a **bottomless abyss** (*pātāla*),” he makes such a statement about something that is non-existent and false.

4 This “bottomless abyss,” bhikshus, is rather a designation (*adhivacana*) for painful bodily feelings. (S 36.4/206), SD 2.25

Here, the Buddha states that the “abyss” (*pātāla*) is not a hell in the great ocean. To the ancient Indians, this is a whirlpool mid-ocean, an entrance to a subterranean watery abysmal hell. Or, like other pre-scientific ancient cultures, they, too, believed that the world was flat and if we went too far, we would fall off into the abyss.

⁶⁹ **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,23/1:55), SD 8.10; **Sāleyya S** (M 41,10/1:287), SD 5.7; **Sandaka S** (M 76,7.2/1:515), SD 35.7; **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117,5/3:71 f), SD 6.10. The wrong views here are refuted in **Apanṇaka S** (M 60,5-12/1:401-404), SD 35.5.

⁷⁰ Further see **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (5).

⁷¹ See eg **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4a.

⁷² Visuddhi, magga speaks of 3 kinds of “world” (*loka*): the world of formations (*saṅkhāra, loka*), the world of beings (*satta, loka*) and the physical world (“world of space”) (*okāsa, loka*) (Vism 204; DA 1:173; MA 1:397).

The Buddha would have none of this, and declares that “abyss” (*patāla*) as meaning something more close and more real to us (psychologically, at least), that is, it is “a term (*adhivacana*)” for painful bodily feelings.⁷³ In other words, hell is not a place we go to, but a suffering state of mind that can arise any time, anywhere.

If “hell” is a mental state, then “heaven,” too, is a mental state. It is *how* we think, feel, and live that keep us happy and empowers to make others happy, too. Furthermore, we should understand how our senses and sense-experiences tend to define our lives. When we fail to see the impermanence of such experiences—that they must also change and become other—we see them as “things” to collect: we desire to *have* more and more pleasures.

8.4.5 The realms as allegories. We can, in fact, take this understanding a step further, and see these realms as allegories, that is, stories in which the characters and events stand for ideas about human life, or for political or historical situations.⁷⁴ When we say that a certain story is an allegory, we mean that it *is* us, or that it *can* be us. It is a mirror reminding us the bad or the good that we can be, and to choose and work wisely on it. To successfully do this, we need to be familiar with the Buddha’s model of the two kinds of teaching, the implicit and the explicit.

The implicit teaching is one “whose meaning *needs* to be drawn out” (*neyy’attha*), while the explicit teaching is one whose meaning *has* been drawn out” (*nī’attha*). While the former would include stories and allegories, the latter are direct references to terms and ideas of true reality.⁷⁵ Wherever the suttas mention “gods” (*deva*) and related terms, we need to tease out their import: we need to ask ourselves: “What is the meaning of this statement?” The answer, or the right answer, may or may not come at once, but as long as we keep questioning in this way, we will continue to get an ever bigger and clearer vision of the Dharma.

This vital strategy also applies to suttas accounts of the hell-states. One important example will suffice. **The Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130) tells us how the lord of the hells, king Yama, regularly questions those who have fallen into the hells why they do not heed the 5 divine messengers (rebirth, old age, disease, suffering, and death)⁷⁶ and turn away from bad. In due course, it is said, even king Yama himself seeks to hear the Buddha’s teaching so that he is freed from samsara itself.⁷⁷

8.4.6 The realms as mental states. When we understand that if we free our minds from such a sense-based and cyclic way of thinking, but accept impermanence for what it is, and let go of our ideas of “fixing” such experiences, then we are on the way *be* truly happy. It is helpful here to reflect the nature of “having” and “being,” and their differences. On this level, it is meaningful to say, “having” burdens us; “being” frees us.

If we must habitually have pleasure and success, then we are devas or gods, but when such pleasures and success are gone or we realize they are not what we thought them to be, then these very things that brought us heaven, would transmogrify into hell. When he think that all we must have is food, clothing, housing, health, and that money is what this is all about, then we are caught in the cyclic and predicable lives as animals. If we must habitually have things or experiences, but we are never satisfied with them,

⁷³ S 36.4/4:206 f = SD 2.25. On the hells as metaphors, see **Bāla,paṇḍita S** (M 129), SD 2.22 Intro.

⁷⁴ See **Myth in Buddhism**, SD 36.1 (3.3).

⁷⁵ **Neyy’attha Nī’attha S** (A 2.3.5/1:60), SD 2.6b.

⁷⁶ A better known set is that of the 3 divine messengers (an old man, a sick man, and an aged man: allegories of decay, disease and death) described in **(Yama) Deva,dūta S** (A 3.35) by king Yama himself, and the Sutta closes with Yama himself aspiring to hear the Buddha’s teaching for the sake of his own liberation (A 3.35/1:138-142), an account found also in **Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 130,28-30/1:186 f), SD 2.23. The “3 messengers” account is prob older. This triad evolved into the first 3 three sights, of the 4 sights of prince Siddhattha, which arouse samvega in him. On seeing the 4th sight, that of a pleasant-looking recluse, Siddhattha feels joyful faith (*pasāda*), and is moved to renounce the world (J 1:59; cf AA 1:36; DhA 1:84 f). Siddhattha, in other words, heeds the warnings of the divine messengers.

⁷⁷ See **(Yama) Deva,dūta S** (A 3.35/1:138-142), SD 48.10, & **Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 130,28-30/1:186 f), SD 2.23. On the hells as allegories, see **Deva,dūta S** (M 130) @ SD 2.23 (3). Further see **Myth in Buddhism**, SD 36.1 (4.3).

we are addicted to them, then we are pretas. When we must habitually have violence and destruction, then we have become hell-beings.

In our movies, TV shows and other entertainment media nowadays, we see a “seventh” realm, as it were—that of the zombies, the undead. They are lifeless bodies that physically consume the living, but seems to have no will of their own. They seem stuck in their habit of mechanical walking, without any human love, doing the only thing to know: consuming others. Doesn’t that sound familiar?

Our real spiritual task is to at least *be* human. This is what the 5 precepts are about: seeing the values of life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom. As long as we are guided and sustained by such values and act accordingly, then we are humane. To be humane means we accept ourselves just as we are (especially the fact that we are impermanent and can change), and accept others unconditionally in the same way. Above all, we understand, or persevere to understand, how our senses work, and to use them wisely, that is as tools for understanding our mind better. Then our spiritual journey is well on the way.⁷⁸

8.4.7 Learning aids. Although I am now more convinced that the Buddha, as represented in the sut-tas, rejects the historical reality of the gods and the various realms, they are vital teaching-tools that can touch the depths of our being that is inaccessible by intellectual discourses, even scientific learning. We all love stories, especially stories that teach us that it is all right to fail and to learn from such failures; stories of joy and how we can *be* that joy.

The gods and the realms are our life’s stage where we explore the possibilities of our human potential and stretch our creative imagination to understand why we do bad thing and how low we can fall, and also how we must do good and rise even beyond our own imaginations. We are capable of better things: the stories we tell and love often hint at such possibilities: they point to true reality and the true happiness that awaits us.

8.5 DUALITY. The last word, however, comes from **the Kaccāna,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15), where the Buddha declares to the monk Kaccāna,gotta regarding right view:

This world, Kaccāna, mostly⁷⁹ depends upon a duality: upon [the notion of] existence and [the notion of] non-existence.

But for one who sees **the arising of the world** as it really is with right wisdom, there is [no notion of] non-existence regarding the world.

And for one who sees **the ending of the world** as it really is with right wisdom, there is no notion of existence regarding the world...

‘**Everything is** [all exists],’ Kaccāna, this is one extreme. ‘**Everything is not** [all does not exist],’ this is the second extreme.

Without resorting to either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches **the Teaching by the middle** [that is, dependent arising]. (S 12.15/2:16-17), SD 6.13

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⁷⁸ This is of course an “inner journey,” ie, meditation: see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1.

⁷⁹ “Mostly,” *yebhuyyena*, here refers to the ordinary being, except for the noble saints (*ariya,puggala*) who hold on to the extreme notions of either something exists (*atthitā*) (eternalism, *sassata*) or does not exist (*natthitā*) (annihilationism, *uccheda*) (SA 2:32). See foll n.

The Discourse to Saṅgārava (on Devas)

M 100

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was wandering [peregrinating] in Kosala country by stages (on a teaching tour)⁸⁰ with a large community of monks.

The brahminee Dhānañjānī

2 Now at the time, a brahminee named Dhānañjānī,⁸¹ full of faith in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha, was living⁸² in Caṇḍala, kappa. Once, when she stumbled,⁸³ she thrice exclaimed the inspired utterance,⁸⁴

<i>Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassa</i>	Homage to him, the Blessed One, the worthy one, the fully self-awakened one!
<i>Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassa</i>	Homage to him, the Blessed One, the worthy one, the fully self-awakened one!
<i>Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassa</i>	Homage to him, the Blessed One, the worthy one, [210] the fully self-awakened one! ⁸⁵

3 At that time there was a brahmin youth [Māṇava] named Saṅgārava living⁸⁶ in Caṇḍala, kappa. He was a master of the Three Vedas,⁸⁷ along with their invocations and rituals; phonology and etymology;

⁸⁰ “Wandering...by stages,” *cārikam caramāno*, lit “walking the walk,” that is, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering the people. See n ad loc in **Tevijja S** (D 13.1/1:235), SD 1.8.

⁸¹ She is called Dhānañjānī in Dhānañjānī S (S 7.1/1:160 f), SD 45.5. See Intro (1.2).

⁸² Paṭivasati.

⁸³ “She stumbled,” *upakkhalitvā*, also “having stumbled.” Dhānañjānī S (S 7.1/1:160) (prob in a different context) reads *upakkamitvā* (“having approached, gone to”), with vl *upakkhalitvā*. MA 3:451 reads *pakkhalitvā*, which means either “having stumbled” or “having washed.” Brahmins often wash themselves before a ceremonial event. I B Horner however suggests, “I have chosen to render [it] by ‘tripped’ in conformity with the textual meaning. The *udāna* (solemn or inspired utterance) may then be an expression used for warding off the ill-luck which might otherwise ensure after stumbling” (M:H 2:398). However, considering the fact that Dhānañjānī is a stream-winner, and as such, not superstitious, she utters the Salutation (*namo tassa...*) either as a Buddhānussati or simple to regain her mindfulness after tripping. Cf Mahv 3:223. See (3.1) above on arctic hysteria.

⁸⁴ “Exclaimed the inspired utterance,” *udānam udānesi*. See prec n on “she stumbled.” On the utterance of *namo tassa* by other brahmins, see **Kāraṇa,pālī S** (A 45194,2.1 + SD 45.11 (1.2.3)).

⁸⁵ The narrative up to this point is also found in **Dhānañjānī S** (S 7.1/1:160), SD 45.5, where however there is a different turn: Dhānañjānī made this inspired utterance before 500 brahmins. Apparently, Dhānañjānī is in the habit of making this inspired utterance: as such, the narrative here could be a separate incident, or it could be on the same occasion as the Saṅgārava narrative. **The brahmin Jānuṣsoni**, too, publicly utters the *Namo tassa* formula in **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27,8), SD 40.5 (qv). For details, see Intro (1.2) above.

⁸⁶ Paṭivasati.

⁸⁷ As at **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1.3/1:88), **Soṇa,daṇḍa S** (D 4,5/1.114, also 120, 121, 123), **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5,6/1:-130, also 138, 141), **Brahm’āyu S** (M 91,2/2:133, also 134, 141, 142); **Sela S** (M 92,2/2:146, also 147 = Sn p105); **Caṅkī S** (M 95,8/2:165, also 168); **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,3/2:210); also A 1:163, 166, 3:223 (x2); Nc:Be 56 = Se 57. Sometimes it includes knowledge of the marks of the great man (*mahā,purisa,lakkhaṇa*) (eg D 3.1.3). All this is a stock passage of the qualities of a learned brahmin. Comys throughout say that the 3 Vedas are the Iru, Yaju and Sāma [Rg, Yajur and Sāma] (DA 1:247; MA 3:362; AA 2:261; SnA 2:447; BA 68; NcA 14; ApA 274, 276, 430). The fourth Veda, the Atharva, is not mentioned as it is a later text. MA however says that its existence is implied when the Itihāsa (histories) [see foll n] are called the “fifth,” referring to the works regarded as authoritative by the brahmins. JA too glosses *itihāsa,pañcamam* as *veda,catukkam*, “the four Vedas” (J 5:451), the reason being that *it was after the fact*, ie, by the time the Comys were completed, the fourth Veda already formed part of the Vedic collection. Bodhi notes, “It is more likely, however, that the histories are called ‘the fifth’ in connection with the

and the Iti,hāsa Purāṇas⁸⁸ as the fifth; and well versed in materialistic philosophy and the marks of the Great Man. He became a teacher well known far and wide, instructing 500 brahmin youths in the sacred mantras. Having heard the brahminee named Dhānañjānī utter those words, he said to her:

“This brahminee Dhānañjānī must be disgraced and degraded, since when there are brahmins around, she praises that bald-headed recluse!”⁸⁹

[The brahminee Dhānañjānī:] “Noble sir⁹⁰ does not know the virtue and wisdom⁹¹ of the Blessed One. If noble sir knew that Blessed One’s virtue and wisdom, noble sir, you would never think of abusing and reviling him.”

“Then, madam, inform me when the recluse Gotama comes to Caṇḍala,kappa.”

“Yes, noble sir,” the brahminee Dhānañjānī replied to the brahmin youth Saṅgārava in assent.

4 Then, after wandering by stages in Kosala country, the Blessed One eventually arrived in Caṇḍala,kappa. There in Caṇḍala,kappa, the Blessed One stayed in the mango grove of the brahmins of the Todeyya clan.

Saṅgārava sees the Buddha

5 The brahminee Dhānañjānī heard that the Blessed One had arrived in Caṇḍala,kappa, and that he is staying in the mango grove of the brahmins of the Todeyya clan.⁹² Then the brahminee Dhānañjānī approached the brahmin youth Saṅgārava and said this to him,

“It is said that the Blessed One had arrived in Caṇḍala,kappa, and that he is staying in the mango grove of the brahmins of the Todeyya clan. Now, noble sir, you may go when you think the time is right [at your convenience].”

“Yes, madam,” the brahmin youth Saṅgārava replied to the brahminee Dhānañjānī.

Then the brahmin youth Saṅgārava approached the Blessed One, and having exchanged greetings [211] with him, sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the brahmin youth Saṅgārava said this to the Blessed One:

6 “Master Gotama, there are some recluses and brahmins who proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now.⁹³ Amongst these recluses and brahmins who proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have

four branches of study auxiliary to the Vedas that precede them in the description” (M:ÑB 1296 n850). On technical terms here, see Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

⁸⁸ Iti,hāsa Purāṇas are the aural tradition of brahminical legends of kings and sages. See prev n.

⁸⁹ Saṃyutta account (S 7.1) says that Dhanañjani’s furious husband berates her as an “outcaste” (*vasalī*) (S 7.1/1:160).

⁹⁰ “Noble sir,” *bhadra,mukha*, lit “lucky- or happy-faced one,” perhaps in modern jargon, “(my) fine fellow” as vocative, esp to a junior. As at M 2:53, 210; S 1:74 (see S:RD 1:100 n3).

⁹¹ “Virtue and wisdom,” *sīla,paññāna*, as at D 1:124. This term is syn with the more common *vijjā,caraṇa* (knowledge and conduct), with the qualities reversed.

⁹² “Brahmins of the Todeyya clan,” *todeyyānaṃ brāhmāṇaṃ*, so called because they are from the village of Tudi or Tudi,gāma (DA 2:399; MA 3:443; AA 3:164), near Sāvattihī (DA 2:384; MA 5:8). Only the head of the clan is called Todeyya, who is also village head.

⁹³ “Who proclaim...etc...here and now,” *dittha,dhammābhiññā,vosāna,pārami-p,pattā ādi,brahmacariyaṃ paṭijānanti*. MA says that they declare the fundamentals of a holy life, saying, “Having directly known here and now in this present existence and having reached the consummation, we have attained the nirvana called ‘perfection,’ that is, the transcendence of everything” (MA 3:453). On *abhiññā,vosāna,pārami-p,patta*, see **Mahā Sakul’udāyi S** (M 77.15/2:11; A 3:9). MA glosses it as the attainment of arhathood (*arahatta,vasena*) (MA 3:262, 265) or the attainment of nirvana (*nibbāna-p,patta*) (MA 3:453); or as awakening (*bodhi*) itself (AA 3:225). Bodhi notes: “This may be the only sense that the word *pāramī* bears in the four Nikāyas. In the later Theravāda literature, beginning perhaps with such work as the Buddhavaṃsa, this word comes to signify the perfect virtues that a bodhisatta must fulfill over many lives in order to attain Buddhahood. In that context it corresponds to the *pāramitā* of the Mahāyāna literature, though the numerical lists of virtues overlap only in part” (M:ÑB 1284 n763).

reached the consummation and perfection of superknowledge here and now, where does master Gotama stand?”

Types of holy men

7 “Bhāra,dvāja, I say that there is a diversity amongst those recluses and brahmins who proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now:

(1) Bhāra,dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who are **traditionalists**,⁹⁴ who on the basis of an aural tradition⁹⁵ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of superknowledge here and now. Such are the brahmins of the Three Vedas.

(2) Bhāra,dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who, entirely on the basis of mere faith, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now.⁹⁶ Such are the **reasoners and inquirers**.⁹⁷

(3) Bhāra,dvāja, there are some recluses and brahmins who, in things not heard before, **having directly known the Dharma for themselves**,⁹⁸ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now.

8 I, Bhāra,dvāja, am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dharma for themselves regarding things not heard before,⁹⁹ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of superknowledge here and now.

As to how I am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dharma for themselves, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now, that may be understood in the following way.

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

9 Here, Bhāra,dvāja, before my awakening, while I was still only an unawakened Bodhisattva, I considered thus:¹⁰⁰

“The household life is stifling, a dusty path.¹⁰¹ The life of renunciation is like the open air.¹⁰² It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life completely, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell.

⁹⁴ *Anussavikā*, lit “those of the aural tradition,” see **Sandaka S** (M 76.24-26/1:520).

⁹⁵ *Anussavena*, “through hearsay,” ie blindly following tradition, which according to Jayatilleke has 3 possible senses: (1) divine revelation, (2) authoritative tradition, and (3) report (1963:182). For details, see Jayatilleke 1963: 182-193. Technically, I have rendered *anussavana* as “aural [by ear] tradition” (referring esp to brahminical traditions), and reserved “oral” (*mukha,pāṭha*) for the Buddhist reciter (*bhāṇaka*) tradition. On *anussavana* (tradition), see Jayatilleke 1963:193-195.

⁹⁶ *Santi bhāra,dvāja eke samaṇa,brāhmaṇā anussavikā, te anussavema diṭṭha,dhammābhiññā,vosāna,pārami-p-pattā ādi,brahma,cariyaṃ paṭjānanti*. Here the attainments mentioned refer to those of the non-Buddhist system.

⁹⁷ **Bodhi** notes, “It is puzzling that the reasoners and investigators (*takkī, vīmaṇsī*) are here said to rely on the basis of mere faith (*saddhā,mattakena*). Elsewhere faith and reasoning are contrasted as two different grounds of conviction (M 95.14), and ‘mere faith’ seems more closely allied with reliance on oral tradition than with reasoning and investigation” (M:NB 1304 n919). See **Sandaka S** (M 77.27-29/1:520).

⁹⁸ *Sāmaṇ yeva dhammaṇ abhiññāya*. This phrase, notes Bodhi, “emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life,” (M:NB 1304 920), ie, not learning (hearing) it from others. Cf the newly-awakened Gotama’s reply to Upaka: *na me ācariyo atthi*, “No teacher have I” (V 1:8).

⁹⁹ “Regarding things not heard before,” *pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*, as at A 3:9; cf D 2:33; S 2:9, 105. AA glosses *dhammesu* as *catu,sacca,dhammesu*, “in the four noble truths” (AA 3:225).

¹⁰⁰ The previous phrase and this whole narrative as at **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,14-17/1:163-167). Cf **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,12/1:240). Opening phrase, *pubbe va sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass’eva sato*, as at **Bhaya,bherava S** (M 4,3/1:17), **Dvedhā,vitakka S** (M 19,2/1:114), **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,12/1:240), **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 85,10/2:93), **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,9/2:211), but different contexts. See also S 2:5, 10, 104, 170, 3:27, 4:7, 8, 97, 289, 5:263, 281; A 1:258, 3:240-242 (passim), 4:439; Pm 2:109; Miln 235.

What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?

10 Later, Bhāra,dvāja, [212] while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robe, and went forth from the household life into the homeless life.

THE TWO TEACHERS¹⁰³

Ālāra Kālāma

11 Having thus gone forth in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to **Ālāra Kālāma**¹⁰⁴ and said this to him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, I want to lead the holy life in this Dharma and Discipline.’

Bhāra,dvāja, Ālāra Kālāma replied:

‘The venerable one may stay here. This Dharma is such that a wise man [I:164] can soon enter upon and dwell in it, realizing for himself through direct knowledge his own teacher’s doctrine.’

Bhāra,dvāja, I soon quickly learned that Dharma. As far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal¹⁰⁵ of his teaching went, I could speak with knowledge and confidence,¹⁰⁶ and I claimed: ‘I know and see,’ and there were others who did likewise.

11.2 Bhāra,dvāja, I thought thus:

‘It is not through mere faith alone that Ālāra Kālāma declares: “By realizing through direct knowledge, I enter upon and dwell in this Dharma” Certainly Ālāra Kālāma dwells knowing and seeing this Dharma.’

Then, Bhāra,dvāja, I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, in what way do you declare that by realizing for yourself through direct knowledge you enter upon and dwell in this Dharma?’

Bhāra,dvāja, he declared that it was the base of nothingness.

11.3 Bhāra,dvāja, I thought thus: ‘Not only Ālāra Kālāma has **faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom**; I, too, have them. Suppose I endeavour to realize the Dharma that Ālāra Kālāma declares he attains and realizes for himself through direct knowledge?’

¹⁰¹ *Sambādho gharavāso rajā,patho*. There is a wordplay on *sambādha*, “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” which also refers to the sexual organ, male (V 1:216, 2:134) or female (V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260). *Rajā,patha*, “a dusty path,” here refers to “the dust of passion,” and to “the path of returning” (*āgamana,patha*), ie rebirth (DA 1:180,17 = MA 2:179,20; UA 237,27).

¹⁰² *Sambādho ghar’āvāso rajā,patho, abbhokāso pabbajjā*. This is stock: **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,12/1:240,20), SD 49.4; **Mahā Taṇhā Saṅkhaya S** (M 38,32/1:267,24), SD 7.10; **Kandaraka S** (M 51,13/1:344,30), SD 32.9; **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,9/2:211,29), SD 10.9; **Deva,daha S** (M 101,31/2:226,8), SD 18.4; **Cha-b,bisodhana S** (M 112,12/3:33,8), SD 59.7; **Danta,bhūmi S** (M 125,14/3:134,2), SD 46.3; **Civara S** (S 16.11,14/2:219,25), SD 77.5; **Thapati S** (S 55.6,18+22/5:350,23, 351,21), SD 42.7; **Attan Tapa S** (A 4.198,7/2:208,23) = (Pug 4.24/57,12), SD 56.7; **Upāli S** (A 10.99,5/5:204,17), SD 30.9.

¹⁰³ This whole section (the episodes of Ālāra & of Uddaka) as at **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 36.17-33/1:240-247). On Ālāra and Uddaka, see SD 1.11 (4).

¹⁰⁴ Buddhaghosa says that Ālāra, also called Dīgha,piṅgala; Kālāma was his family name (DA 2:569 = MA 2:171). The story of the Bodhisattva’s first two teachers [15-16] is found in several places in the early Canons: **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36/1:240); **Saṅgārava S** (M 100/2:212); **Madhyam’āgama** of the Sarvāstivāda (T26.776b5-777a4; **Vinaya** of the Dharmaguptakas (T1428.780bt-c19); cf J 1:66; DhA 1:85; ApA 71; BA 6; DhsA 34; Mahvṣṭ 66. “No word is said about the Buddha’s relationship to these two people, nor indeed do we hear what these men had been or done. This would be hard to explain if the training of the Bodhisattva under them had been related at that time a few pages earlier as it is now.” (Bronkhorst 1993:85 f; see n to §§22-23 on “The first listeners” below).

¹⁰⁵ “Mere lip-reciting and rehearsal,” *oṭṭha,pahata,mattena lapita,lāpana,mattena*, “merely moving the lips and reciting what had been recited” (Thomas 1949:62)

¹⁰⁶ “I could speak with knowledge and confidence,” *nāṇa,vādañ ca therā,vādañ ca*.

Bhāra,dvāja, I soon quickly entered upon and dwelled in that Dharma by realizing it for myself through direct knowledge. Then I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, is it in this way that you declare for yourself that you enter upon and dwell in this Dharma through direct knowledge?’

‘That is the way, avuso, that I entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for myself through direct knowledge.’

‘That is the way, too, avuso, that I have entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for myself through direct knowledge.’

‘It is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dharma that I declare to have myself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge. [1:165]

And the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that I declare to have myself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge.

You have realized what I have realized. So you know what I know. As I am, so you are.

Come now, avuso, let the two of us lead this community!¹⁰⁷

Thus, Bhāra,dvāja, Ālāra Kālāma, my teacher, placed me, his pupil, on an equal footing with himself and accorded me the highest honour. But it occurred to me: ‘This Dharma does not lead to disenchantment [with the world], to cessation [of suffering], to direct knowledge, to awakening, to Nirvana, but only to rebirth in **the base of nothingness.**’¹⁰⁸

Bhāra,dvāja, dissatisfied with that Dharma, I left.

Uddaka Rāmaputta

12 Bhāra,dvāja, still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to **Uddaka Rāmaputta**¹⁰⁹ and said to him:

‘Avuso, I want to lead the holy life in this Dharma and Discipline.’

Bhāra,dvāja, the venerable one accepted me [*in the same way as Ālāra did*]...

Soon, monks, as far as lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I mastered everything with knowledge and confidence, as did others.

12.2 Bhāra,dvāja, I thought thus:

‘It is not through mere faith alone that **Rāma** declared: “By realizing through direct knowledge I entered upon and dwelled in this Dharma.” Certainly Rāma dwelled knowing and seeing this Dharma.’

Then, Bhāra,dvāja, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and asked him:

‘Avuso, in what way did Rāma declare that by realizing for himself through direct knowledge he entered upon and dwelled in this Dharma?’

Bhāra,dvāja, Uddaka Rāmaputta declared that it was the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

12.3 Bhāra,dvāja, I thought thus:

¹⁰⁷ *Ehi dāni avuso, ubho va santā imañ gaṇaṃ paraharāmā ti.* See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26. 16c), SD 1.11 n on the leadership of the community.

¹⁰⁸ “Base of nothingness,” *ākāṅkhaṇāyatana*. Comy: Ālāra taught him the seven attainments (of calmness meditation) ending with the base of nothingness, the third of the four formless attainments. Though these states are spiritually exalted, they are still mundane and do not in themselves lead to nirvana, but merely to rebirth in the sphere of nothingness. The lifespan there is 60,000 aeons (world-cycles) but at the end of which one returns to a lower world. As such, one is still caught in Māra’s trap.

¹⁰⁹ It is clear from the Uddaka Sutta (S 35.103) that Uddaka Rāmaputta had no high spiritual attainment: “Bhikshus, though Uddaka Rāma,putta was not himself a knowledge-master (*vedagū*), he claimed: ‘I am a knowledge-master.’ Though he was not himself an all-conqueror (*sabba,jī*), he declared: ‘I am an all-conqueror.’ Though he had not removed the tumour’s root [craving], he declared: ‘I have removed the tumour’s root’.” (S 35.103.2/4:83). At §12.2, it is clear that the reference is to Rāma, Uddaka’s father. See SD 1.11 (4).

‘Not only Rāma had faith, [1:166] energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom; I, too, have them. Suppose I endeavour to realize the Dharma that Rāma declared he entered upon and realized for himself through direct knowledge?’

Bhāra,dvāja, I soon quickly entered upon and dwelled in that Dharma by realizing it for myself through direct knowledge. Then I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and said this to him:

‘Avuso, was it in this way that Rāma declared for himself that he entered upon and dwelled in this Dharma through direct knowledge?’

‘That is the way, avuso, that Rāma entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for himself through direct knowledge.’

‘That is the way, too, avuso, that I have entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing for myself through direct knowledge.’

‘It is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dharma that Rāma declared to have himself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that *you* declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge.

And the Dharma that you declare to have yourself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge is the Dharma that Rāma declared to have himself entered upon and dwelled with direct knowledge.

You have realized what Rāma had realized. So you know what Rāma knew. As Rāma was, so you are.¹¹⁰

Come now, avuso, lead this community!¹¹¹

Thus, Bhāra,dvāja, Uddaka Rāmaputta, my companion in the holy life, placed me in the position of a teacher and accorded me the highest honour. But, monks, it occurred to me: ‘This Dharma does not lead to disenchantment [with the world], to cessation [of suffering], to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana, but only to rebirth in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**.’¹¹²

Bhāra,dvāja, dissatisfied with that Dharma, I left.

13 Bhāra,dvāja, still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. [1:167] There I saw

¹¹⁰ Iti yaṃ dhammaṃ rāmo aññasi taṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ jānāsi, yaṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ jānāsi taṃ dhammaṃ rāmo aññāsi. Iti yādiso rāmo ahoṣi tādiso tuvaṃ, yādiso tuvaṃ tādiso rāmo ahoṣi. These sentences are crucial in showing “Rāma,” ie Uddaka’s father, is referred to, and no Uddaka himself. Note further the past tense ahoṣi used in connection with Rāma. Bh Bodhi: “Both Horner in [Middle Length Sayings] and Ñ[ānamoli] in MS err in their translations of the account of Bodhisatta’s meeting with Uddaka Rāmaputta by assuming that Uddaka is identical with Rāma. However, as his name indicates, Uddaka was the son (putta) of Rāma, who must have already passed away before the Bodhisatta arrived on the scene. It should be noted that all references to Rāma are in the past tense and the third person, and that Uddaka in the end places the Bodhisatta in the position of teacher. Though the text does not allow for definite conclusions, this suggests that he himself had not yet reached the fourth immaterial attainment.” (Bodhi, 2001:1217 n303)

¹¹¹ *Ehi dāni āvuso, tvaṃ imaṃ gaṇaṃ pariharāti.* Note here Uddaka is asking the Bodhisattva to *himself* lead the community. Cf §15c where Ālāra invites the Bodhisattva, “Let the two of us lead this community!” (*Ubho va santā imaṃ gaṇaṃ pariharāmī ti*).

¹¹² “Neither-perception-nor-non-perception,” *n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana*. This is the name for the 4th dhyana of the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*), a semi-conscious state that is surpassed only by the state of complete suspension of consciousness called or the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*) or the attainment of cessation (*nirodha, samāpatti*, S 14.11) [42 & n]. The absolute necessary precondition to this attainment are said to be the perfect mastery of all the 8 dhyanas as well as the previous attainment of non-return or arhathood. Comy says that this state may last for 7 days or even longer. Immediately at the arising of the state, however, there arises in the non-returner the fruition of non-return (*anāgāmi,phala*), and in the arhat the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta,phala*). **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43) explains the difference between death and cessation as follows. In the case of one who is dead, his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, life is exhausted, the vital heat extinguished, the faculties destroyed. In the case of one who has entered the cessation of perception and feeling, his bodily, verbal and mental functions have ceased, but his life is not exhausted, the vital heat is not extinguished, the faculties become exceedingly clear (M 43.25/1:296 abr; see also M 44.16-21). See §43 below.

an agreeable spot, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort.¹¹³ I sat down there thinking: ‘This is conducive for spiritual striving.’¹¹⁴

SELF-MORTIFICATION

The similes of the fire-sticks¹¹⁵

14 “Then 3 **similes**, never heard before, naturally [spontaneously] occurred to me.

(1) THE WET SAPPY STICK IN WATER. Suppose, Bhāra,dvāja, there were a wet sappy stick left in water,¹¹⁶ and a man were to come holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

What do you think, Bhāra,dvāja? Could the man, taking an upper fire stick and rubbing against the wet sappy stick left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“No, master Gotama. Why is that so?”

Master Gotama, it is because the stick is wet and sappy, and it is left in water. If he went on trying, he would only meet with weariness and disappointment.”

14.2 “Even so, Bhāra,dvāja, those who do not dwell away from sense-pleasures, and have not totally abandoned and suppressed them internally, even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of their self-mortification, would be incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

14.3 So too, Bhāra,dvāja, as regards these recluses and brahmins who still do not dwell bodily and mentally withdrawn from sense-pleasures, and whose sense-desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sense-pleasures have not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally,¹¹⁷

14.4 even if these good recluses and brahmins *feel* painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *incapable* of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening;¹¹⁸

¹¹³ This passage (repeated in **Ariya Pariyesanā S**, M 26,17/1:167 = 100,13/2:212) is the oldest ref to an ideal place for meditation. This stock phrase of 3 places conducive to meditation are at D 2:29; M 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; S 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; A 1:147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; Pm 1:175, 2:36. In **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), the full instruction is given: “Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue and this aggregate of noble sense-restraint and this aggregate of noble mindfulness and clear comprehension and this aggregate of noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw” (D 2,67/-1:71): this stock passage also at **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), SD 8.10.67 (2005). A briefer version is found in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22), **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) and **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118): “Here, monks, a monk who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty place, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.” (D 22,2/2:291 = M 10,4/1:56 = 118,17/3:82).

¹¹⁴ **Mahā Saccaka S** (M36.20-31) picks up from here with graphic details of the Bodhisattva’s self-mortification (see Appendix). This account, however, seems to be an abridgement of the longer account given in **Mahā Sihanāda S** (M 12.44-61/1:77-82). A brief mention of his ascetic experience is given in **Bhaya,bherava S** (M 4,20/ 1:21).

¹¹⁵ On §§14-16, as at **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,17-19/1:240-242), SD 49.4. On the problem of the location of these similes of the fire-sticks, see M:NB 1229 n387. According to Bronkhorst, this episode of the 3 similes (M 36.17-19) and the episode where Saccaka contrasts the composed behaviour of the Buddha with the evasive reactions of the six heterodox teachers (M 36.48): “If we remove these portions...we are left with what may be called the ‘Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra.’ From the beginning this Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra must have contained the episode on meditation without breath and reduced intake of food. This episode itself may or may not have existed before the composition of the Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra.” (1993:18).

¹¹⁶ *Allam kaṭṭham sa,sneham udake nikkhittam.*

¹¹⁷ *Evam eva kho, bhāradvāja, ye hi keci samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā kāyena ceva cittena ca kāmehi avūpakaṭṭhā viharanti, yo ca nesam kāmesu kāma-c, chando kāma,sneho kāma,mucchā kāma,pipāsā kāma,pariḷāho so ca ajjhatam na suppahīno hoti na suppaṭippassaddho.*

¹¹⁸ *Opakkamikā cepi te bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā dukkhā tibbā kharā kaṭukā vedanā vedayanti, abhabbāva te ñāṇāya dassanāya anuttarāya sambodhāya.*

14.5 and even if those good recluses and brahmins do *not* feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *still* incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the first simile, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.¹¹⁹

15 (2) THE WET SAPPY STICK ON DRY LAND. Furthermore, Bhāra,dvāja, **a second simile**, never heard before, naturally occurred to me.

Suppose, Bhāra,dvāja, there were a wet sappy stick left on dry ground far away from water,¹²⁰ and a man were to come holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

What do you think, Bhāra,dvāja? Could the man, taking an upper fire stick and rubbing against the wet sappy stick left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“No, master Gotama. Why is that so?”

Master Gotama, it is because, although the stick is left on dry land, it is still wet and sappy. If he went on trying, he would only meet with weariness and disappointment.”

15.2 “Even so, Bhāra,dvāja, those who do not dwell away from sense-pleasures, and have not totally abandoned and suppressed them internally,

even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of their self-mortification, would be incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

15.3 So too, Bhāra,dvāja, as regards these recluses and brahmins who still do not dwell bodily and mentally withdrawn from sense-pleasures, and whose sense-desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sense-pleasures have not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally,

15.4 even if these good recluses and brahmins *feel* painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *incapable* of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening;

15.5 and even if these good recluses and brahmins do *not* feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *still* incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the second simile, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.

16 (3) THE DRY SAPLESS STICK ON DRY LAND. Furthermore, Bhāra,dvāja, **a third simile**, never heard before, naturally occurred to me.

Suppose a man were to use a dry sapless stick, lying on dry ground far away from water,¹²¹ and a man were to come holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

What do you think, Bhāra,dvāja? Could the man, taking an upper fire stick and rubbing against the wet sappy stick left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“Yes, master Gotama. Why is that so?”

Master Gotama, it is because the stick, dry and sapless, is left on the ground, far away from water.”

16.2 “Even so, Bhāra,dvāja, those who *dwell away from sense-pleasures*, and *have totally abandoned and suppressed them internally*, even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of their self-mortification, would be capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

16.3 So too, Bhāra,dvāja, as regards these recluses and brahmins who do dwell bodily and mentally withdrawn from sense-pleasures, and whose sense-desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sense-pleasures have been fully abandoned and suppressed internally,

16.4 even if these good recluses and brahmins *feel* painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *capable* of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening;

16.5 and even if these good recluses and brahmins do *not* feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *still* capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ayaṃ kho maṃ, bhāradvāja, paṭhamā upamā paṭibhāsi anacchariyā pubbe assuta,pubbā.

¹²⁰ Allam kattham sa,sneham ārakā udakā thale nikkhittam.

¹²¹ Sukkham kattham kolāpam ārakā udakā thale nikkhittam.

¹²² As noted by Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, it is puzzling that in the foll paras the Bodhisattva is shown engaging in self-mortification *after* he had here come to the conclusion that such practices are useless for the attainment of awakening. “This dissonant juxtaposition of ideas raises a suspicion that the narrative sequence of the sutta has become jumbled. The appropriate place for the simile of the fire-sticks, it seems, would be at the end of the Bodhisattva’s period of ascetic experimentation, when he has acquired a sound basis for rejecting self-mortification” (M:ÑB 1229 n387). Comy to M 36 however accepts the above sequence but asks why the Bodhisattva underwent austerities when

This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the third simile, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.
These, Bhāra,dvāja, are the 3 similes, never heard before, that naturally occurred to me.

The Bodhisattva's self-mortification¹²³

17 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down the mind with mind.’¹²⁴

So, Bhāra,dvāja, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down the mind with mind. While I did so, sweat ran down from my armpits.

17.2 Bhāra,dvāja, it was just like a strong man holding a weaker man by the head or shoulders, were to restrain, subdue, attack him;

even so, Bhāra,dvāja, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down the mind with mind, and sweat ran down my armpits.

17.3 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained [1:243] and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.¹²⁵

18 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise **the breathingless meditation**.’¹²⁶

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, there was loud sound of winds coming out from my ear-holes, just like the loud sound of winds from a smith's bellows.

But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

19 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, violent winds cut through my head, just as if a strong man were splitting my head open with a sharp sword.

19.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

20 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, there were violent pains in my head, just as if a strong man [1:244] were tightening a tough leather strap around my head as a headband.

he could have attained Buddhahood without doing so. It explains that he does so, first, to show that his own exertion (*parakkama*) to the world, rejoicing in the “virtue of his crushing energy” (*virīya,nimmathana,guṇa*), feeling like a rajah who wins supreme sovereignty after crushing his enemies; and second, showing compassion (*anukampamāno*) to later generations, so that they too would strive with the same determination for awakening as he himself has done. (MA 2:288)

¹²³ §§23-27, as at **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,23-30/1:243-246), SD 49.4.

¹²⁴ *Yan nūnāhaṃ dantebhi dantamādhāya, jivhāya tāluṃ āhacca, cetasā cittaṃ abhiniggaṇheyyaṃ abhinippīleyyaṃ abhisantāpeyyaṃ ti*. Cf **Vitakka Saṅghāna S** (M 20), where this is given as the last method of overcoming a distracted mind (M 20.7/1:120 f), SD 1.6. In **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.20/1:242), SD 49.4, **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 85.19/2:93), SD 55.2, and **Saṅgārava S** (M 100.17/2:212), it forms the initial practice of the Bodhisattva's self-mortification, and as it is the least severe, is recommended as the last of the 5 methods: cf J Bronkhorst, “Self and meditation in Indian Buddhism,” 1998: 12. **Purisa Thāma S** (A 2.1.5/1:50) teaches one not to be content with wholesome mental states and to be unremitting in one's “personal effort” to win the spiritual goal. See **Vitakka Saṅghāna S** (M 20), SD 1.6 (1).

¹²⁵ **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36) adds here, “But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain” (*evārūpā pi kho me Aggī,vessana uppannā dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhati*) at the end of each of the 6 sections (M 36.17-22/1:241-244), SD 49.4. This is apparently the earliest canonical example of the two kinds of pain (bodily and mental), noted in **Sall'atthana S** (S 36.6/ 4:207-210), wherein the saint experiences only bodily pain but not mental pain. See SD 1.12.

¹²⁶ “Breathingless meditation,” *appānaka jhāna*.

20.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

21 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, violent winds carved up my belly,¹²⁷ just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox’s belly with a sharp butcher’s knife.

21.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

22 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’

So, Bhāra,dvāja, I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears. While I did so, Bhāra,dvāja, there was a violent burning in my body, just as if two men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of burning coal.

22.2 But, Bhāra,dvāja, although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

23 Now, Bhāra,dvāja, when [1:245] the devas saw me, some said: ‘The recluse Gotama is dead!’ Other devas said: ‘The recluse Gotama is not dead but dying!’ Still others said: ‘The recluse Gotama is neither dead nor dying: he is an arhat, for such is how arhats dwell!’

24 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise cutting off food entirely.’ Then, Bhāra,dvāja, devas came to me and said, ‘Good sir, do not do so. If you do so, we shall infuse divine essence¹²⁸ through the pores of your skin and you will live on like that.’

24.2 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘If I claim to be completely fasting while these devas infuse divine essence through the pores of my skin and I live on that, then I shall be lying.’ So, Bhāra,dvāja, I dismissed the devas, saying, ‘There is no need!’

25 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, perhaps of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch¹²⁹ soup or pea soup.’

25.2 Bhāra,dvāja, when I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little, Bhāra,dvāja,

my limbs became like the joints of vine stems or bamboo stems;

my backside became like a camel’s hoof;

the projections of my spine stood out like corded beads;

my ribs jutted out like the crazy¹³⁰ rafters of an old broken shed;

the gleam of my eyes sank deep down into their sockets, looking like the gleam of water gone far down in a deep well;

my scalp shrivelled and withered like [1:246] green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun;

my belly skin touched my backbone so that when I touched my belly I felt my backbone and if I touched my backbone I felt my belly skin;

when I defaecated or urinated, I fell over on my face right there;

when I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at their roots, fell off from my body as I rubbed—all because of eating so little.¹³¹

¹²⁷ According to Agniveśa’s *Caraka Samhitā*, Sūtra,sthāna 20.11 (p113), headache (*śīroruc*) [21-23] and belly (*udarāveṣṭaḥ* [24]: the Ayurvedic commentator Cakrapāṇidatta explains: *udarasyaṅveṣṭanam ivodarāveṣṭaḥ*) are caused by wind (*vāta*). Heat (*dāha*), on the other hand, is caused by bile (*pitta*): see Sūtra,sthāna 20.14 (p114). See Bronkhorst 1993:20 f & n29.

¹²⁸ “Divine essence,” *oja*, ambrosia.

¹²⁹ A bean-like climbing plant.

¹³⁰ *Olugga*, collapsing and fallen down, dilapidated.

¹³¹ The Bodhisattva’s self-mortification. There are at least three well known statues of the Buddha looking very emaciated. In his paper, “The Emaciated Gandhāran Buddha Images: Asceticism, Health and the Body,” Robert L Brown argues that although most people think that these images depict the Bodhisattva at the height of his self-mortification, on closer examination of the details on these images, they actually represent the Buddha fasting during the

26 Bhāra,dvāja, When people saw me, some said, ‘The recluse Gotama is black.’ Others said, ‘The recluse Gotama is not black, he is brown.’ Others said, ‘The recluse Gotama is neither; he is golden-skinned.’ So much had the clear, bright colour of my skin deteriorated through eating so little.’

27 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me,

‘In the past, recluses and brahmins have experienced painful, racking, piercing pains;

in the future, recluses and brahmins will experience painful, racking, piercing pains;

at present, recluses and brahmins are experiencing painful, racking, piercing pains—

but, Bhāra,dvāja, this is the utmost extreme, there is none beyond this.

27.2 But by these painful austerities, I did not attain any superhuman state, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.

Could there be another path to awakening?

THE MIDDLE WAY

Wholesome pleasure

28 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘I recall that [during the ploughing festival]¹³² when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and dwelled in the first dhyana that is accompanied by initial application and sustained application, zest and joy born of seclusion. Could that be the path to awakening?’

Then, Bhāra,dvāja, following on that memory,¹³³ I realized, ‘That *is* the path to awakening!’

29 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘Why [1:247] do I fear the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?’ Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘**I do not fear the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states!**’¹³⁴

30 Then, Bhāra,dvāja, it occurred to me, ‘It is not easy to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food—some boiled rice and porridge.’ And I ate some solid food.

Now, Bhāra,dvāja, at that time the 5 monks¹³⁵ were waiting upon me, thinking, ‘If our recluse Gotama achieve some higher state, he will inform us.’ But when I ate the boiled rice and gruel, the five monks were disgusted and left me, thinking, ‘The recluse Gotama now lives luxuriously. He has given up the quest and reverted to luxury!’

31 Now, Bhāra,dvāja, when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and dwelled in the first dhyana that is accompanied by initial application and sustained application, zest and joy born of seclusion.

49 days following the Great Enlightenment (Brown 1997:106, 112). Brown, however, fails to note perhaps the clearest evidence that it is the Buddha, not the Bodhisattva, who is represented in the Sikri and the Jamalgarhi images (and very likely in the Takht-i-Bahi image, too)—namely, the presence of the halo or aureole behind the image’s head—which Brown acknowledges in a personal communication in 2002.

¹³² The ploughing festival, ie, a ritual sowing, *vappa,maṅgala* (MA 2:290; J 1:57). On this “first dhyana” episode (**Mahā Saccaka S**, M 36.31 f/1:246 f), cf Chinese version, T1428.781a4-11.

¹³³ That is, regarding the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breaths (MA 2:291).

¹³⁴ On the 2 kinds of pleasures—sensual pleasure and the pleasure of awakening—see **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9/3:233), SD 7.8. On pleasure experienced by the awakened mind, see **Uṇṇābha S** (S 51.15), SD 10.10 .

¹³⁵ This group of 5 monks (*pañca,vaggiya*) traditionally comprise of Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assaji. It is said that the Buddha gives his first discourse to them on the night of the full moon day of Āsāḷha (June-July),¹³⁵ following the great awakening. This becomes a festival still celebrated today amongst Theravāda Buddhists as Āsāḷha Pūjā (V 1:10 ff; S 5:420 ff.; Mvst 3:330 f; Lalv 540(416) f.). As a result of this event, the first sangha comprising the 5 monks and the Buddha is born. See SD 1.3 (3); 1.11 (6).

32 With the stilling of initial application and sustained application, I entered upon and dwelled in the second dhyana, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.¹³⁶

33 And with the fading away of zest, I entered upon and dwelled in the third dhyana, of which the Noble Ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness,’ he does not think of his own suffering, nor of another’s suffering, nor of both of them.

34 And with the abandoning of joy and pain, I entered upon and dwelled in the fourth dhyana, that is neither pleasant nor painful, with a mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.¹³⁷

The great awakening¹³⁸

35 (1) When my mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness, [1:248]

I directed it to **the knowledge of the recollection of past lives**.¹³⁹

I recollect my manifold past lives, that is,

one birth, two births, three births, four, five,
ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty,
one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand,
many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion,
many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, (recollecting,)

‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such the end of my life.

Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span.

Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’¹⁴⁰

36 This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the first true knowledge won by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.¹⁴¹

37 (2) When my mind was thus concentrated, *purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness,*

I directed it to **the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings**.¹⁴²

I see—by means of **the divine eye** [clairvoyance],¹⁴³ purified and surpassing the human—
beings passing away and re-appearing, and know how they are inferior and superior,
beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, faring in accordance with their karma:

‘These beings—who were endowed with evil conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
after death, when the body has broken up, have re-appeared in a plane of misery,
an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—
after death, when the body has broken up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

¹³⁶ The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya,tuṅhī,bhāva*): see n3.

¹³⁷ Vbh 245, Vism 165=4.183.

¹³⁸ This whole section is as at **Bhaya,bherava S** (M 4.27-33/1:22 f). The passage at **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2) is more detailed with similes (D 2.93-98/1:81-84).

¹³⁹ This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

¹⁴⁰ Be & Se abbreviate: “Even so, Bhāra,dvāja, with my mind thus *concentrated*, I recollect my manifold past lives...in their modes and details.”

¹⁴¹ At the end of each of these 3 paras here, **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36) adds: “But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain” (M 36.39/1:248). See end of §17 n above.

¹⁴² This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.72-101/423-429.

¹⁴³ *Dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §102).

Thus, by means of the divine eye, I see beings passing away and re-appearing, and understand how they fare according to their karma.

38 This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the second true knowledge won by me in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute. [1:249]

39 (3) When my mind was thus concentratedn *purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness,*

I directed it to **the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes.**¹⁴⁴

I directly knew as it really is:

‘This is suffering;
This is the arising of suffering;
This is the ending of suffering;
This is the path leading to the ending of suffering.’¹⁴⁵

These are the influxes;
This is the arising of the influxes;
This is the ending of the influxes;
This is the path leading to the ending of the influxes.’¹⁴⁶

40 When I knew and saw thus, my mind was freed from the influx of sensual desire, from the influx of existence, and from the influx of ignorance. When it was freed, there arose the knowledge: ‘It is freed!’ I directly knew:

‘Birth is ended. The holy life has been lived. Done is that which needs to be done. There is nothing further beyond this.’¹⁴⁷

41 This, Bhāra,dvāja, was the third true knowledge won by me in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who dwells diligent, ardent and resolute.

Do gods exist?

42 When this was said, the brahmin youth Saṅgārava said to the Blessed One:

“Steadfast¹⁴⁸ indeed is Master Gotama’s striving; of a true person¹⁴⁹ is Master Gotama’s striving—just like that of an arhat, a fully self-awakened one!

¹⁴⁴ *Āsava-k,khaya,nāṇa*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) has been variously tr as “taints, 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) wrong 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 prob 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). See BDict under *āsava*.

¹⁴⁵ These 4 statements on suffering pose an interesting problem: they are not called noble truths here (and in *Sāmañña,phala S*, 2.97/1:83). Norman remarks that “since they appear to be subordinate to the four statements about the *āsavas*, it is possible that the statements about misery are a later addition, which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of 4 statements being evolved about the *āsavas*, to provide symmetry. See Schmithausen 1981:205 & Norman 1982:377-91, 1990:130.

¹⁴⁶ As in *Sāmaññaphala S* (D 2.97/1:83 f), SD 8.10.

¹⁴⁷ *Nāparam itthatāya*: lit. “there is no more of ‘thusness.’” See *Mahā,nidāna S* (D 15,32), SD 5.17.

¹⁴⁸ “Steadfast...striving,” *aṭṭhita...padhānam*, which should read *aṭṭhita,padhānam*. I B Horner that this is a tmesis (M:H 2:401 n3), ie a separation of the parts of a cpd word by intervening word(s), eg “what things soever” (for “whatsoever things”). This occurs in Pāli as follows: (a) traces of the autonomy of preverbs: *ajjha so vasi* (Sadd 627,12-17); (b) insertion of *ca, eva, su* and forms of *atthi* or *bhavati* after the first member of a nominal cpd (Sadd 202 n(e), 481 n12, 627 n13, 767,17-22, 781,7-11). See CPD 1:33* sv.

¹⁴⁹ Horner also notes this as a tmesis (M:H 2:401 N 4).

42.2 But how is it, master Gotama, **are there gods?**¹⁵⁰

“Certainly,¹⁵¹ Bhāradvāja, it is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are ⟨superior⟩ gods.”¹⁵²

42.3 “But how is this, master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘Are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bhāradvāja, that there are ⟨superior⟩ gods?’ If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?”¹⁵³

“Bhāradvāja, when one is asked, ‘Are there gods?’ [213] whether one answers, ‘There are ⟨superior⟩ gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be so,’ a wise man should draw the clear conclusion that there are gods.”

42.4 “But then why didn’t master Gotama answer me so in the first place?”¹⁵⁴

“It is widely accepted in the world, Bhāradvāja, that there are gods.”¹⁵⁵

Saṅgārava takes refuge

43 When this was said, the brahmin youth Saṅgārava said to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, master Gotama! Excellent, Master Gotama! Venerable sir, 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 master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I go to master Gotama¹⁵⁶ for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.¹⁵⁷ May maser Gotama remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

— evaṃ —

Bibliography

Brown, Robert L.

¹⁵⁰ Cf **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 2:130; MA 3:359); also A 1:210, 3:287, 313, 316, 5:331, 334.

¹⁵¹ The implications of the ablative *thānaso* in the present passage remain unclear, as in other contexts *thānaso* indicates that something happens “immediately” or “on the spot,” cf eg V 3:70,23; S 8.8/1:193,6; S 45.156/5:50,7; S 54.9/5:321,25; S 55.26/5:381,29; A 5.194/3:238,6; A 7.16/3:298,2; A 8.46/4:263,4; A 10.60/5:108,29. Yet such a meaning does not fit the present context, as it would make little sense for the Buddha to answer that he “immediately” or “on the spot” knew that there are devas. Perhaps *thānaso* in the present context was intended to underline the expression *vidita* as a pointer to the personal realization of the Buddha. Perhaps the Buddha’s use of the word *thānaso* in a somewhat unusual manner was what caused Saṅgārava’s misunderstanding. Hoernle fragm 149/Add 32 Rb+d in Hartmann 1991:260 reads: *[tr]e [dā]nūm naikāṃṣena vyā and yena na ekāṃśe[na] vyākarosi samt(i devāḥ)*, indicating that in the Skt discourse, too, a similar misunderstanding took place. (Analyo’s fn)

¹⁵² On the reading *adhideva* in the foll 3 paras, see Intro (3-7), esp 5 & 7 above.

¹⁵³ *Ucce sammataṃ kho etaṃ Bhāradvāja lokasmim yad idam atthi devā ti.* “Certainly,” *ucce*, “intensely, very much, emphatically” (CPD). Comy: *uccena saddena sammataṃ (v1 sammā) pākaṭaṃ mataṃ lokasmim*, “with a loud sound commonly agreed upon in the world” (MA 3:454). Comy says that Saṅgārava thinks that the Buddha is speaking without actually knowing, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech (MA 3:454). “The sequence of ideas in this passage,” notes Bodhi “is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt” (M:ÑB 1304 n921). For Norman’s views, see 1981.

¹⁵⁴ *Kissa pana me bhavaṃ Gotamo ādiken’ eva na byākāsī ti.*

¹⁵⁵ On this apparently puzzling section, see Intro 7 above.

¹⁵⁶ “Blessed Gotama,” *bhagavantaṃ Gotamaṃ*.

¹⁵⁷ “The community of monks” (*bhikkhu, saṅgha*) here clearly refers to the noble community of saints (*ariya, saṅgha*). Even today, when a Buddhist takes refuge, he respectively takes the Buddha, the Dharma (the true teaching) and the Sangha (the noble community of saints) as his personal ideal, his method of spiritual development, and his exemplars. These 3 jewels (*ti, ratana*) are also the refuges and ideals of the conventional Sangha members (ie those who are still unawakened and not even streamwinners yet).

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