

3

Paṭācārā¹

(3a) **Paṭācārā Therī,gāthā**, The Verses of the Elder Nun Paṭācārā | **Thī 112-116**

(3b) **Tiṃsa,mattā Therī,gāthā**, The Verses of the 30 Elder Nuns | **Thī 117-121**

(3c) **Candā Therī,gāthā**, The Verses of the Elder Nun Candā | **Thī 122-126**

(3b) **Pañca,satā Paṭācārā Therī,gāthā**, The Verses of the Elder Nun Pañca,sata Paṭācārā | **Thī 127-132**

Theme: The woman who lost all whom she loved but found true happiness; and her followers

1 Secret affair

Paṭācārā² is the foremost amongst the nuns who are well-versed in the Vinaya (A 1:25). Her story, however, is a very sad one, perhaps the saddest in Buddhist spirituality, even in all religious literature. She suffered the tragic loss of all her loved ones all within a few days, a tragedy that drove her to madness, that is, until she met the Buddha.³ She was the beautiful daughter of a Sāvattthī seth (entrepreneur). When she came of age (between 14-16), her parents confined her to the seventh floor of their mansion, where she secretly became intimate with her servant boy.

One day, when her parents decided that she should marry a rich young man of her station, she decided to elope with her secret lover, the servant-boy. Disguised in servant's clothes, she met the boy at the city gate, and together they ran off to another distant village, where they lived together by growing their own food. She herself prepared food for both of them.

In due course, she had a child. Thinking that they needed their parents' help now, and that as parents they would surely love grandchildren, she decided that they should return to Sāvattthī. Her husband, fearing that he might be beaten up upon his return, refused to go. Then, her birth pangs came and she delivered a son in great pain.

When the second child came, she again thought of visiting her parents' house. Again, her husband refused. When her husband was away working, she took the first son with her and left for Sāvattthī. On finding out that she had left, her husband immediately trailed her into the middle of the forest. When he found her, however, she refused to turn back.

2 Loss of all her loved ones

Then a thunderstorm arose and at the same time she suffered her birth pangs. Her husband quickly went about with an axe seeking materials for making a shelter. While standing on top of an anthill, a fierce serpent inhabiting the anthill emerged and stung him to death.

Meanwhile, Paṭācārā was giving birth to her second child by herself unsheltered from the storm with her first son wailing away. Both her sons now cried loudly because of the cold and rain, and inclement place. She spent the rest of the night weak, wet and miserable, all alone in the forest. When morning came, she found her dead husband. "Because of me, my husband has to die in such a lonely place," she lamented. Then she struggled on her journey with her two children.

They soon reached a stream (said to be the Acita,vatī) that had flooded because of the storm during the night. She could not ford the stream with both her children because of the deep waters and swift currents. So, she carried the newborn infant in her arms, and left the first son behind on the near bank.

Having reached the far bank, she left the new-born son there. Hesitantly, she waded back to the near bank for the older boy. But when she was midstream, a hawk saw the new-born son. Because of his reddish flesh, the hawk thought him to be a piece of meat and swooped down on him.

The terrified mother hysterically screamed, "Shoo! Shoo!" Hearing her shouting, the first son thought that she was calling for him. He stepped into the river and at once drowned in the swift currents. The hawk had taken away her second son. Within a short moment, she lost both her children. She cried out in great grief.

¹ ThīA 108 ff.; AA 1:356 ff.; DhA 2:260 ff., 3:434 f.; DA 3746; MA 1:232; UA 127; J 6:481.

² This is her nickname; we do not know her real name: (3).

³ DA 3:746; MA 1:232; UA 127.

Then she met a man from Sāvattḥī and when she asked him about her family, the man replied that their house had collapsed in the terrible storm in the night. Both her parents and her brother, too, were killed and their bodies were being cremated right at that moment, pointing to the smoke rising in the sky over the trees.

At that very moment, Paṭācārā could not bear it any longer and went mad. Her clothes fell from her body, but she did not even know it. As she went about naked and lamenting her losses, some scolded her, some threw rubbish at her, some threw dust on her head, some pelted her with clods of earth.

3 Paṭācārā healed

Now at that time, the Buddha was teaching in the Jeta,vana. When he saw her, he knew that she had done good deeds in the past which were just then ready to ripen. The Buddha simply pronounced: “Sister, regain your mindfulness!” Instantly, through the Buddha’s supernatural power, she was healed. Then someone threw her his cloak and she put it on.⁴

She then told her tragic story and the Buddha listened patiently. When her grief had subsided, the Buddha declared:

The four oceans contain but little water
Compared to all the tears that we have shed,
Smitten by sorrow, bewildered by pain.
Why, O woman, are you still heedless? (DhA 2:268; cf Assu Sutta, S 2:180)

The Buddha then gave her this admonition as recorded in the Dhammapada:

- 288** There are no sons for one’s protection,
Nor father nor relatives, too.
For one who is overcome by death,
No protection is to be found amongst relatives.
- 289** Realizing this reality,
Let the wise and the virtuous
Swiftly clear the way
That leads to Nirvana. (Dh 288 f)

At the end of the teaching, Paṭācārā became a streamwinner and requested to be admitted into the order. After her ordination, by reason of her happy mind (P *paṭit’ācār’attā*), she was called Paṭācārā. (DhA 2:269)

4 Paṭācārā’s awakening

4.1 One day, while she was washing her feet, she noticed how the water she had poured over her feet ran a little way and disappeared into the ground. The second time it went a little farther, and a third time farther still. Taking this as her subject of meditation, she reflected:

Even as the water I spilled the first time ran a little way and disappeared, so also living beings in the world are dying in youth. Even as I spilled the water the second time ran a little way farther, so also living beings in the world are dying in the prime of life. Even as the water I spilled the third time ran a little farther yet, so also living beings here in the world are dying of old age. (DhA 2:269)

⁴ Hence her name (ThīA 110). Here, *paṭā,cārā* means “cloak-walker,” ie one who wanders about in a cloak.

4.2 In her Therī,gāthā, there is a verse which describes another intense spiritual experience of hers. She describes how, before turning in, when extinguishing her lamp, she realizes that the point of the light going out is like the moment of awakening:⁵

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 115 | Then taking a lamp,
Having looked for the bed, | I entered the dwelling,
I sat on the couch. |
| 116 | Then, taking a needle,
just like the lamp’s quenching is nirvana, | I dunked [pulled down] the wick:
the liberation of my mind. (Thī 115 f) |

4.3 The Buddha who was seated in his Fragrant Cell, sent forth a radiant image (hologram) of himself, and standing before Paṭācārā said:

Paṭācārā, it is better to live but a single day, indeed, a single moment, and see the rise and fall of the five aggregates, than to live a hundred years and not see.

4.4 And, connecting his teachings together, the Buddha pronounced this stanza:

One may live for a hundred years,
Not seeing the rise and fall of things.
Better, indeed, is one day’s life
Of one who sees this rise and fall. (Dh 113)

At the conclusion of this teaching, Paṭācārā became an arhat together with the four analytical skills (*paṭi-sambhidā*).⁶

4.5 Paṭācārā later became a great teacher, and many women, stricken with grief, sought her guidance and her consolation (ThīA 47, 177, 122). The Buddha declared her as the foremost amongst the nuns who are Vinaya-experts (A 1:25). From being a frivolous young girl who lost everything she had loved, Paṭācārā became an arhat and *the* expert in the Discipline amongst the nuns.

SD 43.3a

Paṭācārā Therī,gāthā

Thī 112-116

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 112 | <i>Naṅgalehi kasam⁷ khettaṃ
bījāni pavapaṃ⁸ chamā⁹
putta,dārāni posentā
dhanam vindanti māṇavā.¹¹</i> | Tilling the field with ploughs,
sowing seeds in the soil,
raising wives and children, ¹⁰
brahmin youths look for ¹² wealth. |
|-----|---|--|

⁵ Dh 288 f; 113; Thī 112-116, 218 f; AA 552-560; DhA 8.12/2:260-270; ThīA 108-112. See DhA:B Introd §27, Synoptical Table & p50. The Commentarial accounts are confusing. The **Dhammapada Comy** says that she becomes an arhat after mindfully watching the water flowing into the ground. The **Therīgāthā Comy**, however, adds that she enters her cell and on putting out the oil-lamp, she wins arhathood. It is impossible for a person to gain awakening twice. However, from the canonical verses (Thī 112-116), it is clear that she only mindfully watches the flowing water, and becomes an arhat at the putting out of the lamp.

⁶ Simply, these 4 are the analytic skill in effects (*attha,paṭisambhidā*), in causes (*dhamma,paṭisambhidā*), in language (*nirutti,paṭisambhidā*) and in ready wit (*paṭibhāna,paṭisambhidā*): see SD 28.4 (4).

⁷ See Tha:N 86 n112.

⁸ See Tha:N 86 n112.

⁹ See Tha:N 60 n17.

¹⁰ Lit “raising sons and women,” where “women” (*darā*) refers to the wife (or wives) and daughters.

¹¹ Be Se so; Ce Ee māṇavā.

- 113** *Kim ahaṃ sīla,sampannā
satthu sāsana,kārikā
nibbānaṃ nādhigacchāmi
akusītā anuddhatā.* Why do I, accomplished in virtuous conduct,
keeping to the Teacher’s teaching,
not attain nirvana?
Neither lazy nor puffed up am I.
- 114** *Pāde pakkhālayitvāna
udakesu¹³ karomāhaṃ
pādōdakaṃ ca disvāna
thalato ninnam āgataṃ
¹⁴tato cittaṃ samādhesiṃ¹⁵
asso bhadro v’ajāniyo.¹⁶* Having washed my feet,
I paid attention to the waters,
and seeing the foot-water
going from higher to lower ground,
the mind was then concentrated
like a noble thoroughbred horse.
- 115** *Tato dīpaṃ gahetvāna
vihāraṃ pāvisiṃ ahaṃ
¹⁷seyyaṃ olokayitvāna
mañcakamhi upāvisiṃ.* Then, taking a lamp,
I entered the dwelling.
Having looked at the bed,
I sat upon the couch.
- 116**¹⁸ *Tato sūciṃ gahetvāna
vaṭṭiṃ okassayāma ’haṃ
padīpassēva¹⁹ nibbānaṃ
vimokkho ahu²⁰ cetaso* Then, taking a pin,
I dunked [pushed down] the wick:
just like the lamp’s quenching is nirvana,
the liberation of my mind.

— evaṃ —

5 The 30 nuns

5.1 The Paṭācārā Therī,gāthā (Thī 112-116) are followed immediately by **the Tiṃsa,matta Therī,-gāthā** (Thī 117-121), the verses of the 30 elder nuns. There is no reason to doubt the commentarial account that these nuns were converted by Paṭācārā’s teachings. Verse **117** closely resembles Paṭācārā’s own verse **112**, and the elder nun is mentioned by name in verse **119**.

5.2 Dhammapāla, in his commentary on Thī 112-116, says that these 30 women have lived in the times of various past Buddhas, conducting themselves in good karma. In due course, their good karma brought them rebirth in various good families in the time of our own Buddha. When they came of age, they heard the Dharma before the nun Paṭācārā. Gaining faith, they went forth. They were virtuous in conduct and diligent in their practice. One day, Paṭācārā admonished them in two verses: **Thī 117 f.** (ThīA 118)

¹² “Look for,” *vindanti* (3 pl pres) from *vindati*, from √VID: (1) to know, (2) to find. Hence, while the tr reflects a bias for sense (2), we should understand it as having a broader sense of “enjoying wealth.”

¹³ Be Ce Se Comy so; Ee *udake su*.

¹⁴ Be verse 115: 6 lines; Ce Se: 4 lines.

¹⁵ Yu. samādhemi.

¹⁶ *Je bhadro (e)va ajāniyo*. Be Ee *assaṃ bhaddam v’ajāniyam*; Ce *assaṃ bhaddam v’ajāniyam*; Se *asso bhadro-va’jāniyo*. Ee: Verse 114 up to here. In full, the line reads *asso bhadro iva ajāniyo*: vowel shortenings are metri causa (mc).

¹⁷ Ce Se verse 116 (6 lines).

¹⁸ Be Ee verse 116.

¹⁹ Be Ee Ce *padīpassēva*; Se *pajjotass’eva*. Here *padīpassēva* = *padīpa* + *iva*: on *-a* + *iva* > *-eva*, see Tha:N 149 n118; cf *haṭṭhakass’eva* (Dh 164), *amitten’eva* (S 1:57; Dh 307), *jambonadass’eva* (Dh 230), *nigrodhass’eva* (S 1:-207). For the lamp parable, see D 2:157, S 1:159, A 1:236, 4:3, Tha 906, Sn 235.

²⁰ *Ahū* shortened mc to *ahu*: see also Thī 94a, 116d, 204b, 224c, 270a; see Tha:N lxxxvii §71 & p70 n43.

(Thī 117) Dhammapāla says that the women earned a living by pounding the grain of others. Doing such lowly and menial work, they accumulated wealth. However, such work was lowly, worldly, difficult and not connected with the spiritual goal.

(Thī 118) Now that the Buddha’s teaching is present, let us practise it in all its meaning and purity, so that we have no reason to miss this rare opportunity for spiritual growth. Let us prepare ourselves for the practice without delay. Once we are ready, we should cultivate one of the 38 types of meditations,²¹ so that we better understand the Dharma, which in turn refines and boosts our own practice.

5.3 (Thī 119) Heeding Paṭācārā’s instructions, the 30 nuns at once devoted themselves to mental cultivation. Attaining mental calm (*ceto,samatha*)—here an allusion to dhyana—they then directed their calm and clear mind to effectively review the Buddha’s teaching.

(Thī 120) As a result of their practice, they attained successively the three knowledges (*te,vijjā*),²² that is, the knowledge of the recollection of their own past lives (that is, rebirth) during the first watch of that same night; the knowledge of the arising and passing of beings according to their karma, during the second watch; and the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes, in the last watch.²³

(Thī 121) Soon after their attaining arhathood, the 30 nuns went before the Paṭācārā, saluted her by giving a deep bow (the five-pointed prostration), and roared their lion-roar, declaring their awakening and their gratitude to her. With their attainment, they have fulfilled their spiritual task and stand as witnesses to the efficacy of the Buddha Dharma.

SD 43.3b

The Verses of the 30 Elder Nuns

Thī 117-121

Paṭācārā

117 *Musalāni gahetvāna
dhaññaṃ koṭṭenti māṇavā²⁴
Putta,dārāni posentā
dhanam vindanti māṇavā²⁶*

Having taken pestles,
the young brahmins pound grain,²⁵
supporting children and women,
the young brahmins look for wealth.

118 *Karotha buddha,sāsanam
yam katvā nānutappati
Khippam pādāni dhovivā
ekam ante nisīdatha.
Ceto,samatham anuyuttā
karotha buddha,sāsanam.*

Practise the Buddha’s teaching,
having done which, one regrets not.
Quickly wash the feet,
sit down at one side!
Devoting the mind to mental calm,
practise the Buddha’s teaching.

²¹ Comy mentions “38 objects” (*aṭṭha,timsa ārammaṇa*). These are the 40 meditation subjects (*kamma-t,thāna*), minus the perceptions of light (*āloka,saññā*) and of space (*ākāsa,saññā*) (DhsA:PR 210 n2), as enumerated in **Abhi-dhamm’attha,saṅgaha** (Vism 3.104-133/110-112; Abhs:SR 202-204; Abhs:BRS 329-339; DhA:CP 485 n22); **also Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (Fig 8.1).

²² On the 3 knowledges (*te,vijjā*), see **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,17-19), SD 49.1 = SD 2.24. On *te,vijja* as adj, see **Te,vijja S** (D 13) & SD 1.8 (2.2).

²³ The 3 watches (*yāma*) of the 3 night are: first watch (6-10 pm), middle watch (10 pm-2 am), and last watch (2-6 am). The day is divided into 2 periods: the forenoon and the afternoon. On the 5 periods of the day, see SD 32.13 (1).

²⁴ Be Ke Se māṇavā; Ce Ee māṇavā.

²⁵ This is also the livelihood of the women (5.3).

²⁶ Be māṇavā; Ce māṇavā.

(The council fathers)²⁷

- 119** *Tassā tā*²⁸ *vacanaṃ sutvā*
paṭācārāya sāsanaṃ
Pāde pakkhālayitvāna
ekam antaṃ upāvisuṃ
Ceto,samatham amuyuttā
akariṃsu Buddha,sāsanaṃ.
- They, having heard her word,
Paṭācārā's teachings,
having washed their feet,
sat down at one side.
Devoted to mental calm,
they practised the Buddha's teaching.
- 120** *Rattiyā purime yāme*
*pubba,jātim*²⁹ *anussaruṃ*
Rattiyā majjhime yāme
dibba,cakkhuṃ visodhayuṃ
Rattiyā pacchime yāme
tamo,khandhaṃ padālayuṃ
- In the night's first watch,
they recalled past lives.
In the night's middle watch,
they purified the divine eye.
In the night's last watch,
they pierced through the mass of darkness.
- 121** *Uṭṭhāya pāde vandimsu*
katā te anusāsanī
indaṃ 'va devā tidasā
saṅgāme aparājitaṃ
*Purakkhatvā vihasāma*³⁰
te,vijjā 'mha anāsavā 'ti
- Standing, they saluted her feet,
“Your instruction has been done:
just as the 30 devas honour Indra,
undefeated in battle,
we will dwell honouring you,
we of the three knowledges, influx-free.”

— evaṃ —

6 The nun Candā

6.1 The introductory story in the Commentary (ThīA 120 f) says that in our Buddha's time, Candā was reborn into the family of an unknown brahmin in a brahmin village. From the time of her birth, the family's fortune diminished. She grew up in miserable conditions.

6.2 When she came of age, cholera broke out in her home. All her relatives died from the disease, and she was left without a refuge. She wandered from family to family with an almsbowl in hand, keeping herself alive with whatever almsfood she was able to obtain.

6.3 One day, she came to the refectory or food distribution place (*bhatta,vissagga-ṭ,thāna*) of the nun Paṭācārā. Noticing how afflicted she was and overwhelmed by hunger, the nuns, feeling compassionate and well-disposed towards her, served her with the remaining food.

6.4 Candā was impressed with the nuns' moral virtue and conduct. Going before the nun Paṭācārā, she saluted her and sat down at one side. Then Paṭācārā expounded the Dharma to her. Hearing the Dharma, faith arose in her, and she was moved with samvega (spiritual urgency)³¹ concerning the cycle of life.

6.5 She decided to go forth and practised diligently the elder nun's instruction. Establishing herself in insight, she devoted herself to mental cultivation, so that she ripened in spiritual maturity. In no long time,

²⁷ They are the narrators as well as compilers of the verses (5.2).

²⁸ Be *tā*; Ce *taṃ*.

²⁹ Clearly here *pubba,jāti* = *pubbe,nivāsa*, just as in BHS *pūrve,jāti* and *pūrve,nivāsa* respectively (BHSD): see Thī 63, 100, 120, 172, 179. See Tha:N 76 n63.

³⁰ Be *vihasāma*; Ce Comy *vihariyāma*; Ke Se *viharissāmi*. According to Norman, Ke Se must be a gloss which has come into the text, since it is unmetrical. The Ce Comy reading must be a mistake. The line recurs in Thī 181, where Ee Comy read *vihasāmi*. The same in true of 360, where Ke and Se read *viharissāmi*. See Thī:N 87 n121.

³¹ On *samvega*, see SD 1.11 (3) & SD 9 (7f).

she attained arhathood along with the analytic knowledges.³² Reviewing her awakening, she then uttered these verses (Thī 122-126).

SD 43.3c

The Verses of the Elder Nun Candā

Thī 122-126

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>122 <i>Duggatāham</i>³³ <i>pure āsim</i>
<i>vidhavā ca aputtikā</i>
<i>Vinā mittehi nātīhi</i>
<i>bhatta,coḷassa nādhigam</i>³⁴</p> | <p>Ill did I fare before,
a widow, without children,
with neither friends nor relations,
obtaining neither food nor clothing.</p> |
| <p>123 <i>Pattam daṇḍam ca gaṇhitvā</i>
<i>bhikkhamānā kulā kulam</i>
<i>Sīt' uñhena ca ḍayhantī</i>
<i>satta vassāni cāri'ham</i></p> | <p>And taking a bowl and stick,³⁵
begging from family to family,
burnt by the cold and heat,
wandered I for seven years.</p> |
| <p>124 <i>Bhikkhunim puna</i>³⁶ <i>disvāna</i>
<i>anna,pānassa lābhiniṃ</i>
<i>Upasaṅkamma avocam</i>³⁹
<i>pabbājeh' anagāriyam</i>⁴⁰</p> | <p>But³⁷ having seen a nun³⁸
who had received food and drink,
I approached her and said,
“Let me go forth into homelessness!”</p> |
| <p>125 <i>Sā ca maṃ anukampāya</i>
<i>pabbājesi paṭācārā</i>
<i>Tato maṃ ovaditvāna</i>
<i>param'atthe niyojayi</i></p> | <p>And, out of pity, she,
Paṭācārā, let me go forth.
Then, having advised me,
she urged⁴¹ me on to the highest goal.⁴²</p> |
| <p>126 <i>Tassāham vacanam sutvā</i>
<i>akāsim anusāsanim</i>
<i>Amogho ayyāy'ovādo</i>⁴³</p> | <p>Having heard her word, I
followed her instruction.
The noble lady's advice was not in vain:</p> |

³² On the analytic knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*), see (4.4) n.

³³ Comy glosses this as meaning “poverty” (*duggatā'ti daliddā*, ThīA 121); cf VvA 101 ad Vv 17: *daliddā'ti duggatā*.

³⁴ For a philological n, see Thī:N 87 n122.

³⁵ Comy says that this is a clay bowl (*mattikā,bhājana*), and that the stick is for protection against cows, dogs, etc (*goṇa,sunakh'ādi,pariharaṇa,daṇḍakam*) (ThīA 121)

³⁶ Be Ce Ee Se so. Comy has *pana* in the text, but *puna* in the lemma. In this case, it is likely that *puna* has the sense of “but”: see PED sv & Dh:G pp109 f.

³⁷ Comy explains that this means “later, on another occasion, after seven years” (*punāti pacchā, satta,samvaccharato apara,bhāge*, ThīA 122).

³⁸ Viz Paṭācārā (ThīA 122).

³⁹ Ke *avocim*.

⁴⁰ Be Ce *pabbajjam*; Ee Se *pabbajim* (wr); Comy *pabbaja*. *Pabbajim* (past tense) must be wrong, prob arising from contexts such as **137b**. It is clear from *pabbajesi* in **125b** that Candā must have said, “Cause me to go forth,” ie the imperative of the causative of *pabbajati*; hence, the reading has been amended to *pabbājehi*.

⁴¹ Comy: She (Paṭācārā) urged me on by explaining a meditation subject” (*niyojayīti kammaṭṭhānam ācikkhīnī niyojesi*, ThīA 122).

⁴² Comy explains that “the highest goal” means “the supreme goal, the practice of the path leading to nirvana (quenching), as well as nirvana itself (the quenching itself)” (*param'atthēti parame uttame atthe, nibbāna,gāminiyā paṭipadāya nibbāne ca*, ThīA 122).

⁴³ Be Ee Se *ayyāy'*; Ce 'yyāya.

tevijjā'mhi anāsavā'ti.

one of the knowledges am I, influx-free.

— evaṃ —

7 Pañca,satā Paṭācārā

7.1 MEANING OF PAÑCA,SATĀ

7.1.1 The title of **the Pañca,sata Paṭācārā Therī,gāthā** (Thī 127-132) is puzzling: what does the prefix *pañca,satā* mean? At first blush, we are likely to read it as meaning “five hundred,” but 500 of what? Dhamma,pāla, in his Commentary, takes it as referring to the “500 elder-nun followers” of Paṭācārā, also known by the same name. At the start of his commentary on Thī 127-132. Dhammapāla says that these are “the verses of some 500 nuns who were mothers” (*pañca,sata,mattānam therīnam gāthā*, ThīA 122), and at the end notes that

Pañca,satā paṭācārā means the 500 nuns who received the name Paṭācārā, as it is said, “They know what was said by Paṭācārā because of the fact they received instruction in her presence.”⁴⁴

In other words, *pañca,sata paṭācārā* simply means “the 500 followers of Paṭācārā” (ThīA 124).

7.1.2 Could the prefix “500” simply be a hyperbole for a “large following” of say, a few hundred? Perhaps we can at best say here that there is no reason to doubt the possibility of Paṭācārā having such a gathering. After all, we do have cases of wanderers, monks and laymen with followings of “500,” such as Uruvelā Kassapa,⁴⁵ Sāriputta and Moggallāna,⁴⁶ Anātha,piṇḍika,⁴⁷ Sāmā,vatī⁴⁸ and, of course, the Buddha himself is often said to be accompanied by a company of 500 monks.⁴⁹

The introductory story then gives a brief account of how the nuns each loses a child, goes to Paṭācārā, and is comforted and converted by her. Their spiritual upliftment, says Dhammapāla, is due to their having done wholesome karma in the times of previous Buddhas. The first 4 verses (Thī 127-130) are spoken by Paṭācārā herself by way of admonishing these bereaved women. The women themselves, after becoming nuns and awakening, utter the same Therī,gāthā of two lines (Thī 131-132) as their verses of uplift (*udāna*). (ThīA 122)

7.2 SCHOLARLY ANALYSES

7.2.1 **K E Neumann**, in his 1899 translation of the Therī,gāthā, renders *pañca,sata* not as a numeral, but as an adjective, *die fünfmal Feine*, “the fivefold subtlety” (1899:302 n1). He takes *sata* here as meaning “one who has *sati* (mindfulness or memory, Skt *smṛti*).” Although C A F Rhys Davids rejects this translation (Tha:RD 77 n1), it is likely that Neumann is actually right, as noted by K R Norman (Thī:N 88 n127-32).

Dhammapāla already pointed out (ThīA 121) that although the 30 nuns who are Paṭācārā’s followers (Thī 117-121) are included in the total number of elder nuns in the verses’ colophon (*uddāna*), the 500 are not. And secondly, as noted by Norman, since the Paṭācārā’s verses to the 30 nuns have *plural* verbs, they too would have been expected of the verses of the 500, but they are all in the *singular*. Thirdly, we should not have expected Paṭācārā to mean “follower of Paṭācārā,” or alternatively, if it did mean this we should have expected it to be applied to the 30 also.

7.2.2 Norman concludes, “I have, therefore, no hesitation in assuming that these verses were uttered by one therī only, whose name was Paṭācārā, to whom the epithet *pañca-satā* (whatever its meaning) was given to distinguish her from the other Paṭācārā (112-16). The lack of details in Dhammapāla’s introduc-

⁴⁴ *Pañca,satā paṭācārā'ti paṭācārāya theriyā santike laddha,ovādatāya paṭācārāya vuttam avedisun'ti katvā paṭācārā'ti laddha,nāmā pañca,satā bhikkhuniyo* (ThīA 125).

⁴⁵ On Uruvelā Kassapa, see Uruvelā Paṭihāriya (Mv 1.15-21 = V 1:24-35), SD 63.2; also SD 16.1 (6.2).

⁴⁶ On Sāriputta and Moggallāna, see DhA 1:195. The 500 disciples were actually followers of Sañjaya, 250 of whom returned to him, while the other 250 followed the 2 chief disciples to become the Buddha’s followers.

⁴⁷ On Anātha,piṇḍika, see Pīti S (A 5.176), SD 19.8.

⁴⁸ Sāmā,vatī had 500 women-in-waiting (DhA 1:209 f): see SD 8.6 (8.2).

⁴⁹ On the Buddha’s retinue, see eg Te,vijja S (D 13,1), SD 1.8.

tory story seems to me to indicate that it has no real value, but was made up to suit the (supposed) 500 authors. I would suggest that the real story was given in Kisā,gotamī (213-16), while the latter’s story has been incorrectly attached to the other Paṭācārā (112-16).” (Thī:N 88 n127-32)⁵⁰

Furthermore, Norman suggests that *pañca,satā* has the meaning of “mindful about the five,” and would assume that the “five” here refers either to the 5 aggregates (*pañca-knkhanda*)⁵¹ or the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*).⁵² While the 5 aggregates define a human being, the 5 hindrances prevent our attaining the transhuman state, the bliss of dhyana. The arhat fully understands how we are composed of the aggregates, and to overcome the hindrances to attain dhyana at will.

SD 43.3d

The Verses of the Elder Nun Pañca,satā Paṭācārā

Thī 127-132

Paṭācārā

127 ⁵³*Yassa maggam na jānasi
āgatassa gatassa vā
taṃ kuto āgatam⁵⁵ puttam⁵⁶
mama puttōti rodasi*

Who knows not his way,
his coming or his going:⁵⁴
For that son who has come from who knows where
you weep, “My son!”⁵⁷

128 *maggam ca⁵⁸ kho’ssa jānāsi⁵⁹
āgatassa gatassa vā
na naṃ samanusoceṣi
evaṃ,dhammā hi pāṇino*

But you know not his way,
his coming or his going,
grieve not for him—
for, such is the way of the living.⁶⁰
Uninvited, he came from there,

129⁶¹ *ayācito tatōgacchi⁶²*

⁵⁰ Further see Thī:N 99 n213-23.

⁵¹ See SD 17, esp **Dve Khandha S** (S 22.48), SD 17.1a.

⁵² See **Nīvaraṇā**, SD 32.1.

⁵³ Comy says that vv127-130 are spoken by the elder nun (*therī*) to whom the 500 women. mothers who have lost their children went (ThīA 122).

⁵⁴ Comy says that this refers to “rebirth in the immediate past or future” (*anantarā atītānāgata,bhavūpapattiyo*, ThīA 123).

⁵⁵ Ce *c’āgatam*.

⁵⁶ Ee Se so; Be Ce Comy *sattam*. Comy here has *sattam* in the gloss (we can surmise that this was in Dhammapāla’s text).

⁵⁷ Comy says that it does not help to lament for a lost son (or any loved ones we have lost); as such, there is no reason for weeping (ThīA 124). Cf **Tiro,kuḍḍa S**: “Neither tears nor sorrow | nor any mourning whatever— | they help not the departed— | the (departed) relatives remain the same” (Khp 7,11 = Pv 1.5,11 = SD 2.7). The Sutta explains how we can actually help the departed who are reborn as pretas. Note that here *peta* simply refers to “the departed” without any other later connotation: see **130c**.

⁵⁸ Cf Thī 128, 144, 183, 416, 445 f, 487, 513. On the possibility of tr *ca* as disjunctive “but” (*pana* or *tu*), which is common in Tha & Thī, see ThīA:N 75 n55 & ThaA 131 n41.

⁵⁹ Comy (ThīA 123) seems to take this verse as implying a condition “if you knew, you would not grieve.” Norman disagrees, explaining that if we take the 3rd person pronoun (Geiger, *Pali Grammar* §108.1), we can translate “You know this one’s way; you do not grieve.” Alternately, he adds, if we assume that *assa* is an Eastern form for *yassa*, then we can translate “You do not grieve for him who say you know.” (ThīA:N 69). For rel prons without *y-* in the Asokan inscriptions, see Norman, “Notes on the Aśokan Rock Edicts,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 10 1967:165-167.

⁶⁰ Comy: Here and now, this (suffering) is due to the beings’ deprivation of the beloved and the pleasant, because of their lack of mastery there; how much more so in the hereafter (*diṭṭha,dhamme’pi hi sattānaṃ sabbehi piyehi manāpehi nānā,bhāvā vinābhāvā tattha vasa,vattitāya abhāvato, pag’eva abhisamparāyam*. ThīA 123).

*ananuññāto ito gato
kuto pi nūna āgantvā
vasitvā katipāhakam*

unpermitted, he goes from here⁶³—
having come from who knows where,
living (here) for but a few days.

130 *ito pi aññenāgato*⁶⁴
*tato aññena gacchati*⁶⁵
⁶⁶*peto manussa,rūpena*
samsaranto gamissati
yathāgato tathā gato
kā tatha paridevanā

From here, he has gone by one path;
from there, he goes on by another.
Through a human form one has passed on,
one will go journeying on in samsara.⁶⁷
As he came, so he went:
what is there to weep about?

Each of the 500 followers of Paṭācārā⁶⁸

131⁶⁹ *abbuhi*⁷⁰ *vata me sallam*
duddasam hadaya,nissitam
yā me soka,paretāya
putta,sokam vyapānudi

Truly indeed is my dart removed,
hard to see, resting in the heart:
from me, overcome by grief,
she has driven away grief for son.

132 *sājja abbūlha-s,sallāham*
*nicchātā*⁷¹ *parinibbutā*⁷²
*buddham dhammañ ca saṅghañ ca*⁷³
*upemi saraṇam munim*⁷⁴

This very day, I have the dart removed,
hunger-free, quenched—
to the Buddha, and the Dharma and the Sangha,
to the sage, I turn for refuge.

— evam —

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⁶¹ The Be+Ce verse has only the first 4 lines (= 2 double lines), with v131 starting with *peto manussa,rūpena*.

⁶² So Ee Se; Be Ce *tat'āgacchi* & Comy has *āgacchi* in the gloss, and quotes *āgato* as vl.

⁶³ We are born and die according to our karma, whose workings it is almost impossible to know.

⁶⁴ Be Ce Comy *aññena gato* which makes better sense than Ee *aññenāgato*, “he went from hereby another (road).”

⁶⁵ Here *gacchati* should be taken as a future: “he will go for from his next existence by another (road)” (*tato aññe-na gacchati tato pi bhavato aññena gamissati aññam eva upagamissati*, ThīA 124). On *gacchati* as fut, see Tha:N 123 n14; cf Thī 306, 426.

⁶⁶ Be+Ce v130 starts here (4 lines = 2 double lines).

⁶⁷ The sentiment here is that of a cyclic, repetitive process of continuous births, rebirths, meeting and parting, as sort of Sisyphean experience. On the theme of *repetition*, see *Anusaya*, SD 31.9. On *Sisyphus*, see *Yodh'ajiva S* (S 42.3), SD 23.3 Intro.

⁶⁸ *Pañca,satā paṭācārā*, lit “the 500 Paṭācāras,” ie followers of Paṭācārā, the rubric (hading) in Thī.

⁶⁹ Comy says that **vv131-132** (the two closing verses) are spoken by the 500 elder nuns (ThīA 124).

⁷⁰ Be Ce *abbahī*; Ee *abbuhi*; Se *abbuyhi*. Cf Thī 44, 131/

⁷¹ **Thī 132ab** = 53ab = 168ab. Only Comy on **Thī 168** glosses *nicchātā*, ie as “without craving” (*nicchātāti nittanḥā*, ThīA 159). The term appears 9 times in **Anupubba,vihāra Samāpatti S 2** (A 9.33/4:410-414 = SD 95.2) where its Comy glosses it as “hunger-free by being the absence of the hunger that is craving and views” ((*nicchātāti tanhā,dīṭṭhi-c,chātānam abhāvena nicchātā*, AA 4:193).

⁷² In the suttas, *parinibbutā* and its various forms (*parinibbuti*, *parinibbāna*, etc) have no technical sense, but simply refer to a full awakening of an arhat. In later works, such as in **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,6.8b), *parinibbāna*, for example began to assume the sense of “final passing away.” See Tha:N 119 n5 & 291 n1218; also SD 9 (15): Aspects of (*pari*)*nibbāna*.

⁷³ This line and the next, cf Thī 249 f & Thī:N 109 n249-50.

⁷⁴ Here *munim* is clearly only an adj qualifying *buddham*, even though they are located apart. For *buddha,muni*, Thī 231 & Thī:N 104 n231; see also n on *buddham tādisam* at Thī:N 109 n249-50.

Thī 5.10+11+12
Thī 6.1

Therī,gāthā 5, Pañcaka Nipāta 10+11+12,
Therī,gāthā 6, Chakka Nipāta 1

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