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Asappurisa Sutta 2

Dutiya Asappurisa Sutta, The Second Discourse on the False Individual | S 45.26

Theme: False persons, true individuals, and spiritual progress

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Sutta highlights

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY. The Asappurisa Sutta 2 (S 45.26) is a short straightforward teaching on two pairs of people: the false person and one more false than a false person, and the true individual and the one more true than a true individual.

- (1) A false person (*asappurisa*) is one who does not follow the noble eightfold path, [1.3.1.1]
- (2) One more false than a false person (*asappurisenā asappurisa, tara*) not only does *not* follow the eightfold path: he only has the wrong knowledge and the wrong liberation; [1.3.1.2+1.3.1.3]
- (3) A true individual (*sappurisa*) is one who follows the noble eightfold path, [1.2.0(1)]
- (4) One more true than a true individual (*sappurisenā sappurisa, tara*) not only follows the eightfold path, but also has right knowledge and right liberation. [1.2.0(2)]

1.2 Analyses of *sappurisa*

1.2.0 Two kinds. The Asappurisa Sutta 2 mentions two kinds of true individuals (*sappurisa*), that is,

- (1) A true individual (*sappurisa*) is one who follows the noble eightfold path [1.2.1].
- (2) One more true than a true individual (*sappurisenā sappurisa, tara*) not only follows the eightfold path, but also has right knowledge and right liberation. [1.2.3 + 1.2.4]

1.2.1 *Sappurisa*

1.2.1.1 A more detailed analysis of the term *sappurisa* (Skt *sat, puruṣa*) has been done elsewhere.¹ The term literally means “worthy or true man,” and broadly refers to any true practitioner (S 45.26)—a follower of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma²—whether a monastic (M 113)³ or a lay person (A 8.37-38).⁴

Here, a **true individual** is one who follows the noble eightfold path [§6], that is, one who is diligent in keeping to right view and avoiding wrong view. The primary position of “right view” (*sammā diṭṭhi*) as the very first limb of the noble eightfold path emphasizes its role in making all the other limbs “right” (*sammā*),⁵ that is, about the proper understanding of, broadly, the 3 characteristics (of impermanence, suffering and non-self),⁶ and, more specifically, of the 4 noble truths (suffering, its arising, its ending, and the way to its ending).⁷

1.2.1.2 In practice, the true individual is one who practises the 3 trainings (*ti, sikkhā*), that is, in moral virtue (restraint and cultivation of body and speech), in mental cultivation (mindfulness and meditation), and in wisdom (understanding impermanence, suffering and non-self).⁸ In this teaching, the eightfold path is divided into three practical sections, and begins with the moral virtue group (*sīla-k, khandha*), followed by the mental cultivation group (*samādhi-k, khandha*), and ending with the wisdom group (*paññā-k, khandha*), as shown in this table:

¹ SD 23.7 (3).

² *Dhammānudhamma, paṭipatti*: see (Sotāpatti) Phala S (S 55.55,2 (4)) + SD 3.3(4.1.1) (4).

³ Ie an arhat, see SD 23.7 (3.1.9.1).

⁴ See SD 23.7 (3.1.3).

⁵ On why right view comes first in the eightfold path, see **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117), SD 6.10.

⁶ On the 3 characteristics, see *Atam, mayatā*, SD 19.13 (1).

⁷ On the 4 noble truths, see **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1; SD 44.1 (3.5.2)..

⁸ On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

<u>Factor</u>	<u>(aṅga)</u>	<u>Training (sikkhā)</u>	<u>(khandha)</u>
(7) Right view	<i>sammā diṭṭhi</i>	} <u>III. Wisdom aggregate</u> (liberation-based mind)	<i>paññā khandha</i> (straightened views)
(8) Right intention	<i>sammā saṅkappa</i>		
(1) Right action	<i>sammā kammanta</i>	} <u>I. Moral virtue aggregate</u> (the body and speech)	<i>sīla khandha</i> (wholesome conduct)
(2) Right speech	<i>sammā vācā</i>		
(3) Right livelihood	<i>sammā ājīva</i>		
(4) Right effort	<i>sammā vāyāma</i>	} <u>II. Concentration aggregate</u> (the mind)	<i>samādhi khandha</i> (mental stillness)
(5) Right mindfulness	<i>sammā sati</i>		
(6) Right concentration	<i>sammā samādhi</i>		

Table 1.2.1.2 The noble eightfold path and the 3 trainings [also at SD 21.6, Table 3.2.1]⁹

1.2.2 Related terms

1.2.2.1 In the early suttas, “**noble saint**” (*ariya*) and “true individual” (*sappurisa*) are synonyms, as in the well known stock,

an untutored worldling [ignorant ordinary person], who has no regard for the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in the teaching [Dharma] of the noble ones, who has no regard for the true individuals and is unskilled and undisciplined in the teaching of the true individuals.¹⁰

While acknowledging that, in terms of the destruction of defilements, both terms are synonymous (MA 1:14), the same Commentary to the Sabb’āsava Sutta (M 2)¹¹ distinguishes between *ariya* and *sappurisa*. Here, *ariya* refers only to the Buddha himself, quoting **the (Sacca) Loka Sutta** (S 56.28), “in the world, along with its gods, the Tathagata is called ‘noble’” (*sadevake bhikkhave loke...tathāgato ariyo’ti vuccatīti*).¹² In this case, *sappurisa* refers to pratyeka buddhas and the Buddha’s saint disciples (*pacceka, buddhā tathāgata, sāvaka*) (MA 1:21).

1.2.2.2 The *sappurisa*, especially the Buddha’s **saint disciples** (*sāvaka*), are spiritually connected as such with the Buddha through their gratitude to him, as stated in this oft-quoted Jātaka verse:

*Yo ve kataññū kata, vedi dhīro
kalyāṇa, mitto daḥha, bhatti ca hoti
dukkhitassa sakkacca karoti kiccaṃ
tathā, vidhaṃ sappurisaṃ vadantī’ti*

The steadfast one who remembers what is done¹³
is a spiritual friend indeed, a firm devotee, too,
who carefully does his duties to the afflicted¹⁴—
such a one is called a true individual.

(J v70 :: J 5:146)¹⁵

Here, the emphasis is not so much in the sense of returning a favour in a material manner or as a social obligation, but being devoted to living the Dharma “in accordance to the Dharma,” that is, as we have received it directly from the Buddha, as the Buddha declares in **the Mahā, parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16):

⁹ See D 2:312; M 1:61, 3:251; Vbh 235.

¹⁰ *Assutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisadhammassa akovido sappurisadhamme avinīto*, M 2,5 @ SD 30.3.

¹¹ **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,9) n, SD 30.3.

¹² S 56.28/5:435 @ SD 104.5.

¹³ Alt tr: “...who returns a favour”.

¹⁴ Or, “when they are afflicted,” ie, when those who have helped him are in need or difficulty (he returns the favour).

¹⁵ Quoted as MA 1:21; SA 2:252; ItA 1:10; Nc 76; PmA 2:446; DhsA 350.

Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda:

5.3 “Ānanda, the twin sal trees are bursting forth with full blossom and fruit, albeit untimely, the blossoms falling on the Tathagata’s body, showering down upon it, covering it up, in homage to the Tathagata.

Heavenly mandārava [coral tree] flowers are falling from the sky, heavenly sandalwood powder are falling from the sky, showering down upon the Tathagata’s body, covering it up, in homage to the Tathagata.

Heavenly music is resounding through the sky in homage to the Tathāgata. Heavenly songs are wafting through the sky in homage to the Tathagata.

5.3.2 But, Ānanda, this is not the way to honour, respect, revere, worship, or esteem the Tathagata.¹⁶ Ānanda, whatever monk, nun, layman or laywoman¹⁷ practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, properly practising, living in accordance with Dharma, he honours the Tathagata, respects him, reveres him, worships him with **the supreme worship**.¹⁸ Therefore, Ānanda, consider thus:

‘We will practise the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, properly practising, dwelling in accordance with the Dharma!’—this is how you should train yourself.” (D 16,5.3) + SD 9 (7.2.4)

1.2.2.3 Where a true individual refers to one who is unawakened, one is known as a “**good worldling**” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), that is, as one who at least perseveres to keep the 5 precepts.¹⁹ Technically, that is, as a late canonical term, it refers to any holy saint, except the arhat (M 110; A 4.240).

The meaning of the term, in other words, depends on the context. In essence, the *sappurisa* is a “true individual” in the sense that he thinks for himself, especially in spiritual matters, does not rely of any external agency for spiritual salvation, but looks within himself for inner peace and mental clarity for self-understanding.²⁰

1.2.3 Right knowledge. For the sake of right knowledge, the priority for a monastic is to study and master the Dharma-Vinaya, especially the suttas and its commentaries. Even if the monastic does not become an expert in the teaching and the discipline, such knowledge, diligently listened and learned, even on a basic level, is vital for living a proper and effective holy life.

“Proper” in the sense that he does not, even unknowingly, break any Vinaya rule or practise wrong livelihood. His commitment to the Vinaya empowers him with a vital understanding of the Vinaya and its spirit. He does not see the monastic order as a means of worldly livelihood and social elitism, and does not socialize with the laity, or fall into worldly habits.²¹

“Effective” means that his practice, especially of meditation, brings him inner calm and peace, if not some level of dhyana. The experience of inner joy is vital for a monastic, without which he is likely to stray from the Dharma-Vinaya and be distracted into the way of a career priesthood, such as taking up academic learning as a profession, or getting caught in some kind of social work, or having dealings with the world in terms of pleasure and wealth.

Right knowledge arises from our proper practice of the 3 trainings as embodied in the limbs of the eightfold path. The proper practice of moral virtue results in our having a “cultivated body” (*bhāvita*,

¹⁶ See **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35), where the arhat is said to do all this by declaring that the Buddha is “awakened...; mentally tamed...; stilled...; crossed over...; quenched...” and “teaches the Dharma” for the same of these (M 35,-26.2/1:235), SD 26.5.

¹⁷ Note here that this important exhortation on the “supreme worship” is addressed to all the 4 companies (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen). However, there is evidence of a monastic-lay distinction here in Buddhaghosa’s commentary: see SD 9 (7.2). See foll n.

¹⁸ “**Supreme worship**,” *paramā pūjā*, alt tr “highest homage,” ie the highest puja: see SD 9 (7.2). On the story of Dhamm’ārāma, see SD 9 (14). Cf **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35), where in a similar connection, the arhat is said to be accomplished in the 3 supremacies (*anuttariya*) (M 35,26.2/1:235), SD 26.5.

¹⁹ See SD 23.7 (3.1.7).

²⁰ On the translation of *sappurisa*, see SD 23.7 (3.2).

²¹ On some of the problems involved here and their prophecies, see **The Dharma-ending age**, SD 1.10 (3+5.2).

kāya), which, in turn, becomes the basis for our practice of calming and clearing the mind, that is, mental cultivation. This results in our having a cultivated mind (*bhāvita, citta*), which, in turn, provides happiness in our lives here and now, opening us to the true meaning and purpose of life. When our lives are imbued with meaning and purpose, we rise above the crowd, ready for awakening to higher reality.²²

1.2.4 Right liberation

1.2.4.1 The path to right liberation begins with our journey on the eightfold path, bringing about a spiritually healthy body in a spiritually healthy mind. The liberating process begins with our habitual reflecting on the impermanence of our body and everything else in the world—this is the famous perception of impermanence that leads to our attaining streamwinning in this life itself.²³

When we habitually see impermanence and accept this as a universal characteristic (*sāmañña lak-khaṇa*) of all existence, then we begin to see our own body as being impermanent. Since it is impermanent, it can never give us every satisfaction that we desire. Of course, the body is not bad or evil in any way, since it is nothing but the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, wind) and consciousness. It is how we see it, our views, that are good or bad. If we mistake the body as having anything permanent or really satisfying, we are simply deluding ourselves.

If our body is impermanent and unsatisfactory, our mind changes even more often and faster than our body. There is no way we can cling to the mind, no matter how hard we try to. We do this by holding on to our views, but we keep changing them over time, rarely realizing that this is happening. The mind seems to have a life of its own, never really following our intentions, expectations or perseverance. Notice how difficult it is for us to even sit down quietly to do nothing but watch our breath for just a few minutes.

With both body and mind being impermanent, changing, and becoming other, there is no way we can really own this body, or even identify with it. While we have consciousness in our functional body, we seem to be all right, albeit not all the time. Reflecting in this way, we will in time give up **the fetter of self-identity view**: the wrong view that we—a “self” or a “soul”—can ever exist apart from the dynamic process of change, growth and decay that we are. We are but unfinished processes!

1.2.4.2 As we reflect on the impermanence of our bodies and minds, we begin to see that everything else, animate or inanimate, too, are undergoing change, in a constant state of flux.²⁴ In other words, change is a universal truth. To exist is to change, and change give meaning to existence. Without change, nothing makes sense. Knowledge arises when we are able to see different degrees of changes between one “thing” and another.

The word “thing” is merely a concept we use to refer to a sequence or window of changing moments of consciousness that we direct our attention to by giving it a “name” (*nāma*). In other words, it is merely a mental process itself, that follows what has happened just ahead of the naming process. What we are following is, of course, our own sequence or window of consciousness that is superimposed on the reality outside.

Although there is “something” out there, it really has nothing to do with us—the “us” being itself a conscious construct of passing moments—and we have nothing to do that something. Hence, such questions as “Why is there something, rather than nothing?” is meaningless and unhelpful. We have created a world of the senses in and around us, that is what we have to deal with.²⁵

There is no doubt then that there is no one to deal this with except ourself. Since we are the one who creates and projects a worldview in and around us, or hitch onto the worldview of others, thus leaving ourselves mindless and helpless, giving up our ability to deconstruct the worldview we have projected.

The only way out of this predicament is to work our way back into our own mind and heart. We need to return to our own mind, which is our real home, beyond heaven and hell, and all creations. If we doubt

²² On meaning and purpose of life, see Piya Tan, “Sad is not really bad” (R278), 2013: dharmafarer.org.

²³ See (**Anicca**) **Cakkluu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

²⁴ The expression, “constant state of flux” is an interesting oxymoron, a juxtaposition of opposing ideas: a flux is never constant, it keeps changing! Here we have an example of conventional language usage.

²⁵ See Reflection, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” R131, 2010.

this, then we have surrendered our mind, and perhaps our sanity, too. We simply must not doubt ourselves: it is left to us to work our own salvation, no matter how feeble or uncertain we may feel about it all.

1.2.4.3 **Our mind is all that is, that we are and have, to begin with.** “Our mind is all that is” means that whatever effectively exists for us is not the world out there, but what we perceive of that world. “(Our mind is all) that we are” means that our real world are the experiences of our own 5 senses and the mind. “(Our mind is all we) have” means that our minds creates a sense of “self,” something apparently identifiable and appears permanent, so that we can own it, or at least crave for it. “To begin with” means that our personal development and transformation must begin with our mind and in our mind. It all begins there, and has to end there, as it were.

Our search for the true answer to life’s hard questions must begin at the start and source—the mind (see Dh 1-2). When we try to look for this answer anywhere else, in another person, in some outside agency (God, gods, Buddha, demons, etc), we will sooner or later be left high and dry on the rock of doubt. We have created doubt by looking in the wrong way and thing. The reality is that there is no **doubt**, except what we have projected for ourselves.

1.2.4.4 Those of us who are still caught up with some ideas of an abiding self or harbouring some hope for the security and succour of such a self, must suffer from some doubt in our own ability and necessity for self-effort and awakening. Indeed, if awakening is possible, who else is there to awake except we ourselves (in a manner of speaking). The blinding power of such desire and doubt is simply so overpowering that we are pushed into **a rut of rituals and vows** for succour and salvation.

Repetitions of tasks, such as prayer or petitioning to sacred and holy images, give us a sense of familiarity, and hence some promise permanence in contempt of a world that is constantly changing: we only need to open our eyes and look around. Most of us are neither willing nor able to open our eyes or to look beyond our noses. When we do open our eyes, we are simply unable to make out the memes²⁶ and mirages before us. So we believe what we see, or we are told to believe so that we might see what we want to believe or must believe. This is religion.

Captivating rituals are those that excite the senses rather than still the heart.²⁷ Rituals of reciting the Buddha’s name or names, or mantras of deities give us a sense of power and euphoria. Rituals accompanied by some kind of attire, gestures, movements, music and noise indulge and excite our senses, which is taken to be some holy communication or sacred presence. Such rituals are good if they transform our lives to be more keenly attentive and responsive to those before us, and sustain our inner harmony even after the fact. They are merely addictive and distractive if they merely help us to forget our woes and wounds that need proper direct tending and healing.

Ritual dissembles and limits goodness and kindness so that they are only meaningful or useful to the performer. The audience must starve in wonderment, trust with mere hope, while waiting for the performers to stop and free themselves from strange cage of sounds and gestures to be back in the real world, to be truly human, so that we communicate and work together to better ourselves and the world. Kindness is not a religion, and can never be a ritual. Compassion is a random act of kindness, even to those who do not deserve it.

Vows can give us a strong and meaningful drive if we need to have something wholesome done, or some unwholesome situation undone. However, religious vows of “saving the world,” “liberating all beings,” or invoking “world peace” are often merely casual and cruel words of the unthinking and uncaring. They have never worked, except as ways to bush our wine, a religion marketing ploy to attract the pious and gullible.

But drinking too much wine intoxicates us. Indeed religious intoxication—the belief that divine prayers and answers are more real than actual personal effort in transforming ourselves and helping others in

²⁶ See **Memes**, SD 26.3.

²⁷ On the “arousal” effect of visualization exercises and the “relaxation” effect of Theravada meditation, see eg Ido Amihai & Maria Kozhevnikov, “Arousal vs relaxation: A comparison of the neurophysiological and cognitive correlates of Vajrayana and Theravada meditation practices,” *Plos One*, 2014.

their times of real needs—is an unholy excuse for allowing others to languish in their karma instead of helping them to turn around their conditions or teaching them how to alleviate themselves

1.2.4.5 There are liberating rituals and there are captivating rituals. Liberating rituals are those that are expressions of our heart’s joy or unconditional love for others or before a vision of true reality, such as bowing before another with lotus-palms reminding him of his potential for good and self-awakening, or bowing before a Buddha-image to rejoice in the presence of the Dharma in this very day on account of the Buddha’s wisdom and compassion.

In this sense, meditation is a liberating ritual. We repeatedly direct our minds, fixing it on a mental object, say the breath or lovingkindness. It is liberating in that we feel our mental energies more focused and more spacious within our heart, so that we are filled with zest followed by stillness. Then, we rose above ritual, and have real and direct experience of our mind liberated from its encumbering physicality.

1.3 ASAPPURISA

1.3.1 Analysis of the term

1.3.1.1 The opposite of the “true individual” (*sappurisa*) is the “**false person**” (*asappurisa*), that is, one “who is bad, empty, confused, a fool blinded by ignorance.”²⁸ We have seen that the *Asappurisa Sutta* 2 defines the false person as one who does not keep to the noble eightfold path, but follows the wrong one [§4], and **the one more false than the false person** is one who not only keeps to the wrong path, but also attains wrong knowledge (*micchā ñāṇa*) [1.3.1.2] and wrong liberation (*micchā vimutti*) [1.3.1.3].

The (Majjhima) Sappurisa Sutta (M 113) says that even a false person can practise Buddhism (or any religion), but he does so with **conceit** (arrogance and measuring himself against others), is arrogant about his social status, wealth, learning, expertise, asceticism, meditation or attainment. He may even be able to attain any or all of the 8 dhyanas, that is, the 4 form dhyana and the 4 formless dhyanas. However, on attaining any of such states, he identifies with it, conceited in the fact that he has attained such a state. As a result, “in whatever they conceive, it turns out to be something else.” In other words, they have a wrong understanding of their attainments, and so has wrong knowledge, and any kind of liberation they conceive or claim to have is false liberation.²⁹

The false person, in other words, practises or holds views about moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom that are self-centred, so that they are false and ultimately unhelpful. On account of the falseness of such a life-style, the false person lacks lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity (the 4 divine abodes),³⁰ and tends to be driven by desires and ambition, measuring others, competitive and envious of others, and lack inner calm and a balanced mind.

Although a false person may be adept in his work, well organized, and appears successful, he really has no true understanding of personal growth or liberation. More often than not, a false person is also narcissist, who is so driven and manipulative that he appears to be a good leader and organizer. He is not often dysfunctional, and in fact his conviction and forcefulness make him very effective in a job that requires authority, such as politics, business, celebrities, and religions. He is focused on getting and maintaining power, and is often much more successful at it than those with a more balanced approach to things. However, when someone with some level of a clinical narcissistic disorder runs a country or a corporation or a Buddhist organization, trouble is never far away.³¹

*Asataṃ bhāvanam³² iccheyya
purekkhāraṇ ca bhikkhum
āvāsesu ca issariyaṃ
pūjā para,kulesu ca.*

The unwise might wish for respect
and pre-eminence amongst the monks,
and supremacy amongst the dwellings,
and honour amongst families of others.

(Dh 73)³³

²⁸ *Asappurisan’ ti lāma, purisaṃ tuccha, purisaṃ mūḷha, purisaṃ avijjāya andhī, katam bālam* (AA 3:209).

²⁹ M 113 @ SD 23.7.

³⁰ On the 4 divine abodes, see *Brahma, vihāra*, SD 38.5.

³¹ See Reflection, “Don’t try to stop changing,” R360, 2014.

³² *Udāna, varga* (Skt) has *lābham*, “gains” here (Uv 13.3).

³³ For nn on Dh 73 f, see Dh:N 80 n73 & 81n74.

*Mam eva kata maññantu
gihī pabbajitā ubho
mam ev'ativasā assu
kiccâkiccesu kismici
iti bālassa saṅkappo
icchā māno ca vaḍḍhati*

“This was indeed done by me! Let
both householders and renunciants think thus.
Let them be under my control alone
in whatever is done or not done!”
Such is the thought of a fool
His wishes and conceit only grows.

(Dh 74)

1.3.1.2 “**Wrong knowledge**” here refers to a misunderstanding that either rejects or is unaware of the 3 characteristics (impermanence, suffering and non-self), especially the third, or the understanding is distorted or perverse.³⁴ Such wrong knowledge entails false beliefs and wrong views, especially those based on some kind of “eternalist” view (*sassata.ditṭhi*) or on some kind of “annihilationist” view (*uccheda,-ditṭhi*).³⁵

The view that “the Buddha is dead” (or more specifically, the *historical* Buddha is “dead”), and so we need a new Buddha, even better, a local one, say, a Japanese Buddha, or a “living Buddha” from China or from Tibet. Such ideas are insidiously wrong because they are based on an annihilationist view. Only in a manner of speaking, the Buddha “dies,” or more correctly, his 5 aggregates cease to exist. Even then, we are speaking only provisionally.³⁶

The teaching or idea that any Buddha can be eternal is a wrong view based on eternalism. One of the most common eternalist wrong views is that of “eternal” Buddhas who are able to somehow “save” us through their “vows” and grace.³⁷ Nowhere in the early teachings do we have even a suggestion of such an idea. The real truth is that the Buddha was born human, lived as a superhuman, and died a transhuman.³⁸ It is vital to remember this human aspect, which is what reminds us of our own potential for good and self-awakening.

Again, such an idea of spiritual potential grew into a dogma (a fixed belief without proof) of “Buddha-nature” or *tathāgata,garbha* (literally, “womb of the Tathagatas”) suggesting that we each contain a Tathagata or Buddha within us (like a homunculus), waiting to be born when we allow it to do so, or that we are already enlightened without even trying!

Such an idea is clearly rooted in eternalism (the Buddha-nature is *always* there) and also predestination, which means that we are somehow sure of awakening, even without making personal effort, and that all things (even plants and rocks have Buddha-nature): this is a form of pantheism (“God is everywhere”). Such ideas are common in later faith-based, moneytheistic, and cultish Buddhisms.³⁹

We can rightly speak of **a human potential for self-awakening** on account of the impermanence of the body and the ability of the mind to recall and relate this impermanence to all things in this world. In other words, this entails personal effort, that is, mental cultivation. The teaching of 4 noble truths (suffering, its arising, its ending and the path) is clearly based on a medical model, or some might say, it is the

³⁴ On the 3 kinds of perversions (*vipallāsa*), ie, of perception (*saññā vipallāsa*), of thought (*citta vipallāsa*), and of view (*ditṭhi vipallāsa*), see **Vipallāsa S** (A 4.49/2:52), SD 16.11.

³⁵ On these 2 extreme views, see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1.

³⁶ See SD 36.2 (5.9.3+6.1); also Reflection, “Buddhism for real,” R343, 2014.

³⁷ On deification of the Buddha, see SD 36.2 (7). On the Buddha as a trinity, see **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.3 (3.3.2).

³⁸ “Transhuman” here refers to the Buddha going *beyond* the human state (nirvana). We could conventionally say this is an “eternal” state, in the sense that there is no rebirth or return of an awakened being. Yet, to say a buddha is “eternal” suggests that he is unchanging, and to say he does *not* exist any more is to fall into the error of annihilationism. The buddhas and nirvana are beyond conditioned statements; there are no unconditioned statements, only silence. See **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1.

³⁹ “Moneytheistic” here means that any well-funded and well-organized religious group can promote and market their beliefs and practices in respectable and effective ways, even employing specialists and scholars, and publishing impressive books, journals and media. See **Memes**, SD 26.1, & **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.2 esp (2.3.2).

prototype for the traditional Indian medical model. In such a model and imagery, we need to heal ourselves, and the doctor is only a doctor if we follow his instructions and heal ourselves.⁴⁰

It is quite different between saying we *have* the Buddha-nature and saying that *as if* this were the case, that we have the potential for good.⁴¹ The urgency here is that we should not merely theologize goodness or preach it, but we have to act on it with wisdom, and be compassionately attentive and responsive to our real spiritual needs and those of others.

In short, whenever we are uncertain how an idea or teaching works, we can safely take an “as if” approach to it. Insofar as a teaching is a proper tool for self-understanding and self-awakening (“self” here meaning the mind), we can and must use it for our personal growth, liberation and outreach to others. “Outreach” here refers to our personal example of someone who has tasted the joy of freedom through the Dharma.

<i>Na tāvata dhamma, dharo yāvata bahu bhāsati yo ca appam pi sutvāna dhammaṃ kāyena passati sa ve dhamma, dharo hoti yo dhammaṃ na-p, pamajjati</i>	He is not a Dharma-expert merely because he speaks much. Who, hearing but little, sees the Dharma in his body [for himself]— he is indeed a Dharma-expert, who’s not heedless in the Dharma. (Dh 259)
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1.3.1.3 “**Wrong liberation**” arises from wrong knowledge, and is no liberation at all, but a continued attachment to wrong practice and wrong views. A monastic should especially work to at least break the fetters of self-identify view, doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows.⁴² These are the 3 fetters that imprison us to worldly rebirth, and if they are not broken in this life itself, we are likely to be reborn in some subhuman realm (as an asura, a preta, an animal, or a hell-being),⁴³ or if we are reborn in a human world, it would be difficult to find the Dharma or to practise it.

<i>Kāsāva, kaṇṭhā bahavo pāpa, dhammā asaṅṅatā pāpā pāpehi kammehi nirayaṃ te upapajjare</i>	Many, with yellow robes around their necks, are bad by nature, unrestrained. The bad on account of their bad arise in a hellish state. (Dh 307)
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(1) For as monastic, **self-identity view** is not only the wrong view of seeing this body, or any part of it, as being permanent or desirable, but such a view is projected onto external and social realities. A monastic, for example, may see himself as the foremost teacher or religious leader, or that his centre or community as an extension of himself, or that his views, teachings or practices are the only right ones, even when they do not concur with the Dharma or Vinaya.

The self-identity view can arise from our identifying with our body, or identifying with a group, crowd, colour, race, or even country. When we speak of “Tibetan” Buddhism, “Chinese” Buddhism, “Japanese” Buddhism or any kind of ethnic Buddhism, the prefix invariably defines the Buddhism or prioritizes the kind of Buddhism that is followed.⁴⁴

Even such a term as “western” Buddhism must be carefully examined and used. Clearly, concerned western Buddhists feel an urgent need for Buddhism to be relevant and efficacious for westerners and the westernized. This means that Buddhism has to be free of its unnecessary and narrow ethnic baggages: the Dharma boat needs to be emptied so that it can move on speedily to its true goal. When that Buddhism

⁴⁰ For the well known doctor imagery, see **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 63,5.2), SD 5.8; SD 44.1 (3.3.2); **The teacher or the teaching**, SD 3.14.

⁴¹ On the “as if” approach, see SD 17.8b (2.2.3).

⁴² On breaking the 3 fetters, **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

⁴³ See **Pañca, gati S** (A 9.68), SD 2.20 & **Mahā Siha, nāda S** (M 12,37-41), SD 49.1 = SD 2.24. See also “World of our own” (R115) 2012 & “We are not born human” (R216) 2011.

⁴⁴ See Reflection, “Back to the Buddha,” R367, 2014.

works well and true to the teaching, then its narrow name serves no more purpose. It is just Buddhism, or better, Buddha Dharma.

<i>Siñca bhikkhu imam nāvam</i>	Bail out this boat, bhikshus.	
<i>sittā te lahum essati</i>	Bailed dry it will go quickly.	
<i>chetvā rāgañ ca dosañ ca</i>	Having cut off lust and hate,	
<i>tato nibbānam ehisi</i>	then you will go to nirvana.	(Dh 369)

(2) **Doubt** is when we are uncertain, hence do not know, what to do on a mental level at first. This uncertainty then affects our speech and actions, halting them, so that we do not progress, or even regress. More often than not, that uncertainty arises when we are ignorant and depend on external agencies for knowledge. If such knowledge is helpful, it is well and good. However, when it comes to matters of personal growth, we cannot merely listen to advice, but it must be good advice, one that works to free us from such a dependence. False knowledge holds us back; true knowledge frees us to move on.

False knowledge is as insidious as doubt: both blind us so that we are unable to move or move dangerously. Knowledge alone will help us grow and move, but sometimes in the wrong way. For knowledge is simply what others know. Only when we know for ourselves what is true or false, good or bad, and know how to use that understanding for personal growth, does it become wisdom.

Knowledge sees and feels suffering; wisdom sees only pain arising from the changing and breaking up of the 4 elements [1.2.4.1]. Knowledge attempts to use cunning, bribes and prayers to lessen or remove suffering; wisdom works to understand what pain really is and so goes down to the root of the problem. Knowledge, when pained by greed, hate, delusion or fear, cry out or chant the names of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and strange deities and spirits; wisdom sees the rise and fall of pain: they are just as impermanent as pleasure itself. Knowledge curses suffering and tries to exorcise it; wisdom blesses pain, accepting it unconditionally: for, it shows our body, organs and limbs are working well. Knowledge looks outside with lust or ill will; wisdom looks within and learns with love and joy.

<i>Yo sāsanaṃ arahataṃ</i>	⁴⁵ The one lacking wisdom who,	
<i>ariyānaṃ dhamma,jīvinam</i>	on account of wrong view,	
<i>paṭikkosati dummedho</i>	scorns the teaching [dispensation] of the arhats,	
<i>ditṭhiṃ nissāya pāpikaṃ</i>	the noble ones who live the Dharma	
<i>phalaṃ kaṭṭhakass'eva</i>	bears fruit to his own destruction,	
<i>atta,ghañṇāya phallati</i>	like a bamboo shoot. ⁴⁶	(Dh 164; Dh:G 258) ⁴⁷

(3) When in doubt, look outside; when we are uncertain, measure others—this just what we often do. When we keep up this ritual of seeking answers outside of ourselves, we are always driven to imitate or, at least, measure up to others. But we are not others; we each have our own minds and hearts—we can think and do feel for ourselves. So we remain helpless, we can only wish and vow to be better, or at least keep up with others.

Religious rituals and vows, too, work in the same way. We see others performing a ritual, and we are impressed, and wish to be a part of it, too. This is because we tend to see such rituals as a kind of being empowered by some external agency, perhaps a guru, or a deity, or a Bodhisattva, or even a Buddha with a name not found in the early suttas. Very few who perform rituals really know what they are really doing, that is, either they are not doing it completely right or fail to understand the nature of rituals.

A few, very devoted to such rituals, have known too much so that they fear being wrong or shown to be wrong. So they keep on looking for witnessing stories and wish-fulfilling events to “prove” their effi-

⁴⁵ This tr is not interlinear, but follows the natural flow of ideas.

⁴⁶ Cf S 597 (S 6.12 @ SD 46.23). On the problem of the meaning of *kaṭṭhaka*, see John Brough, *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, London, 1962:255 n258 (on Gāndhārī Dharmapada verse 258).

⁴⁷ For further nn, see SD 46.23 (1.1.3).

cacy. We need or want to keep on performing the rituals because they do *not* really work. If they do, then we do not need to do them any more!

It's just like starting a fire. Once we strike a match, and it burns, we start a fire, feel its warmth, see its light, or use it for preparing our meals. We don't need or want to go on striking matches no matter how well designed or beautiful they are, or how elegantly we can strike it. A match cannot burn because it is damp or the striking surface is worn or wet. We might keep on striking, breaking matches and taking out new ones, or using more than one, and repeating the whole process over and again. If we do somehow get a single match-stick lit, that would be sufficient for our purpose.

Mindfulness and inner peace do not need any proof. This is because we have stopped performing rituals and making vows, and dealt with our problems and weakness hands-on. We are enjoying a ritual-free and vow-free peace. It's like the arhat **Assaji** peacefully walking on his almsround. **Sāriputta** sees him, and at once is struck by Assaji's peacefulness. At first asking and then insisting Assaji to teach him, Sāriputta then listens when Assaji teaches, and becomes a streamwinner—all because he recognizes Assaji's inner calm, and then sees his own. No prayer nor ritual nor vow is needed for spiritual realization: we only need to open our hearts to true peace.⁴⁸

Vows here are grand religious statements by imagined holy beings or by us ourselves imitating such beings to be like them or attain some imaginary state, or heaven or paradise. Such views are often involve the reciting or minding of mantras or chants related to such holy beings, some cosmic Buddha or transcendental Bodhisattva, very much like a scaled-down version of some theistic God. Indeed, the nature of such recitations and prayers are little different from the way God-believers praise their God or supplicate him. In some form of later ethnic Buddhism, their followers, it is taught and believed, only need to recite that Buddha's name and after death will be reborn in the paradise conjured up by that Buddha.

Some modern and more learned of such devotees even interpret the possibility of creating such a paradise here and now, which is in fact a more useful and helpful way of living than merely chanting and making vows. Throughout civilization, some of us have dreamt of a utopia or ideal society where there is true peace, justice and progress. But these are human realities, rather than religious fancies, some of which we today enjoy, thanks to the vision and vigour, sometimes tears and blood, of some statesman or social reformer who lived self-effacing lives with neither ritual nor vow, but true human action.

Early Buddhism has much to contribute in terms of personal development and mental cultivation which are the bases of such a utopia or ideal society. Even where such a community does not exist, it is possible for the person, for us, to give up identifying with our bodies, to stop doubting ourselves, and to renounce rituals and vows, so that through vision, wisdom and effort, we become true individuals.

<i>Na sīla-b,bata,mattena bāhu,saccena vā puna atha vā samādhi,lābhena vivicca sayanena vā</i>	Not merely by rituals and vows, or, again, by much learning, nor by the gains of meditation, nor by lodging in seclusion,	(Dh 271)
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<i>phusāmi nekkhamma,sukhaṃ aputhujjana,sevitāṃ bhikkhu vissāsaṃ āpādi appatto āsava-k,khayaṃ</i>	am I touched by the joy of renunciation, not pursued by worldlings, Nor has a monk gained confidence who's not attained the influxes' destruction.	(Dh 272)
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1.3.2 Related terms

1.3.2.1 **The (Sappurisa) Sikkhā,pada Sutta** (A 4.210), on the other hand, more narrowly defines the two kinds of false persons in terms of moral virtue. According to the Sutta, **the false person** (*asappurisa*) is *one who breaks the precepts*, and one who is “**worse than the false person**,” that is, “even

⁴⁸ On Sāriputta's meeting with Assaji, see SD 42.8 (1.2).

more false than a false person” (*asappurisenā asappurisa, tara*) is *one who breaks the precepts and encourages others to do so*.⁴⁹

1.3.2.2 A near-synonym of “false person” or *asappurisa* is *kā, purisa* (from *kad*, a pejorative or diminutive prefix + *purisa*, “person”), a low, vile, contemptible man, a wretch.⁵⁰ This term, however, has a narrower sense than *asappurisa*, and applies to a false person in specific situations that are unwholesome. In some instances, it denotes one who has not entered the path, as in **the (Pañca,ñāṇa) Samādhi Sutta** (A 5.27)⁵¹ and **the Upacālā Therī, gāthā** (Thī 189).

In **the (Pañca,ñāṇa) Samādhi Sutta** (S 5.28), *kā, purisa* applies specifically to someone who is unwilling or unable to meditate, on account of wrong practice, or a false person trying or pretending to meditate. The fact is that dhyana cannot arise in a false person (*kā, purisa*), which the Commentary takes as referring to those beings other than such great persons (*mahā, purisa*) as the Buddha and other awakened beings (AA 2:231).

1.3.2.3 Another near-synonym of “false person” (*asappurisa*) is an “empty person” or *mogha, purisa*. A *mogha, purisa* is one who is spiritually empty,⁵² that is, one who lacks wisdom or goodness, or both, especially one who is prone to wrong views. Such a person is strongly driven and bogged down by physical pleasures, that is, those of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches, without realizing their true nature of being impermanent, unsatisfactory and without any essence.⁵³

2 False monastics and true monastics

2.1 FALSE FALSE MONASTICS, TRUE FALSE MONASTICS. The teaching of the Asappurisa Sutta 2—especially that of the false person and the one who is more false than the false person—is a useful model for understanding one of the most visible of religious problems in Singapore (and, to some extent, Malaysia) since the late 20th century. In 2007, for example, the local daily, the Straits Times, carried reports, even a multi-page survey, of “false monks and nuns” masquerading in robes to collect donations from the unsuspecting and gullible. Since they were not monastics in the first place, they were actually the false “false monks and nuns.”

In fact, these professional “beggars” were inspired by the examples of the true “false monks and nun” who had all the comforts and things that lay people had and enjoyed, and much more. Indeed, we hardly see any poor priests (as we should call them)⁵⁴ today (except for the forest monks, perhaps).⁵⁵

2.2 FALSE TRUE MONASTICS, TRUE TRUE MONASTICS

2.2.1 The money priests of today live in the comfort of palatial mansions called temples, replete with all the convenience of a modern home, drive around in their own expensive cars,⁵⁶ have fat bank ac-

⁴⁹ (**Asappurisa**) **Sikkhā, pada S** (A 4.201/2:217), SD 47.3b. See **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), where it is stated that we should keep the precepts and encourage others to do so, too, and to speak in praise of such acts (S 55.7, 5-12/5:-353-355), SD 1.5.

⁵⁰ V 2:188, 22*; **Aputtaka S 1** (S v414/3.19/1:91, 16*), (**Saham, pati**) **Deva, datta S** (S v597/6.12/1:154), **Acira Acira Pakkanta S** (S 17.35/2:241); (**Catukka**) **Deva, datta S** (A 4.68/2:73, 33*); **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja Tha** (Tha 124), **Mahā Kaccāyana Tha** (Tha 495), **Sāriputta Tha** (Tha 1018); **Inda Samāna, gotta J** (J 17/2:42, 8*+16'), **Mahā Ummagga J** (546/6:437, 31*); **Aṅkura Pv** (Pv 2.9, 31/34; PvA 125 = *lāmaka, purisa*, “vile person”), **Saṭṭhi, kūṭa, sahassa Pv** (Pv 814/4.16.9/94). As *akāpurisa*, “not a *kāpurisa*”: **Das'uttara S** (D 34, 1.6(8)/3:279, 1); **Khadi- ra, vaniya Revata Tha** (Tha 649). See DP: *kāpurisa*.

⁵¹ A 5.27, 2(3)/3:24, 17 @ SD 33.13(3.3).

⁵² See **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22, 6/1:132) n, SD 3.13 on “hollow man.”

⁵³ See SD 33.13 (3.3).

⁵⁴ While “monastic” refers to a religious who, as a rule, lives secluded and celibate life, a “priest” lives more communal, even family, lives, supporting themselves by performing rituals, esp final rites, often charging their clients at exorbitant rates.

⁵⁵ “Perhaps” here because when a monastic, even a forest monastic, worries about money, buildings and success, then they are likely to socialize more with the world and forget or forego their training and vision.

⁵⁶ Imagine a monk or priest knocking someone down and killing him, or being involved in a traffic accident!

counts, own considerable property and businesses, and enjoy sense-pleasures, which even the average layperson does not.

We hardly see the almsbowl of such priests. The point is that even good karma soon runs out. The moneytheistic priests claimed they needed money to be “independent”: independent of whom or what? The Buddha and the early monastics were truly independent— even of money and property.

The moneytheistic monastics claimed that they needed money to do “good works.” What about keeping the monastic precepts of the Buddha? That’s the best work and duty for a Buddhist monastic or priest. It is the monastic rules that make a monastic. What is football without football rules? What is a country without laws?

2.2.2 The Buddha in the suttas sits on a pile of grass to meditate, and lives a simple life of abstinence and wisdom, teaching others compassionately to overcome suffering. What are the benefits of living a simple life, even as a lay person? In fact, we can say that it is easier today to awaken to spiritual liberation as a lay person: at least we try to keep to the 5 precepts.

Let us remind and empower ourselves with the Buddha’s simple lifestyle and teachings, that bring us awakening in this life itself (even for a lay person). For those who wait may not get the chance to be re-born as a human being at all.

Not being awakened is like being stricken with a chronic serious illness and not knowing it. Let us start taking the Dharma medicine *now*, and be the growing number of practitioners who *know* we will attain awakening in this life itself, at least as streamwinners.⁵⁷

*Pathavyā eka,rajjena
saggassa gamanena vā
sabba,lokādhipaccena
sotāpatti,phalaṃ varaṃ*

Better than absolute power over the earth,
or even going to heaven,
or, lordship over all the worlds,
is the blessed fruit of streamwinning.

(Dh 178)

— — —

The Second Discourse on the False Individual

S 45.26

1-2 Originating in Sāvattḥī. There (the Blessed One) said.⁵⁸

3 “Bhikshus, I will teach [show] you the false person, and one more false than the false person; and I will show you the true individual, and the one more true than the true individual.⁵⁹ Listen to it.

The false persons

4 And what, bhikshus, is a **false person** (*asappurisa*)?

Here, bhikshus, a certain person

- (1) holds wrong views,
- (2) has wrong thoughts [intentions],

⁵⁷ See Reflection, “False false & true false monastics,” R8 2007.

⁵⁸ *Sāvattḥī, nidānaṃ. Tatr’avoca.*

⁵⁹ *Asappurisaṇ ca vo bhikkhave desessāmi asappurisenā asappurisa, taraṇ ca, sappurisaṇ ca vo bhikkhave desessāmi sappurisenā sappurisa, taraṇ ca, taṃ suṇātha.*

- (3) speaks wrong speech,
- (4) does wrong actions,
- (5) engages in wrong livelihood,
- (6) makes wrong efforts,
- (7) has wrong mindfulness,
- (8) has wrong samadhi [stillness].

This one, bhikshus, is called a false person.

5 And what, bhikshus, is one more false than a false person (*asappurisenā asappurisa, tara*)?

- (1) holds wrong views,
- (2) has wrong thoughts [intentions],
- (3) speaks wrong speech,
- (4) does wrong actions,
- (5) engages in wrong livelihood,
- (6) makes wrong efforts,
- (7) has wrong mindfulness,
- (8) has wrong samadhi [stillness], and
- (9) has wrong knowledge [understanding],
- (10) has wrong liberation.

This one, bhikshus, is called one who is more false than a false person.⁶⁰

The true individuals

6 And what, bhikshus, is a true individual (*sappurisa*)?

Here, bhikshus, a certain person

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) holds right views, | <i>sammā dīṭṭhi</i> |
| (2) has right thoughts [intentions], | <i>sammā saṅkappa</i> |
| (3) speaks right speech, | <i>sammā vācā</i> |
| (4) does right actions, | <i>sammā kammantā</i> |
| (5) engages in right livelihood, | <i>sammā ājīva</i> |
| (6) makes right efforts, | <i>sammā vāyāma</i> |
| (7) has right mindfulness, | <i>sammā sati</i> |
| (8) has right samadhi [stillness]. | <i>sammā samādhi</i> |

This one, bhikshus, is called a true individual.

7 And what, bhikshus, is more true than a true individual (*sappurisenā sappurisa, tara*)?

Here, bhikshus, a certain person

- (1) holds right views,
 - (2) has right thoughts [intentions],
 - (3) speaks right speech,
 - (4) does right actions,
 - (5) engages in right livelihood,
 - (6) makes right efforts,
 - (7) has right mindfulness,
 - (8) has right samadhi [stillness], and
 - (9) has right knowledge [understanding],
 - (10) has right liberation.
- | |
|----------------------|
| <i>sammā ñāṇa</i> |
| <i>sammā vimutti</i> |

This one, bhikshus, is called one who is more true than a true individual.⁶¹

— evaṃ — 140926 140930 141007a

⁶⁰ On the “false person,” see (1.3).

⁶¹ On the “true individual,” see (1.2).