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## Ahiṃsaka Sutta

The Discourse on the Non-violent | S 7.5 [Ee S 7.1.5]  
 or, **Ahiṃsaka Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** the Discourse on Bhāra,dvāja the non-violent  
 Theme: Non-violent in word and in deed  
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### 1 Sutta significance

#### 1.1 SUTTA HIGHLIGHT

**1.1.1 The Ahiṃsaka Sutta** (S 7.5) is a very short discourse relating how the brahmin Ahiṃsaka introduces himself to the Buddha. The Buddha replies in a single verse (**S 624**), highlighting the significance of his name. He seems to be an independent Bhāra,dvāja<sup>1</sup> who meets the Buddha, and after merely listening to a short Dharma teaching from him—on account of his (Ahiṃsaka’s) own karmic readiness—renounces the world, and in due course becomes an arhat.

**1.1.2** From the Sutta location, it is likely that Ahiṃsaka is from **Sāvattihī**. We know of at least two other Bhāra,dvājas—**Jaṭā** and **Suddhika**—from there. Jaṭā Bhāra,dvāja is the interlocutor of **the Jaṭā Sutta** (S 7.6), which is about cutting the inner tangle, while Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja, of **the Suddhika Sutta** (S 7.7), is taught that the highest purity is the spiritual one.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that these three Bhāradvājas are related, but other than being members of the same gotra and that they all become arhats, the suttas and commentaries tell us nothing more about them.

#### 1.2 COMMENTARIAL NOTE

**1.2.1** The Sutta Commentary says that the name Ahiṃsaka (“non-violent”) may have been assigned to him by the council elders<sup>3</sup> because he “asks a question,” that is, asserts himself, about harmlessness. Alternatively, Ahiṃsaka may have been his given name, and that Bhāra,dvāja is his clan or gotra (*gotta*) name. (SA 1:230). From the Sutta itself, it is clear that the second alternative is the more likely explanation.

**1.2.2** The more famous bearer of the name **Ahiṃsaka** is Aṅgulimāla, that is, before he is so called. As a young student, before being forced into a life of violence by his foolish teacher, he is called Ahiṃsaka Māṇava, “the youth called ‘harmless’.” (MA 3:329). He is nicknamed **Aṅguli,māla** (the one with a garland of fingers) after his spree of mass murdering, at which he collects a single finger from each victim and strings them together in a garland, which he wears.<sup>4</sup>

**1.2.3** A teaching on **harmlessness** (*ahiṃsaka,bhāva*) is also given to the elder Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya, as recorded in **the Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya Thera Vatthu** (DhA 19.4) regarding **Dh 260-261**. The verses essentially say that a true elder (*thera*) is not defined by age, but by truth, goodness, non-violence, restraint and self-taming.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the significance of the name, **Bhāra,dvāja**, see SD 50.10 (2.1.2).

<sup>2</sup> S 7.6/1:165 (SD 50.22); S 7.7/1:165 f (SD 50.23).

<sup>3</sup> On **the council elders** (*saṅgīti,kāra*), see SD 50.20 (comy 1-2/8).

<sup>4</sup> See **Aṅguli,māla S** (M 86), SD 5.11.

<sup>5</sup> DhA 19.4/3:387 f.

### 1.3 THE BHĀRA,DVĀJAS

**1.3.1** The very first chapter of the Brāhmaṇa Saṃyutta—the **Arahanta Vagga**—contains 10 suttas (S 7.1-10) recording the conversion and arhathood of various members of the Bhāra,dvāja clan. **The Ahimsaka Sutta** (S 7.5) is the fifth of these suttas.<sup>6</sup>

**1.3.2** There is no other information, either in the suttas nor in the Commentaries, on Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja of Sāvattthī. He does not seem to be any of the famous Bhāra,dvāja brothers of Rājagaha, all of whom renounce the world and become arhats.<sup>7</sup>

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## The Discourse on the Non-violent

S 7.5

**1** Originating in Sāvattthī.

Then, the brahmin Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja approached the Blessed One.

Having approached, he exchanged greetings with the Blessed One.

**2** When the courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the brahmin Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja sat down at one side.

Sitting at one side, the brahmin Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja said this to the Blessed One:

**3** “I am Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja, master Gotama! I am Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja, master Gotama!”<sup>8</sup>

### Ahimsaka’s verses

[The Buddha:]

**4** *Yathā nāmaṃ tathā c’assa  
siyā kho tvarṃ ahimsako.  
Yo ca kāyena vācāya  
manasā ca na hiṃsati.  
Sa ce ahimsako hoti  
yo paramṃ na vihiṃsatīti.*

[S 624]

If you are what your name is,  
you would be the harmless one.  
But it is through body, through speech,  
and through mind, who does no harm—  
if he is the harmless one  
he is one who harms not another.

### Ahimsaka joins the order

**5** When this was said, the brahmin Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja said this to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, Master Gotama! Excellent! Master Gotama!

Just as if one

were to place upright what had been overturned,

were to reveal what was hidden,

were to show the way to one who was lost, or

<sup>6</sup> For the whole list of “Bhāra,dvāja” suttas, see SD 50.10 (2.2).

<sup>7</sup> See SD 50.10 (2.2).

<sup>8</sup> Cf **Māna-t,thaddha S** (S 7.15,9), where the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha only introduces himself to the Buddha after he perceives the Buddha as being able to read his mind (SD 50.36).

were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,  
 in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by the Blessed Gotama.  
 I go to the Blessed Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.  
 May the Blessed Gotama give me the going-forth (*pabbajjā*), give me the ordination (*upasampadā*).”

6 And the brahmin Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja received the going-forth and the ordination in the Blessed One’s presence.

### Ahimsaka becomes an arhat

#### 7 THE FULL ARHATHOOD PERICOPE<sup>9</sup>

Then, not long after he was ordained, the venerable Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja, dwelling alone, aloof,  
 diligent, exertive, and resolute,  
 in no long time at all, right here and now, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge,  
 attained and dwelled in the supreme goal of the holy life,  
 for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

#### 8 THE ARHAT’S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

He directly knew:

“Birth is destroyed,  
 the holy life has been lived,  
 done what is to be done,  
 there is no more of this state of being.”<sup>10</sup>

And the venerable Ahimsaka Bhāra,dvāja became one of the arhats.

— evaṃ —

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<sup>9</sup> For details, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2+56.3), SD 7.14.

<sup>10</sup> On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14.