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Satta Vassa Sutta

The Discourse on the Seven Years, or The Seven Years Discourse | S 4.24
 Be: **Satta Vassānubandhana Sutta** The Discourse on the Seven-year Pursuit
 Theme: Māra is unable to find a single weakness in the Buddha
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2011

1 Māra’s persistence and failure

1.1 MĀRA’S PERSISTENCE

1.1.1 Māra the shadow

The Satta Vassa Sutta (the Discourse on the Seven Years) (S 4.24) of the Māra Saṃyutta tells us that during 5th week after the awakening,¹ **Māra the bad one** appears to the Buddha who is sitting under the goatherd banyan. Māra has been shadowing the Buddha for 7 years, says the Commentary—6 years before the awakening and one after that—but fails to find any weakness in him (SA 1:185). He makes a final jibe at the Buddha, proposing that he is a just lonely man [§3], to which the Buddha replies that he is truly sorrow-free [§4].

Māra then makes an ominously realistic remark, that if we have a mind that identifies with anything, then we would not escape from him [§5], but the Buddha replies that Māra is completely blind to him [§6]. Then, Māra tells the Buddha not to teach the Dharma to others [§7] but the Buddha replies that there are those who desire to know “what lies beyond Death’s realm” [§8], that is, they desire to be free from samsara.

1.1.2 Māra the wet blanket

In the **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha recounts how, around this time, Māra fervently persuades him to pass into final nirvana as he has already found what he is seeking, that is, awakening. Since his search for the truth has been accomplished, what need has the Buddha to remain in the world? Māra asks—and for what purpose would he want to teach the Dharma to others?

The Buddha then declares to Māra that he will not pass away until there is fully flourishing the four-fold community (*cattāro parisā*)—monk disciples, nun disciples, layman disciples and laywoman disciples—who are

accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, well-versed in Dharma, trained in accordance to the Dharma, correctly trained and walking the path of the Dharma, who will pass on what they have gained from their own teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyze it, make it clear: until they shall be able, by means of the Dharma, to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dharma accompanied by wonders (*sappāṭihāriya dhamma*).” (D 16,3.34-35/2:112)

1.1.3 Significance of the “7 years”

1.1.3.1 The Satta Vassa Sutta tells us that Māra shadows the Buddha for a full 7 years [§2]. This Sutta records Māra’s confronting the Buddha sometime in the 1st year of the awakening—according to the Commentary, during the rains, that is, the end of the 1st year of the ministry (SA 1:185). From the same Commentary, we also learn that Māra has been stalking the Bodhisattva all through the 6 years of his self-mortification.

The Commentary to the Satta Vassa Sutta explains these “7 years” as “the 6 years before the awaken-

¹ J 1:78,9-11.

ing, and the 1st rains after the awakening” (*pure bodhiyā cha-b, bassāni, bodhito pacchā ekam vassam*, SA 1:185,7). In other words, these are the 6 years of the self-mortification and around July-September (the rains) of the 1st year of the ministry.

1.1.3.2 We must also recall that Māra first appears to the Bodhisattva outside the city-gate of Kapilavatthu, trying to stop the Bodhisattva from renouncing and to return to his worldly life. Since then, Māra has been shadowing the Bodhisattva.² After that the Bodhisattva rides across 3 realms (those of the Sakyas, the Koliyas and the Mallas), renounces on the bank of the river Anomā, and lives on alms from the streets of Rājagaha.³ This is when the Bodhisattva is 29 years 10 months old.⁴

1.1.3.3 We seem to have no record of how long he stayed in Rājagaha, but it was probably for just a few months. After which he went to the 2 teachers,⁵ and then left them to practise self-mortification.⁶ If we consider that the Indian narrators generally regarded any significant period of time, even a short one, in terms of a full year, that is, in terms of a calendar year⁷—then, we must conclude that “8 years” have passed when Māra appears again before the Buddha, as recorded in the Satta Vassa Sutta. This difference of duration is simply based on how we calculate the years of the various events.⁸

1.1.3.4 One last point worth noting is that **the “7 years”** signify the years of the Bodhisattva’s struggle for awakening. In this case, we should take the “7 years” as beginning with his departure and Māra’s first appearance, up to the great awakening itself—that is, calculating by way of “full years” [1.1.3.3]. In other words, this calculation differs from that of the Commentary [1.1.3.1].

These “7 years” probably explain the well-known stock where the Buddha declares that if one practices his teaching (especially the satipatthana practice) “for just years, one of two fruits may be expected,” either arhathood in this life itself or, if there is still any clinging, non-returning.⁹

1.2 MĀRA’S FAILURE

Māra then admits that he is defeated like a crab whose claws have been removed and crushed by playful children and left stranded on high ground, unable to move or return to its pond [§9]. Then, Māra makes his famous confession comparing himself to “a crow that walked around a stone that looked like a lump of fat” and finding nothing tasty there, leaves disappointed. [§10]

MĀRA’ 16 LINES. The Satta Vassa Sutta closes with a curious remark that Māra sits dejected, “scratching the ground with a stick” (*kaṭṭhena bhūmim vilikhanto*) [§13]. What is he doing? **The Jātaka Nidāna** (Introduction to the Jātaka Commentary) gives an interesting explanation:

At that time, the devaputra Māra thought, “All this while that I have been tailing him, looking for a weakness, I have not seen him stumble in any way. He has now gone beyond my power!”

He sat on the highway dejected, scribbling the reasons in sixteen lines on the ground. One line, he wrote thus:

² See **Miraculous life of Gotama Buddha**, SD 52.1 (9.1.2).

³ His sojourn in Rājagaha is recorded in (**Sutta Nipāta**) **Pabbajjā Sutta** (Sn 3.1 = Sn 405-424), SD 49.19. See SD 52.1 (9.2.2 + 11).

⁴ See SD 52.1 (8.2.1.1). On a different view of the years, see Analayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, 2011:710 n121.

⁵ On the Bodhisattva’s time with the 2 teachers, see SD 52.1 (12).

⁶ On the years of the self-mortification, see SD 52.1 (13).

⁷ Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, vol 1, notes, “In ancient India periods of time were expressed both in terms of full years (how much time had actually elapsed) and calendar years” (2000:170). But see SD 52.1 (9.1.2.2).

⁸ See SD 52.1 (91.2.2).

⁹ See eg **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,46/2:314,11); **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46/1:62,34), SD 13.3; **Udumbarikā Sīha, nāda S** (D 25,22.2/3:55,21), SD 1.4.

“I have not fulfilled the perfection of giving as he has. As such, I am not like him to that extent.”

Then, writing ten lines, he thought, “I have not fulfilled the perfection of moral virtue, the perfection of renunciation, the perfection of wisdom, the perfection of effort, the perfection of patience, the perfection of truth, the perfection of determination, the perfection of lovingkindness, and the perfection of equanimity. As such, I am not like him to that extent.”

Then writing the eleventh line, he thought, “I have not fulfilled the ten perfections that are the bases for the realization of the unique knowledge of the development of the various levels of the faculties.¹⁰ As such, I am not like him to that extent.”

Then writing up to the sixteenth line, he thought, “I have not fulfilled the ten perfections that are the bases for the realization of the unique knowledge of intentions and latencies, knowledge of the attainment of great compassion, knowledge of the twin wonder, knowledge of the removal of hindrances, and knowledge of omniscience. As such, I am not like him to that extent.”

Thus, he sat on the highway dejected, scribbling the reasons in sixteen lines on the ground.

(J 1:78)

A SINGLE STORY. Evidently, the Satta Vassa Sutta (S 4.24) and the following Māra Dhītu Sutta (S 4.25) must have, at an earlier time, formed a single sutta, as the narrative clearly flows consecutively. This is attested by the fact that some manuscripts include the closing paragraph here in the Satta Vassa Sutta [§11], which also fits the Māra Dhītu Sutta’s opening.¹¹

2 Events connected with the Aja,pāla Nigrodha

2.1 AJA,PĀLA NIGRODHA

2.1.1 Origin and etymology of aja,pāla

2.1.1.1 ORIGIN OF THE GOATHERD BANYAN. The Pāli sources are generally silent on how the goat-herd banyan arose. **The Maha,vastu**,¹² an early Buddhist Sanskrit work, says that when the Bodhisattva is practising self-mortification on the bank of the Nairāñjanā (P *nerañjarā*) river, a goatherd sees him and is filled with devotion. he plants a young banyan with the conviction that when it reaches full size, the ascetic would have attained his goal. He invites the Bodhisattva to use the tree, and he acquiesces by his silence. From time to time, the goatherd would tend to the soil around the tree and water it. The tree grows quickly, and seeing this, the goatherd, in due course, dies happy, and is reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three as the deva Nyagrodha (P *nigrodha*). As a deva, reflecting on his good karma, he reappears before the Bodhisattva with other devas and, out of gratitude, again invites him to use the banyan (Mvst 3:301 f).¹³

According to **the Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra**, a shepherd boy offers the Bodhisattva some goat’s milk, and also anoints the latter’s body with it. Then, cutting some banyan branches, he makes a shelter over the Bodhisattva’s head. These branches then take root, bear leaves and flowers as if to shelter him.¹⁴

¹⁰ “Knowledge of ... the faculties,” *indriya,paro,pariyatta,ñāṇa*.

¹¹ S 4.25/1:125-127 @ SD 36.6.

¹² A well known 2nd-century Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit text of the Lokottara,vāda (a Mahāsaṅghika branch), an early Mahayana school.

¹³ For BHS parallels, see Mvst:J 3:269-274.

¹⁴ T3.188 異出菩薩本起經 *Yì chū púsà běnqǐ jīng* (“A different translation of the origin or former history of the Bodhisattva”). The Skt orig is lost, preserved only in the Chinese, a work of Dharmaguptaka school. Tr S Beal, *The Romantic Legend of Sākya Buddha*, London, 1875:192, 238. See Ency Bsm: Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra.

2.1.1.2 ETYMOLOGIES OF AJA,PĀLA. The Commentaries give three explanations for the derivation of the name *aja,pāla*. The most complete set of definitions is found in the Udāna Commentary, which gives the following etymologies:

- (1) Goatherds (*aja,pālā*) rest in its shade (also VA 5:957; UA 51).
- (2) Old brahmins, incapable of reciting the Vedas, live here in dwellings protected by walls and ramparts (*na jāpantīti ajapā, mantānam anajjhāyakā ajapā, ālenti arīyanti nivāsam etthāti ajapālo'ti*).
- (3) It shelters the goats that seek its shade at midday. (UA 51)

Both the Vinaya Commentary (VA 5:957) and the Aṅguttara Commentary (AA 3:24) give only one and the same explanation of the name *aja,pāla*, that is, as (1) above, but both their Ṭīkā add etymologies (2) and (3) above.¹⁵

2.1.2 Key events at the Aja,pāla Nigrodha

2.1.2.1 After the Bodhi tree, the goatherd banyan (*aja,pāla nigrodha*) is the most famous banyan tree in Buddhist history and literature. It grows on the east side of the Bodhi tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā river, near Uruvelā.¹⁶ The tree is important even before the awakening. For, it is here that the Bodhisattva spends some time (D 2:267), and where the lady Sujātā offers him a bowl of milk-rice, his last meal before the awakening (J 1:16, 69).

2.1.2.2 From the **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), we learn that it is here, too, under the Ajapāla Nigrodha, that, very soon after the awakening, Māra persuades the Buddha to pass right away as he has achieved his goal (D 2:112). In fact, the Saṃyutta records that Māra appears to the Buddha several times here trying to distract him. [2.1.3]

2.1.2.3 At the end of the 1st week, says the **Vinaya**, the Buddha, having emerged from his meditation, meets the *humhuṅka* brahmin.¹⁷ **The Vinaya Commentary and the Udāna Commentary**, however, place this event in the 5th week (VA 5:957; UA 54). In the 5th week, too, it is said, Māra approaches the Buddha, beseeching him *not* to teach the Dharma, but fails.¹⁸ Then, Māra's daughters, reacting to their father's failure, try to tempt the Buddha themselves, without any success.¹⁹

2.1.2.4 The Mahā,vastu, however, says that it is only *after* the 5th week spent by the Buddha at the abode of the naga king, Mucalinda, that he sits for 7 days, that is, the whole of the 6th week, enjoying blissful meditation at the foot of the goatherd banyan (Mvst 3:302 f). In the next section, it says, without mentioning the time, that the Buddha then reflects on the profundity of the Dharma he has awakened to, and the difficulty for others to understand it, and so thinks of living a solitary forest life. This is when Brahmā Sahampati appears before the Buddha to implore him to teach the Dharma (Mvst 3:314 f).

2.1.2.5 In the seventh week, says the Vinaya, the Buddha leaves the *raj'āyatana* (Bauhinia latifolia) tree and returns to the goatherd banyan (V 1:4). There, it is said that Brahmā Sahampati appears to him and beseeches him to teach the Dharma (V 1:5-7). This account of Brahmā's supplication agrees with that of the Mahāvastu just mentioned.

¹⁵ VAṬ:Be 3:144; AAṬ:Be 2:243.

¹⁶ For a map of the Bodhi tree area and location of the goatherd banyan, see diag, **The first seven weeks**, SD 63.1.

¹⁷ V 1:2 f; U 1.4/3 (no week is mentioned). A similar episode is found at Mvst 3:325. Comys say that this brahmin believes in visual good omens (*diṭṭhi,maṅgalika*), and who walks about sounding *hum* from conceit and anger (VA 957; UA 52). E Hardy says that the name "apparently is the designation of a class of brahmins uttering and putting their confidence in the sound *hum*" (JPTS 5 1987-1901:42). On *hum* meaning disapproval, cf Vism 96, 105. On its possible meaning of approval or acceptance, see VvA 77. See U:W 3n & U:M 13 n18.

¹⁸ **Satta Vassa S** (S 4.24/1:122-124), SD 36.5.

¹⁹ **Māra,dhītu S** (S 4.25/1:125-127), SD 36.6; J 1:78, 469

The Commentaries, however, put this event in the 8th week (SA 1:195), that is, immediately after the meal offered by the merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika.²⁰ Around that time, too, when the Buddha reflects on the propriety of finding a teacher to show respect to—he decides that it is the Dharma that should be respected—Brahmā Sahampati again appears, supporting the Buddha in his reflection.²¹

2.1.2.6 Various discourses record the Buddha as reflecting on some key models for teaching the Dharma while he is sitting under the goatherd banyan. **The Brahmā Sutta** (S 4.18) and **the Magga Sutta** (S 47.4) speak of the four satipatthanas, while **the Sahampati Brahmā Sutta** (S 48.57) mention the five faculties, and **the Uruveḷā Sutta 1** (A 4.21) the three trainings [2.1.3]. Each time, Brahmā Sahampati appears approving of his thoughts. These are vital clues telling us how the Buddha formulates various models for this teaching the Dharma.

2.1.2.7 It is said in **the Uruveḷā Sutta 2** (A 4.22) that several old brahmins visit the Buddha here, inquiring whether it is true that, despite his youth, he does not honour older brahmins. In reply, the Buddha teaches them the 4 conditions that make an elder (*thera,karanā dhamma*) [2.1.3]. This discourse probably records a later event, at a time when the Buddha's teaching is more established. It is unlikely that such brahmin elders would ask the Buddha such a question when he has had little contact with them. However, there is still the possibility that this discourse records an event that follows up from the Buddha's meeting with the *humhuṅka* brahmin (see above).

2.1.3 A summary of discourses related to the Aja,pāla Nigrodha

The events of the Satta Vassa Sutta (S 4.24) and the Māra,dhītu Sutta (S 4.25) occurs while the Buddha is sitting under the goatherd banyan (*aja,pāla nigrodha*), said to be during the 5th week after the awakening.²² Other discourses that are located at this same spot (but not necessarily given at the same time) include:

• Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta	Māra invites the Buddha to finally pass away ²³	D 16,
• Sakka Pañha Sutta	Pañca,sikha composes inspirational verses ²⁴	D 21,
• Tapo,kamma Sutta	The Buddha reflects on his giving up self-mortification ²⁵	S 4.1,
• Satta Vassa Sutta	Māra fails to taunt the Buddha for seven years ²⁶	S 4.24,
• Māra Dhītu Sutta	Māra's daughters fail to tempt the Buddha ²⁷	S 4.25,
• Brahmā Sutta	The Buddha reflects on satipatthana (3 rd person report) ²⁸	S 47.18,
• Magga Sutta	The Buddha reflects on satipatthana (1 st person report) ²⁹	S 47.43,
• Sahampati Brahmā Sutta	The Buddha reflects on the five faculties ³⁰	S 48.57,
• Uruveḷā Sutta 1	The Buddha reflects on the three trainings ³¹	A 4.21,

²⁰ MA 2:185f; J 1:81. Mvst records this as happening immediately after the 7 weeks (Mvst 3:302 f).

²¹ S 1:138 f; A 2:20 f.

²² J 1:78 f; DhA 3:295-298; Mvst 3:281-286.

²³ D 16,3.34/2:112 (SD 9).

²⁴ D 21,1.6/2:267 (SD 34.8).

²⁵ S 4.1/1:103 (SD 79.8).

²⁶ S 4.24/1:122 (SD 36.5). The events of this Sutta and the next occur in the 1st year of the ministry (SA 1:185).

See §1 n.

²⁷ The foll **Māra Dhītu S** (S 4.25/1:125-127), SD 36.6, on the temptation by Māra's daughters, is clearly a sequel to **Satta Vassa S** (S 4.24). See prec n.

²⁸ S 47.18/5:167. On *satipatṭhāna*, see **Satipatṭhana S** (M 10/1:55-63), SD 13.1+3.

²⁹ S 47.43/5:185: see prec n.

³⁰ S 48.57/5:232. The 5 faculties (*pañc'indriya*) are: (1) faith (*saddhā*), (2) effort (*virīya*), (3) mindfulness (*sati*), (4) concentration, and (5) wisdom (*paññā*): see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50/5:225 f), SD 10.4.

- **Uruveḷā Sutta 2** The Buddha meets some old brahmins³² A 4.22,
- **Humhuṅka Sutta** The Buddha meets a *humhuṅka* brahmin³³ U 1.4.

The Aja,pāla Nigrodha, besides being the venue for Māra approaching the Buddha on various occasions, is also the scene of the following significant events in the Buddha's life:

- The lady Sujātā offers milk-rice to the Bodhisattva just before his awakening (J 1:68 f; DhA 1:71),
- Brahmā Sahampati invites the Buddha to teach the Dharma to the world (V 1:4-6; S 6.1/1:137 f).

2.2 RELATED PARABLES

The Pali word for “weakness” here is *otāra*, which literally means “opportunity,” and which the Commentary glosses as *vivara*, “opening” (SA 1:185). The word *otāra* is found in the following discourses, each of which, using a parable, describes Māra's determination to catch us unawares when we are unmindful, that is:

- **Kummôpama Sutta** A jackal is unable to hurt a tortoise in its shell S 35.240/4:178,
- **Avassuta Pariyāya Sutta** A hut of reed or grass easily catches fire S 35.243/4:185 f,
- **Sakuṇ'agghi Sutta** A quail hiding in the earth is safe from a hawk S 47.6/5:147,
- **Makkaṭa Sutta** A monkey that avoids pitch³⁴ on a tree is untrapped S 47.7/5:149.³⁵

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Satta Vassa Sutta

The Discourse on the Seven Years

S 4.24

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One, when he first awakened, was staying at the foot of the goatherd banyan,³⁶ on the bank of the river Nerañjarā, near Uruveḷā.³⁷

³¹ A 4.21/2:20. The 3 trainings (*ti,sikkhā*) are the training (1) in moral virtue (*sīla,sikkhā*), (2) in mental concentration (*samādhi,sikkhā*), and (3) in wisdom (*paññā,sikkhā*): see **Ti Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235), SD 24.10c.

³² A 4.22/2:22. Several old brahmins visit the Buddha here, inquiring whether it were true that, on account of his youth, he does not honour older brahmins. In reply, the Buddha teaches them the 4 conditions that make an elder (*thera,karanā dhamma*), ie (1) moral virtue in keeping with the monastic discipline; (2) great learning in the Dharma; (3) being an adept in attaining the 4 dhyanas; (4) an arhat (A 4.22.3/2:22 f), SD 71.13.

³³ U 1.4/3 @ SD 71.12.

³⁴ A thick sticky resin derived from the sap of various trees, such as conifers (eg the pines).

³⁵ See further Ency Bsm: Ajapāla-Nigrodha.

³⁶ This is prob the Indian banyan, *Ficus benghalensis*. For a panoramic view of it, see <http://www.panoramas.dk/fullscreen7/f23-banyan-tree.html>.

³⁷ *Ekam samayaṃ bhagavā uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre ajapāla,nigrodhe*. Comy explains the 7 years of Māra's tailing the Buddha as his 6 years (of self-mortification) before the awakening and for a year after that (*pure bodhiyā chab,bassāni, bodhito pacchā ekam vassam*, SA 1:185). The foll **Māra Dhitu S** (S 4.25/1:125-127), SD 36.6, on the temptation by Māra's daughters, is clearly a sequel to **Satta Vassa S**. Comys & Mvst (a Skt work) place the temptation episode in the 5th week after the awakening (J 1:78 f; DhA 3:295-298; Mvst 3:281-286). This is confirmed by the Sutta's location at the foot of the goatherd banyan on the Nerañjarā river-bank near Uruveḷā.

2 Now at that time, Māra the bad one had been pursuing the Blessed One for 7 years,³⁸ closely watching for any weakness, but found none.³⁹

3 Then, Māra the bad one, approached the Blessed One, and addressed him in verse: [123]

3.2 *Sokāvatiṇṇo nu vanamhi jhāyasi
vittam nu jīno uda patthayāno
āguṃ nu gāmasmim akāsi kiñci
kasmā janena na karosi sakkhim
sakkhī na sampajjati kenaci te 'ti* Are you sunk in sorrow, meditating in the woods?
Perhaps you have lost wealth or pining for it?
Or committed some crime in the village?
Why don't you make friends with people?
Why don't you form any intimate tie?⁴⁰ **498**

[Buddha:]

4 *Sokassa mūlam palikhāya sabbam
anāgu jhāyāmi asocamāno
chetvāna sabbam bhava,lobha,jappam
anāsavo jhāyāmi pamatta,bandhū 'ti* Having dug up entirely sorrow's root,
guiltless, I meditate, sorrow-free.
Having cut off all greedy urge for existence,⁴¹
I meditate taintless, O kinsman of the heedless! **499**

[Māra:]

5 *Yaṃ vadanti mama-y-idan 'ti
ye vadanti maman 'ti ca
ettha ce te mano atthi
na me samaṇa mokkhasī 'ti* ⁴²That of which they say, "It's mine,"
and those who speak of "mine"—
if your mind exists among these,
you won't escape me, recluse! **500**

[Buddha:]

6 *Yaṃ vadanti na taṃ mayham
ye vadanti na te aham
evaṃ pāpima jānāhi
na me maggam pi dakkhasī 'ti* ⁴³That which they speak of is not mine,
I'm not one of those who speak so.
You should know thus, O bad one:
My path you will not see. **501**

[Māra:]

7 *Sace maggam anubuddham⁴⁴
khemaṃ amata,gāminam
apehi gaccha tvam ev'eko
kim aññam anusāsasī 'ti* If you have realized the path,
the secure way leading to the deathless,
depart and walk your path all alone!
What's the point of instructing others?⁴⁵ **502**

³⁸ For a similar statement, see (Sutta Nipāta) Padhāna S (Sn 448), SD 51.11. Cf (Puñña) Mettā S (A 7.58a), where the Buddha states that "For 7 years I cultivated thoughts of lovingkindness," but this seems to be an allusion to one of the Bodhisattva's past lives: SD 2.11a. On the significance of the 7 years, see above (1.1.3).

³⁹ *Tena kho pana samayena māro pāpimā satta,vassāni bhagavantam anubandho hoti otārāpekkho otāram alabh-amāno.* "Closely watching for a weakness" (*otārāpekkho*): Māra thinks, "If I see anything improper (*ananucchavika*) in the recluse Gotama's conduct by way of his body speech or mind, I will reprove him." He is unable to find even a dust mote (of misconduct) to be cleansed (SA 1:179, 185).

⁴⁰ This same verse is later used by Rāgā, Māra's daughter, too, in her attempt to distract the Buddha (S 4.25.17/-1:126), SD 36.6.

⁴¹ "Greedy urge for existence" (*bhava,lobha,jappa*), ie craving by way of greed for existence (*bhava,lobha,sāṅkhataṃ taṇham*, SA 1:185).

⁴² This and foll verses as in **Kassaka S** (S 484+485/4.19/1:116), SD 43.9.

⁴³ See prec n.

⁴⁴ *Anubuddham*, "have realized" (V 1:231,1; D 2:123,8*; S 1:137,24* = Sn 384), here pp of *anubujjhati*, "he understands, is conscious of."

⁴⁵ See (Sāla,vatikā) **Lohicca S** (D 12), where the Buddha extricates Lohicca from his wrong view that even if one has realized the truth, it is not worth declaring it to others, ie, one should not teach anything (D 12/1:224-234), SD 34.8.

[Buddha:]

8 *Amaccu,dheyyam*⁴⁶ *pucchanti*
ye janā pāra,gāmīno
tesāham puṭṭho akkhāmi
yam saccam tam nirūpadhin'ti

“What lies beyond Death’s realm?” ask
those people going to the far shore.
When asked, I explain to them
the truth free from acquisition.⁴⁷

503

Māra’s lamentation

9 “Suppose, bhante, there is a lotus pond not far from a village or a market town, and therein, there is a crab.⁴⁸

Then, bhante, a number of boys or girls,⁴⁹ having come from the village, would approach the lotus pond, and take the crab out of the water and leave it on dry land.

Then, bhante, whenever the crab were to stretch a claw, those boys or girls would hack it off, break it off, smash it up with sticks or stones.

Thus, bhante, the crab, with all its claws hacked off, broken off, smashed up, would not be able to return to the lotus pond.

Even so, bhante, all those displays, trickery, and twistings (of mine)⁵⁰ [124] have been hacked off, broken off, smashed up, by the Blessed One.

Now, I, bhante, am unable to approach the Blessed One to look for any weakness.”

Māra’s verses of dejection⁵¹

10 Then, Māra the bad one uttered these verses before the Blessed One:

⁴⁶ Comy glosses as nirvana (SA 1:185). Cf gen *akusalā amaccu,dheyyassa*, “unskilled in what is outside Death’s realm” (M 35.3/1:225,19), which Comy glosses as the 9 supramundane states (*nava,look’uttara dhamma*), ie the 4 pairs of saints (streamwinner-to-be, streamwinner-become, once-returner-to-be, once-returner-become, non-returner-to-be, non-returner-become, arhat-to-be, arhat-become) and nirvana (MA 2:266). Cf *amāra,dheyya*, “not Māra’s realm” (M 1:225,18), which is also glossed as the 9 supramundane states (MA 2:266).

⁴⁷ Be Ce Ee (1998) Se *yam saccam tam nirūpadhim*; Ee *yam sabban tam nirūpadhim*, “all that which is free from any acquisition.” The supreme truth (*param’attha sacca*) is nirvana, which is free from any acquisition (*upadhi*), ie attachment to any kind of possession, material or mental, that leads to rebirth; see DEB: upadhi.

⁴⁸ This parable recurs in a social context, spoken by Dummukha the Licchavī youth, of Saccaka’s defeat, in **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35.23/1:234,7-18), SD 26.5.

⁴⁹ “A number of boys or girls,” *sambahulā kumārakā vā kumārikāyo*: “a rare instance instance in Buddhist literature of the male sex being placed first” (S:RD 1:154 n7).

⁵⁰ *Visūkāyikāni visevitāni vipphanditāni. Visūkāyita* (PED), pp of *visūkāyeti*, denom fr *visūka*) 1 restlessness, impatience (M 1:446). 2 disorder, twisting, distortion (of views); usu in phrase *diṭṭhi~* with *visevita vipphandita*: M 35.-23/1:234; S 4.24.9/1:123. Native glosses: *Visūkāyikānī’ti māra,visūkāni* (“twitching on account of Māra”). *Visevitānī’ti viruddha,sevitāni* (“associated with what is contrary [hindering]”), “*appam āyu manussānaṃ, accayanti aho,-rattā’ti vutte, “dīgham āyu manussānaṃ, nāccayanti ahorattā’ti ādīni paṭiloma,kāraṇāni* (“saying contrary such things as, ‘short is human life, passing by night and day,’ or ‘long is human life, not passing by night and day’”). *Vipphanditānī’ti, tamhi tamhi kāle hatthi,rāja,vaṇṇa,sappa,vaṇṇ’ādi,dassanāni* (“such as the visions of a forms of a royal elephant or a serpent”) (SA 1:186). Comy ad **M 1:123**: *vinivijjh’atthena viloman’atthena*, “with the sense of being penetrated or reversed,” MA 1:71; Comy ad **S 1:123**: *sabbaṃ micchā,diṭṭhi,vevacanam eva*, “merely a word for all wrong views,” SA 2:69; **Dhs §381/78** (Dhs:R 93, “disorder of opinion”); Nm 2:271 (iii); Vbh 145; DhsA 253. Comy ad **Sn 55** glosses *diṭṭhi,visūkāni* as referring to “falling into (one or other of) the 62 bases of wrong views (*dvā,saṭṭhi diṭṭhi,gatāni*, SnA 106,13); or “the puppet-shows of heresy” (DPL: *visūkām*). *Visūkāyikānī’ti diṭṭhi,visūkāni* (“restlessness on account of views”). *Visevitānī’ti diṭṭhi,sañcariyāni* (“shaken by views”). *Vipphanditānī’ti diṭṭhi,vipphanditāni*, “floundering in views” (MA 2:280). Cf vl S 1:123.

⁵¹ *Nibbejanīyā gāthā*: see below, n on *nibbejanīyā*. For nn on the verses, see (**Sutta Nipāta**) **Padhāna S** (Sn 448-449), SD 51.11.

- 11⁵² *Meda,vaṇṇañ ca pāsāṇaṃ
vāyaso anupariyagā
apettha mudum vindema
api assādanā siyā* A crow circle a stone
that looked like a piece of fat, thinking:
“Perhaps we shall find something tender there!
Perhaps, even something tasty!” **504**
- 12 *Aladdhā tattha assādaṃ
vāyas’etto apakkame
kāko’va selam āsajja
nibbijāpema gotamā’ti.* Not getting anything tasty there,
the crow flew away from there.
Just as the crow that assailed the rock,
disgusted, we leave Gotama. **505**

13 ⁵³Then, Māra, having uttered these **verses of dejection**⁵⁴ before the Blessed One, went away to a spot not far away from the Buddha, and sat down cross-legged, silent, dismayed, his shoulders drooping, hanging his head, downcast and bewildered, scratching the ground with a stick.⁵⁵

— evaṃ —

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⁵² This and foll verse recur as **Sn 447 f** in (**Sutta Nipāta**) **Padhāna S** (Sn 3,2), SD 51.11, where see nn.

⁵³ This whole section is the “defeated figure” pericope (Ariṭṭha, M 22,7/1:132,28-30; Saccaka, M 35,22/1:234,1-2; Sāti, M 38,6/1:258,28-30): found in Ce Ee Se, but omitted in Be & Ee 1(1998), which moves it to beginning of the foll **Māra,dhītu S** (S 4.25/1:125-127), SD 36.6. However, as the two suttas form a single narrative, this variation is not significant.

⁵⁴ *Nibbejanīyā*, which Comy glosses as *ukkaṇṭhanīyā*, “feeling dissatisfied, regretful” (SA 1:186,9), but does not given any deviation; DPL der its from **nibbejana*, “associated with √VII, or with *nibbijjati*, “to be disgusted with,” and def it as “connected with recoiling; connected with despondency, giving up” (S 1:124,3; SA 1:186,9; SnA 393,-8). The word is clearly a near-synonym of *nibbidā*, “disgust”: cf Skt *nirvid* (SED); BHS *nirvidā* (BHSD).

⁵⁵ *Atha kho māro pāpimā bhagavato santike imā nibbejanīyā gāthāyo abhāsivā tamhā ṭhānā apakkamma bhagavati avidūre pathaviyaṃ pallaṅkena nisīdi tunhī bhūto maṅku,bhūto patta-k,khandho adho,mukho pajjhāyanto appa-ṭibhāno kaṭṭhena bhūmiṃ vilikkhanto.* As at **Satta Vassa S** (S 4.24,13/1:124), SD 36.5, = **Māra Dhītu S** (S 4.25,1/-1:234), SD 36.6. The underscored is stock: Nigrodha, **Udumbarikā Siha,nāda S** (D 25,21/3:53), SD 1.4; the monk Ariṭṭha, **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,7/1:132), SD 3.13; Saccaka Nigaṇṭha,putta, **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35,22/1:234), SD 26.5; the monk Sāti, **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38,6/1:258), SD 7.10; the brahmin youth, Assalāyana, **Assalāyana S** (M 93,22/2:154), SD 40a.2; the brahmin youth Uttara, **Indriya Bhāvanā S** (M 152,2/3:298), SD 17.13; the wanderer Sarabha, **Sarabha S** (A 3.64/1:186 f×5), SD 51.23. See (1.2).