

## 7

***Buddhānussati***

The recollection of the Buddha

Theme: The 9 virtues of the Buddha

Selections and reflections by Piya Tan ©2006

**1 The recollection of the Buddha****1.1 BENEFITS OF THE BUDDHA RECOLLECTION**

**1.1.1** Buddhaghosa, in his magnum opus, **the Visuddhi, magga**, explains the various qualities or virtues (*guṇa*) of the 3 jewels in great detail. The recollection of the Buddha is the first of six well known recollection exercises (*anussati*), said to be the streamwinner's lifelong practice (*nissaya, vihāra*).<sup>1</sup> The importance of the 6 recollections are attested by the fact that Buddhaghosa presents a whole sizeable chapter in his **Visuddhi, magga** (ch 7) on them.<sup>2</sup>

**1.1.2** According to Buddhaghosa, these 6 recollections succeed only in the noble disciples (*imā ca cha anussatiyo ariya, sāvakaṇaṃ yeva ijjhanti*), because the virtues of the 3 jewels are evident (*pākaṭa*) to them.<sup>3</sup> Since the noble disciples (beginning with the streamwinner) have wise faith, they would naturally reap the richest fruit of these practices.

This does not mean, however, that the practice is fruitless for the ordinary worldling. In fact, these 6 recollections are efficacious for the faith-inclined,<sup>4</sup> for whom these practices would form a support for more advanced spiritual exercises.

**1.1.3** The significance of the 6 recollections is clearly stated in **the Sambādh'okāsa Sutta** (A 6.26), where Mahā Kaccāna exults:

It is wonderful, avuso! It is marvellous, avuso! How the realization of 'the open' (okāsa) in the crowded [the household life] (sambādha) has been discovered by the Blessed One, who knows, who sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of physical and mental pain,<sup>5</sup> for gaining the right way,<sup>6</sup> for realizing nirvana, that is to say, the 6 bases<sup>7</sup> of recollection (cha anussati-ṭ, -ṭhānāni). What are the six?

The recollection of the Buddha,	<i>buddhānussati,</i>	
the recollection of the Dharma,	<i>dhammānussati,</i>	
the recollection of the Sangha,	<i>saṅghānussati,</i>	
the recollection of moral virtue,	<i>sīlānussati,</i>	
the recollection of charity,	<i>cāgānussati,</i>	
the recollection of the devas.	<i>devatānussati.</i>	(A 6.26/3:314 f), SD 15.6

<sup>1</sup> See eg (**Agata, phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10/3:284-288) = SD 15.3; see also AA 3:337 f.

<sup>2</sup> 43 pp in Ñāṇamoli's tr: *Vism* 7/197-228.

<sup>3</sup> *Vism* 7.121/226.

<sup>4</sup> See **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1, esp 8.1, Diag 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Dukkha, domanassa*, sometimes tr as "pain and sadness." See Walshe 1996 (D:W 589 n627). For a broader sense of *domanassa*, see §3 n on *abhijjhā, domanassa*.

<sup>6</sup> "For gaining the right way," *ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*. See Intro (3.3) above.

<sup>7</sup> Or, station.

## 1.2 THE BUDDHA RECOLLECTION IN PRACTICE

**1.2.1** In the Pali Suttas, *buddhānussati* rarely occurs by itself, but usually in a set of 3, 4, 5, 6<sup>8</sup> or 10 recollections (*anussati*).<sup>9</sup> It is a simple practice that can be done in two ways:

- (1) as a mindful recitation or “simple recollection” of the Buddha’s “nine virtues beginning with *araham*” (*navārah’ādi,guṇa*),<sup>10</sup> or
- (2) as a “mindful recollection” of each of the nine virtues in turn, or any of them, in some detail.

Such a practice, in effect, is also a “confession of faith” in the Buddha, a more detailed version of the going for refuge to the Buddha.<sup>11</sup> Amongst those who are faith inclined, such a recitation or recollection is an expressly psychotropic (psychologically effective) or apotropaic (magically efficacious) undertaking.<sup>12</sup>

**1.2.2** Practitioners of early Buddhist meditation invariably would use the *buddhānussati* as a consciousness-altering means that, by inspiring some level of joy, would displace a distraction or any of the 5 mental hindrances.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.3 THE SANDHITA THERA,GĀTHĀ

The Sandhita Thera,gāthā speak of the efficacy of the Buddhānussati, thus:

- 217** *Assatthe harit’obhāse samvirūḷharṃhi pādape  
ekam Buddha,gataṃ saññam alabhittham patissato*<sup>14</sup>  
At the foot of the sprouting green-hued fig-tree,  
mindful in the perception of the Buddha, I obtained the one.<sup>15</sup>
- 218** *ekatimse ito kappe yam saññam alabhin tadā  
tassā saññāya vāhasā patto me āsava-k,khayo ti*  
That perception I obtained 31 aeons ago,  
On account of that perception, I gained influxes’ ending. (Tha 217 f)

This Thera,gāthā of the elder Sandhita recalls how he gains arhathood based on the recollection of the Buddha. The Thera,gāthā Commentary explains that using this recollection, the elder gains deep

<sup>8</sup> On the 6 inspiring meditations, see (1.3) below & further (**Agata,phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10/3:284-288) @ SD 15.3 (2).

<sup>9</sup> For the set of 10 recollections, see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (Fig 8.1).

<sup>10</sup> This is a non-canonical tt (referring to the *Iti’pi so gatha*), also shortened to *navāraha,guṇa* or *nav’araha,gūna*, both meaning “the 9 worthy virtues” or “the 9 virtues of the worthy one.” See **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7 (2.2). The **Mahāyāna version** adds the epithet *tathāgata* at the start, and is called “the 10 virtues” (*daśa adhivacana*): for details, see E Lamotte, *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, Louvain, 1949: ch 1 (1:126-144F), ch 36 (3:1340F). (Eng tr G M Chodron, 2001, 1:109-144, 3:1095-1113).

<sup>11</sup> See **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7.

<sup>12</sup> See Harrison 1992:219.

<sup>13</sup> See **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1 (2.1).

<sup>14</sup> This stanza as at **Sandhita Therāpadāna** (Ap 1:210); also called **Vasanā,bhāgiya S** (Nett 138); ThaA 2:82.

<sup>15</sup> “The one” (*ekam*), here could mean either mental focus (*samādhi*) or nirvana; cf *ekam ayati*: “it goes to the one,” ie, it leads to the one goal, nirvana. (DA 743 = MA 1:229 f; cf PmA 486 ≠ NmA 52 f). See discussion on *ekāyana,maggo* in **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss**, SD 13.1(3.2).

concentration which enables him to recall past Buddhas, with the result that he realizes that even Buddhas are impermanent, which in turn leads to his awakening (ThaA 2:82).

#### 1.4 THE MAHĀYĀNA LIST OF THE BUDDHA’S VIRTUES

The Buddhānussati verse has a Sanskrit parallel, the Buddhānusmṛti, in **the Dhvajāgra Sūtra**.<sup>16</sup>

<b><u>Buddhānusmṛti (Skt)</u></b>	<b><u>Buddhānussati (Pali)</u></b>
iti hi sa bhagavām tathāgato <sup>17</sup>	iti pi so bhagavā
‘rhām	arahaṃ
samyak,sambuddho	sammā,sambuddho
vidyācaraṇa,sampanna	vijjā,caraṇa,sampanno
sugato	sugato
loka,vid	loka,vidū
anuttaraḥ puruṣa,damya,sārathi	anuttaro purisa,damma,sārathi
śāstā deva,manuṣyāṇām	satthā deva,manussānaṃ
buddho	buddho
bhagavām	bhagavā ti   (S 1:219,31) [11]

The Mahāyāna adds *tathāgata* to the list of the Buddha’s 9 virtues, so that it has “the ten virtues of the Buddha,” as shown in the Sanskrit formula above. We shall now examine each of these ten qualities in some detail.

## 2 The Tathāgata

### 2.1 WHY THE BUDDHA IS TATHĀGATA

#### 2.1.1 Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta

The Buddha is called *tathāgata* because he has discovered true reality, which he formulates as the 4 noble truths. In **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), the Buddha declares that he mastered the 4 noble truths in its 3 phases and 12 aspects,<sup>18</sup> that is, in terms of theory (or study), practice and realization:

**(a) The noble truth that is *dukkha*.**

- i. THEORY: There is the reality, that is, the five aggregates, characterized by unsatisfactoriness, impermanence and lack of abiding self;

<sup>16</sup> The Skt of the Buddhānussati verse is found in Sander (1987); all three passages are found in Skilling 1994 1:-269-275.

<sup>17</sup> On *tathāgata* missing from the Pāli formula, see Paul J Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 1994: 60-66.

<sup>18</sup> The 3 phases (*ti,parivaṭṭa*) are: (1) the knowledge of each truth (*sacca,ñāṇa*), (2) the knowledge of the task to be done for each truth (*kicca,ñāṇa*), and (3) the knowledge of the accomplishment of these tasks (*kata,ñāṇa*). When these 3 phases are applied to each of the four truths, they total as 12 modes (*dvādas’ākāra*). The Commentarial version of these 3 phases are called “the 3 true teachings” (*saddhamma*), viz, the True Dharma as theory (textual aspect) (*pariyatti saddhamma*), the True Dharma as practice (*paṭipatti saddhamma*), and the True Dharma as realization (*paṭivedha saddhamma*) (VA 225; AA 5.33; cf Nm 143 where the first two are listed). See **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (S 56.11), SD 1.1 for details.

- ii. PRACTICE: this reality should be understood;
- iii. REALIZATION: he has fully understood the true nature of reality.
- (b) The noble truth that is the arising of *dukkha*.**
  - i. THEORY: There is the arising of this reality, that is, the craving that generates repeated cycles of births and deaths;
  - ii. PRACTICE: this craving should be abandoned;
  - iii. REALIZATION: he has abandoned this craving.
- (c) The noble truth that is the ending of *dukkha*.**
  - i. THEORY: There is the cessation of this unsatisfactoriness, that is, nirvana, where the aggregates of clinging no more arise;
  - ii. PRACTICE: this nirvana should be realized;
  - iii. REALIZATION: he has realized nirvana.
- (d) The noble truth that is the way leading to the ending of *dukkha*.**
  - i. THEORY: There is the way leading to the ending of unsatisfactoriness, that is, the noble eightfold path;
  - ii. PRACTICE: this way should be cultivated;
  - iii. REALIZATION: he has cultivated the way. (S 56.11,9-12/5:422), SD 1.1

Each of these 4 stages implies a kind of “movement” (*gata*) towards the truth (*tatha*).<sup>19</sup>

### **2.1.2 The (Tathāgata) Loka Sutta**

All this explanation has been succinctly stated in **the (Catukka) Loka Sutta** (A 4.23 ≈ It 112), which gives a canonical definition of the Buddha in terms of *tathāgata*, and is here fully translated in **the (Tathāgata) Loka Sutta** (It 112 ≈ A 4.23).<sup>20</sup> Textually, it is likely that **A 4.23** is older than **It 112**; hence, a 4.23 is given first.

## **SD 15.7(2a)**

## **(Catukka) Loka Sutta**

The (Fours) Discourse on the World | **A 4.23/2:23 f ≈ It 112/4.13/121-123**

Traditional: A 4.1.3.3 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 4, Catukka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 3, Uruvela Vagga 3

Traditional: It 4.13 = Khuddaka Nikayā, Iti,vuttaka 4, Catukka Nipāta, Brāhmaṇa Dhamma Yāga Vagga 13

Theme: The qualities of the Tathagata

**1** The world,<sup>21</sup> bhikshus, is fully understood [fully awakened to]<sup>22</sup> by the Tathagata. The Tathagata is fully released<sup>23</sup> from the world.

The arising [origin] of the world, bhikshus, is fully understood by the Tathagata. The arising of the world has been abandoned<sup>24</sup> by the Tathagata.

The ending of the world, bhikshus, is fully understood by the Tathagata. The ending of the world has been realized<sup>25</sup> by the Tathagata.

<sup>19</sup> See **(Sacca) Tathāgatā S** (S 56.12), SD 53.25 esp (1.3).

<sup>20</sup> For an even more such succinct statement, see Sn 558 = §3.2 below.

<sup>21</sup> Comy glosses *loko* here as *dukkha,saccam*, “the truth that is suffering” (AA 3:31; ItA 2:185).

<sup>22</sup> *Abhisambuddho*.

<sup>23</sup> *Visaṃyutto*, lit unyoked, unharnessed, ie, detached from suffering.

<sup>24</sup> *Pahīno*.

<sup>25</sup> *Sacchikato*.

The path leading to the ending of the world, bhikshus, is fully understood by the Tathagata. The path leading to the ending of the world has been cultivated<sup>26</sup> by the Tathagata.

2 Bhikshus, in the world with its gods, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers<sup>27</sup> and people, whatever is seen, heard, sensed or known, attained, sought after, [24] pondered over in the mind<sup>28</sup>—all<sup>29</sup> that is fully understood by the Tathagata. As such, he is called **Tathāgata**.

2.2 And, bhikshus, from the night that the Tathagata fully awakens to the night he utterly passes away [30]—throughout that period— [It 122] whatever he speaks, utters, points out—all that is just so, not otherwise.<sup>31</sup> As such, he is called **Tathāgata**.

3 Just as the Tathagata speaks, bhikshus, so he acts; just as he<sup>32</sup> acts, so he speaks. Thus, as one who acts as he speaks, who speaks as he acts,<sup>33</sup> he is therefore called **Tathāgata**.<sup>34</sup>

3.2 <sup>35</sup>Bhikshus, in the world with its gods, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people, the Tathagata is the vanquisher, unvanquished, who sees all,<sup>36</sup> overlord.<sup>37</sup> As such, he is called **Tathāgata**.

(1) *Sabba, lokam abhiññāya  
sabba, loke yathā, tatham  
sabba, loka, visarāyutto  
sabba, loke anūpayo*<sup>38</sup>

By directly knowing all the world,  
all in the world just as it is,  
From all the worlds he is freed,  
not clinging to all the worlds.

(2) *Sabbe sabbābhibhū dhīro  
sabba, gantha-p, pamocano*

He is indeed wise, victorious over all,  
released from all bonds,

<sup>26</sup> *Bhāvitā*.

<sup>27</sup> *deva*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati, deva*), ie kings. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti, deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi, deva*), ie the Buddhas, Pratyeka Buddhas and arhats (Nc 307 KhA 123).

<sup>28</sup> “Seen, heard, sensed or known, ... in the mind,” *diṭṭham sutam mutam viññātam pattam pariyesitam anuvicāritam manasā*. “Sensed” (*muta*) here includes the senses of smell, taste and touch. For details, see SD 3,13 (5.2.2). On *diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*, see SD 53.5.

<sup>29</sup> “All,” *sabbam*, It 112 omits.

<sup>30</sup> It 112 adds “(passes away) into the nirvana-element without remaining substrate” (*anupādisesāya nibbāna, dhātuyā*). See n at It 112, SD 15.7(2a), ad loc.

<sup>31</sup> *Sabbam tam tatth’eva hoti no aññathā*.

<sup>32</sup> In place of “he,” It 112 reads “the Tathagata” (*tathāgato*).

<sup>33</sup> This chiasmus (a sentence with mirroring phrases) recurs in **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,11/2:224,3, 26/2:229,25), SD 63.4; **Pāsādika S** (D 29,29.3/3:135), SD 40a.6; (**Tathāgata**) **Loka S** (A 4.23,2/2:24,7) = (It 112/4.13/122,2), SD 15.7(2); (**Nigrodha, kappa**) **Vaṅṅisa S** (only first phrase, Sn 2.12/357a\*/62), SD 80.6 = J 326/104\*; Nc:Be 169.

<sup>34</sup> *Yathā, vādī bhikkhave tathāgato tathā, kāri yathā, kāri tathā, vādī, iti yathā, vādī tathā, kāri yathā, kāri tathā, vādī, tasmā tathāgato ti vuccati*.

<sup>35</sup> This stanza qu at DA 1:67; UA 132; NmA 1:183.

<sup>36</sup> *Añña-d-atthu, dasa*, a difficult cpd. Prob *añña* (Skt *anya*, other, another, something, anything) + *atthu* (imp of *atthi*, “let the rest be (as it will)”) + *dasa* (Skt *dṛśa*, seeing, to be seen, to be perceived or understood, PED). Comys expl as “one who sees everything” (DA 1:67; SA 1:209; UA 132; NmA 1:183). CPD prefers “who only sees, the absolute seer, cf *draṣṭa dṛśimātraḥ*, Yoga, sūtra 2:20. See also DP sv. The meaning here I think is that the Tathagata is one who see all, and sees them only as they really are.

<sup>37</sup> *Tathāgato abhibhū anabhibhūto añña-d-atthu, daso vasa, vattī*: attr to Buddha: **Pāsādika S** (D 29,29.4/3:135,20 = Nc 276); (**Tathāgata**) **Loka S** (A 4.23,3/2:24,13 = It 4.1.13/122,7), SD 15.7(2.1.2). These are usu Mahā Brahmā’s epithets: **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1,5/1:18,7), SD 25.2; **Bhaddaji S** (A 5.170/3:202,9); (**Puñña**) **Mettā S** (A 7.58a,11/4:89,9), SD 2.11a; **Satta Suriya S** (A 7.62,10/4:105,3), SD 47.8; Comy: DA 1:111.

<sup>38</sup> It 112 reads *anūpamo*.

- phuṭṭhassa paramā santi  
nibbānaṃ akuto,bhayarṃ* Having touched the supreme peace,  
nirvana, he is fearless everywhere.
- (3) *Esa khīn'āsava buddho  
anīgho chinna,sarṃsayo  
sabba,kamma-k-khayarṃ patti  
vimutto upadhi,saṅkhayo* This influx-destroyed Buddha,  
anger-free, doubt destroyed,  
Attained to the ending of all karma,  
having destroyed life's props, is freed.
- (4) *Esa so bhagavā buddho  
esa sīho anuttaro  
sa,devakassa lokassa  
brahma,cakkhurṃ pavattayi* This Blessed One, the Buddha,  
this peerless lion  
of the world with its devas,  
has turned the perfect wheel [the Brahma,chakra].
- (5) *Iti devā manussā ca  
ye buddham saraṇaṃ gatā  
saṅgama taṃ namassanti  
mahantaṃ vīta,sāradaṃ* Therefore, devas and humans  
who go to the Buddha as refuge,  
having met him, worship him,  
the mighty one, free of fear.<sup>39</sup>
- (6) *Danto dama,yataṃ seṭṭho  
santo sama,yataṃ isi  
mutto moca,yataṃ<sup>41</sup> aggo  
tiṇṇo tāra,yataṃ<sup>42</sup> varo* Tamed, he is the best of the tamed;<sup>40</sup>  
calmed, he is the seer [master] of the calmed;  
liberated, he is the foremost of liberators;  
crossed over,<sup>43</sup> he is the best of flood-crossers.<sup>44</sup>
- (7) *Iti h'etaṃ mamassanti  
mahantaṃ vīta,sāradaṃ* Saying thus, they will honour this<sup>45</sup>  
mighty one, free of fear, saying,

<sup>39</sup> "Free of fear," (*vīta,sārada*), or "intrepid," opp *sārada*, "inexperienced, shy, immature." ItA glosses as *catu,-vesāraja,yogena*, "by way of being yoked to the fourfold intrepidity [self-confidence]," ie, there is no ground on which anyone can justly accuse the Buddha of, as follows: (1) "You claim to be fully awakened, but are not so." (2) "You claim to have destroyed all the influxes, but you have not done so." (3) "Those things which you declared to be harmful have no power to harm those who follow them." (4) "The Dharma taught by you for the sake of utter ending of suffering, does not lead him who acts accordingly to such a goal." Endowed with this fourfold intrepidity, the Tathagata claims the leader's place, roars his lion-roar in assemblies, and turns the perfect wheel. (M 1:71; A 2:8). On the Buddha's 4 intrepidities, see **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,22-28), SD 49.1.

<sup>40</sup> The ending *-yata* is an adj suffix (mfn), eg *tārayata*: DP: *tiṇṇa* (297 2b); mfn: *tarayanta* (M 56/1:386,6\*), SD 27.1. I take each of these 4 lines as alluding to accomplishments (a) in moral virtue; (b) in calmness (*samatha*); (3) in insight (*vipassanā*), and (d) in liberation (*vimutti*), all of which constitute the supramundane noble path. Conversely, we can see lines ab as alluding respectively to streamwinning and once-returning (where no renunciation is necessary), while lines cd refer to non-returning and arhathood (which, as a rule, entails renunciation). On the 4 verbs here, cf V 4:228,11. On the 4 saints, see **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,42-47), SD 3.13; **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,9-12), SD 7.13; **Samāṇa-m-acala S 1** (A 4.87), SD 20.13 + **S 2** (A 4.88), SD 20.14.

<sup>41</sup> *Moca*, from root-n *moc*, caus of VMUC, to free; PED: "delivery, setting free = *mocana*, "delivering, setting free."

<sup>42</sup> *Tāra,yata* (caus of *tara*, "to cross over" + *yata*, adj suffix), I take as being syn with *tāra*, "one who causes (others) to cross over; one who rescues" (Ap 324,5, 42,12; B 11.7; BA 193,23).

<sup>43</sup> "Crossed over" (*tiṇṇo*), ie, crossed over the 4 floods (*ogha*) (MA 2282; AA 3:4; cf SnA 1:35; ItA 2:38; ThaA 3:51). **The 4 floods** are the influxes, ie, the flood of sense-desires (*kām'ogha*), of existence (*bhav'ogha*), of views (*ditṭh'ogha*), and of ignorance (*avijj'ogha*) (D 3:230, 276; S 5:59; Vbh 374).

<sup>44</sup> "Flood-crossers," a free rendition of *tāra,yata*, "who ferries across," or better, "who causes (others) to cross over." *Tiṇṇa* is often used with *ogha,tiṇṇa*. "who has cross the floods (of influxes, *āsava*, of sense-desires, existence, ignorance and views)" (D 2:261,10\*; S 1:3,18\* = Dh 370 = Tha 15 = 633; A 1:142,3\*; Sn 823); also *tiṇṇ'ogha* (SnA 2:518).

<sup>45</sup> By going to him as refuge (AA 3:34; ItA 2:193).

*sa, devakasmir̃ lokasmir̃  
n'atthi te paṭipuggalo'to*

“In the world with its devas,  
there is none who is your match!”

— evaṃ —

## SD 15.7(2b)

## (Tathāgata) Loka Sutta

The (Tathāgata) Discourse on the World | It 112/4.13/121-123 ≈ A 4.23/2:23 f  
Traditional: It 4.13 = Khuddaka Nikayā, Iti, vuttaka 4, Catukka Nipāta, Brāhmaṇa Dhamma Yāga Vagga 13  
Traditional: A 4.1.3.3 = Aṅgutta Nikāya 4, Catukka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 3, Uruvela Vagga 3  
Theme: The qualities of the Tathagata

1 This was indeed spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the arhat [worthy one], thus have I heard.<sup>46</sup>

1.2 The world,<sup>47</sup> bhikshus, is fully understood [fully awakened to]<sup>48</sup> by the Tathagata. The Tathagata is fully released<sup>49</sup> from the world.

The arising [origin] of the world, bhikshus, is fully understood by the Tathagata. The arising of the world has been abandoned<sup>50</sup> by the Tathagata.

The ending of the world, bhikshus, is fully understood by the Tathagata. The ending of the world has been realized<sup>51</sup> by the Tathagata.

The path leading to the ending of the world, bhikshus, is fully understood by the Tathagata.<sup>52</sup> The path leading to the ending of the world has been cultivated<sup>53</sup> by the Tathagata.

2 Bhikshus, in the world with its gods, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers<sup>54</sup> and people, whatever is seen, heard, sensed or known, attained, sought after, pondered over in the mind<sup>55</sup>—all that is fully understood by the Tathagata. As such, he is called **Tathāgata**.

2.2 And, bhikshus, from the night that the Tathagata fully awakens *to the supreme self-awakening* to the night he utterly passes away *into the nirvana-element without remaining substrate*<sup>56</sup>—throughout

<sup>46</sup> *Vuttaṃ h'etaṃ bhagavatā. Vuttaṃ arahatā' ti me suttaṃ.* This is said to be spoken by the laywoman **Khujj'uttarā**: see SD 16.14 (1). **A 4.23** omits.

<sup>47</sup> Comy glosses *loko* here as *dukkha, saccam*, “the truth that is suffering” (AA 3:31; ItA 2:185).

<sup>48</sup> *Abhisambuddho*.

<sup>49</sup> *Visaṃyutto*, lit unyoked, unharnessed, ie, detached from suffering.

<sup>50</sup> *Pahīno*.

<sup>51</sup> *Sacchikato*.

<sup>52</sup> *Loka, nirodha, gāminī paṭipadā tathāgatena abhisambuddhā.* A 4.23 reads *abhisambuddho*.

<sup>53</sup> *Bhāvitā*.

<sup>54</sup> *deva*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati, deva*), ie kings. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti, deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi, deva*), ie the Buddhas, Pratyeka Buddhas and arhats (Nc 307 KhA 123).

<sup>55</sup> “Seen, heard, sensed or known, ... in the mind,” *diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicāritaṃ manasā*. “Sensed” (*muta*) here includes the senses of smell, taste and touch. For details, see SD 3,13 (5.2.2). On **diṭṭha suta muta viññāta**, see SD 53.5.

<sup>56</sup> *Anupādi, sesāya nibbana, dhātuyā parinibbāyati*: **A 4.23** omits, reading only *parinibbāyati*. “The nirvana-element without remaining substrate” (*anupādisesa nibbāna, dhātu*), not in Ee, but in Be & It. The “residue” (*sesa*) here refers to the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*) (SD 17.1). Upon awakening, ie with the destruction greed, hate and delusion, and other defilements, the Buddha and the arhats continue to live depending on the “residue” of the

that period— [It 122] whatever he speaks, utters, points out—all that is just so, not otherwise.<sup>57</sup> As such, he is called **Tathāgata**.

3 Just as the Tathagata speaks, bhikshus, so he acts; just as *the Tathagata*<sup>58</sup> acts, so he speaks. Thus, as one who acts as he speaks, who speaks as he acts,<sup>59</sup> he is therefore called **Tathāgata**.<sup>60</sup>

3.2 <sup>61</sup>Bhikshus, in the world with its gods, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people, the Tathagata is the vanquisher, unvanquished, who sees all,<sup>62</sup> overlord.<sup>63</sup> As such, he is called **Tathāgata**.

4 This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. The meaning here is spoken thus:<sup>64</sup>

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) <i>Sabba, lokam abhiññāya<br/>sabba, loke yathā, tatham<br/>sabba, loka, visamyutto<br/>sabba, loke anūpayo</i> <sup>65</sup> | By directly knowing all the world,<br>all in the world just as it is,<br>From all the worlds he is freed,<br>not clinging to all the worlds.                    |
| (2) <i>Sabbe sabbābhibhū dhīro<br/>sabba, gantha, pamocano<br/>phuṭṭhassa paramā santi<br/>nibbānam akuto, bhayam</i>             | He is indeed wise, victorious over all,<br>released from all bonds,<br>Having touched the supreme peace,<br>nirvana, he is fearless everywhere. <b>[It 123]</b> |
| (3) <i>Esa khīn'āsava buddho<br/>anīgho chinna, saṃsayo<br/>sabba, kamma-k-khayam patti<br/>vimutto upadhi, saṅkhayo</i>          | This influx-destroyed Buddha,<br>anger-free, doubt destroyed,<br>Attained to the ending of all karma,<br>having destroyed life's props, is freed.               |
| (4) <i>Esa so bhagavā buddho<br/>esa siho anuttaro<br/>sa, devakassa lokassa<br/>brahma, cakkuṃ pavattayi</i>                     | This Blessed One, the Buddha,<br>this peerless lion<br>of the world with its devas,<br>has turned the perfect wheel [the Brahma, chakra].                       |

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aggregates, ie, the nirvana-element with residue (*upādisesa, nibbāna, dhātu*). Upon passing away, the aggregates, too, break up for good. See **Nibbāna, dhatu S** (It 2.2.7), SD 50.13; also SD 45.18 (2.5.2).

<sup>57</sup> *Sabbaṃ taṃ tatth'eva hoti no aññathā*.

<sup>58</sup> *Tathāgato*: **A 4.23** omits.

<sup>59</sup> This chiasmus (a sentence with mirroring phrases) recurs in **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,11/2:224,3, 26/2:229,25), SD 63.4; **Pāsādika S** (D 29,29.3/3:135), SD 40a.6; (**Tathāgata**) **Loka S** (A 4.23,2/2:24,7) = (It 112/4.13/122,2), SD 15.7(2); (**Nigrodha, kappa**) **Vaṅḡisa S** (only first phrase, Sn 2.12/357a\*/62), SD 80.6 = J 326/104\*; Nc:Be 169.

<sup>60</sup> *Yathā, vādī bhikkhave tathāgato tathā, kāri yathā, kāri tathā, vādī, iti yathā, vādī tathā, kāri yathā, kāri tathā, vādī, tasmā tathāgato ti vuccati*.

<sup>61</sup> This stanza qu at DA 1:67; UA 132; NmA 1:183.

<sup>62</sup> *Añña-d-atthu, dasa*, a difficult cpd. Prob *añña* (Skt *anya*, other, another, something, anything) + *atthu* (imp of *atthi*, “let the rest be (as it will)”) + *dasa* (Skt *dṛśa*, seeing, to be seen, to be perceived or understood, PED). Comys expl as “one who sees everything” (DA 1:67; SA 1:209; UA 132; NmA 1:183). CPD prefers “who only sees, the absolute seer, cf *draṣṭa dṛśīmātraḥ*, Yoga, sūtra 2:20. See also DP sv. The meaning here I think is that the Tathagata is one who see all, and sees them only as they really are.

<sup>63</sup> *Tathāgato abhibhū anabhibhūto añña-d-atthu, daso vasa, vattī*: attr to Buddha: **Pāsādika S** (D 29,29.4/3:135,20 = Nc 276); (**Tathāgata**) **Loka S** (A 4.23,3/2:24,13 = It 4.1.13/122,7), SD 15.7(2.1.2). These are usu Mahā Brahmā's epithets: **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1,5/1:18,7), SD 25.2; **Bhaddaji S** (A 5.170/3:202,9); (**Puñña**) **Mettā S** (A 7.58a,11/4:89,9), SD 2.11a; **Satta Suriya S** (A 7.62,10/4:105,3), SD 47.8; Comy: DA 1:111.

<sup>64</sup> *Etam attham bhagavā avoca, tatth'etam iti vuccati*. **A 4.23** omits.

<sup>65</sup> Anūpayo (wr), corrected to *anūpamo* foll **A 4.23**. See CPD: an-ūpamo.



- (5) *Iti devā manussā ca  
ye buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gatā  
saṅgama taṃ namassanti  
mahantaṃ vīta,sāradaṃ* Therefore, devas and humans  
who go to the Buddha as refuge,  
having met him, worship him,  
the mighty one, free of fear.<sup>66</sup>
- (6) *Danto dama,yataṃ seṭṭho  
santo sama,yataṃ isi  
mutto moca,yataṃ<sup>68</sup> aggo  
tiṅṅo tāra,yataṃ<sup>69</sup> varo* Tamed, he is the best of the tamed;<sup>67</sup>  
calmed, he is the seer [master] of the calmed;  
liberated, he is the foremost of liberators;  
crossed over,<sup>70</sup> he is the best of flood-crossers.<sup>71</sup>
- (7) *Iti h'etaṃ mamassanti  
mahantaṃ vīta,sāradaṃ  
sa,devakasmim lokasmim  
n'atthi te paṭipuggalo'to* Saying thus, they will honour this<sup>72</sup>  
mighty one, free of fear, saying,  
“In the world with its devas,  
there is none who is your match!”

5 This matter [meaning] too was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.<sup>73</sup>

— evaṃ —

<sup>66</sup> “Free of fear,” (*vīta,sārada*), or “intrepid,” opp *sārada*, “inexperienced, shy, immature.” ItA glosses as **catu-vesāraja,yogena**, “by way of being yoked to the fourfold intrepidity [self-confidence],” ie, there is no ground on which anyone can justly accuse the Buddha of, as follows: (1) “You claim to be fully awakened, but are not so.” (2) “You claim to have destroyed all the influxes, but you have not done so.” (3) “Those things which you declared to be harmful have no power to harm those who follow them.” (4) “The Dharma taught by you for the sake of utter ending of suffering, does not lead him who acts accordingly to such a goal.” Endowed with this fourfold intrepidity, the Tathagata claims the leader’s place, roars his lion-roar in assemblies, and turns the perfect wheel. (M 1:71; A 2:8). On the Buddha’s 4 intrepidities, see **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,22-28), SD 49.1.

<sup>67</sup> The ending **-yata** is an adj suffix (mfn), eg *tārayata*: DP: *tiṅṅa* (297 2b); mfn: *tarayanta* (M 56/1:386,6\*), SD 27.1. I take each of these 4 lines as alluding to accomplishments (a) in moral virtue; (b) in calmness (*samatha*); (3) in insight (*vipassanā*), and (d) in liberation (*vimutti*), all of which constitute the supramundane noble path. Conversely, we can see lines ab as alluding respectively to streamwinning and once-returning (where no renunciation is necessary), while lines cd refer to non-returning and arhathood (which, as a rule, entails renunciation). On the 4 verbs here, cf V 4:228,11. On the 4 saints, see **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,42-47), SD 3.13; **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,9-12), SD 7.13; **Samaṇa-m-acala S 1** (A 4.87), SD 20.13 + **S 2** (A 4.88), SD 20.14.

<sup>68</sup> *Moca*, from root-n *moc*, caus of VMUC, to free; PED: “delivery, setting free = *mocana*, “delivering, setting free.”

<sup>69</sup> *Tāra,yata* (caus of *tara*, “to cross over” + *yata*, adj suffix), I take as being syn with *tāraka*, “one who causes (others) to cross over; one who rescues” (Ap 324,5, 42,12; B 11.7; BA 193,23).

<sup>70</sup> “Crossed over” (*tiṅṅo*), ie, crossed over the 4 floods (**ogha**) (MA 2282; AA 3:4; cf SnA 1:35; ItA 2:38; ThaA 3:51). The 4 floods are the influxes, ie, the flood of sense-desires (*kāma’ogha*), of existence (*bhava’ogha*), of views (*diṭṭh’ogha*), and of ignorance (*avijj’ogha*) (D 3:230, 276; S 5:59; Vbh 374).

<sup>71</sup> “Flood-crossers,” a free rendition of **tāra,yata**, “who ferries across,” or better, “who causes (others) to cross over.” *Tiṅṅa* is often used with *ogha,tiṅṅa*. “who has cross the floods (of influxes, *āsava*, of sense-desires, existence, ignorance and views)” (D 2:261,10\*; S 1:3,18\* = Dh 370 = Tha 15 = 633; A 1:142,3\*; Sn 823); also *tiṅṅ’ogha* (SnA 2:518).

<sup>72</sup> By going to him as refuge (AA 3:34; ItA 2:193).

<sup>73</sup> *Āyam pi attho vutto bhagavatā. Iti me sutan ti.* **A 4.23** omits. The foll verse is quoted at Kvu 477 (Kvu:SR 273); cf V 2:205.

## 2.2 *ITI PI SO BHAGAVĀ* (SKT *ITI HI SA BHAGAVĀM TATHĀGATO*):<sup>74</sup> SO, TOO, IS HE *BHAGAVĀ*.

### 2.2.1 The verse as a recollection tool

The verse for the recollection of the Buddha comprises the Buddha's "the nine virtues beginning with *araham*" (*navārah'ādi,guṇa*),<sup>75</sup> which we shall examine here. One who wishes to cultivate the recollection of the Buddha, says the **Visuddhi,magga**,<sup>76</sup> should develop the qualities of faith, and so on, roused by the power of the noble path. And he should go into solitary retreat and should recollect his own qualities of faith, and so on, invoking the deities as witnesses, by way of this *Iti pi so gāthā*, thus:

<i>Iti pi so bhagavā</i>	So, too, is he the Blessed One: <sup>77</sup> he is
<i>araham</i>	(1) arhat,
<i>sammā,sambuddho</i>	(2) fully self-awakened one,
<i>vijjā,carāṇa,sampanno</i>	(3) accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
<i>sugato</i>	(4) well-farer,
<i>loka,vidū</i>	(5) knower of worlds,
<i>anuttaro purisa,damma,sārathi</i>	(6) peerless guide of tamable persons,
<i>satthā deva,manussānam</i>	(7) teacher of gods and humans,
<i>buddho</i>	(8) awakened,
<i>bhagavā</i>	(9) blessed.

### 2.2.2 *Iti* and *tādi*

**2.2.2.1** Here *iti* has the same spiritual force as words like *tādim*, when used in reference to spiritually attained persons. This important term should not be confused with the demonstrative adjective *tadisa*, "such like."<sup>78</sup> Both *tādim* and *tadisa* have the same Sanskrit *tadṛś*, but when used in the former sense, *tadṛś* comes from *tad,ḍṛś*, "of such appearance," and in the latter sense, comes from *tad,ḍṛśa* = *tad,rūpa*, "of such form."

**2.2.2.2** In the early texts, *tādim* has the pregnant sense of the Latin *ecce homo*, "behold the man!" applied to the Buddha and the arhats, who are characterized as "such" (*tadī*) in 5 ways:

- (1) they are equanimous towards the desirable and the undesirable (*ittha n'itthe*);
- (2) they have given up (*cattavi*) various kinds of unwholesome qualities;

<sup>74</sup> The Mahāyāna version adds the epithet *tathāgata* at the start, and is called "the 10 virtues" (*daśa adhvaca-na*): for details, see E Lamotte, *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, Louvain, 1949: ch 1 (1:126-144F), ch 36 (3:1340F) (Eng tr G M Chodron, 2001, 1:109-144, 3:1095-1113). On *tathāgata*, see (2.1) above.

<sup>75</sup> This is a non-canonical tt, also shortened to *navāraha,guṇa* or *nav'araha,gūna*, both meaning "the 9 worthy virtues" or "the 9 virtues of the worthy one."

<sup>76</sup> Vism 7.2/198.

<sup>77</sup> Alt tr: "For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord]..." On the meaning of *iti pi so*, see CPD 2:278: <sup>1</sup>*iti*: ... *kitti-saddo abbhuggato*: " ~ *pi so bhagavā*: *araham sammā-sambuddho* ... ." ("for the following reasons, too, he is a *bhagavā*: because he is *araham*..."), V 3:1,13 = D 1:49,27 = M 2:133,22 = S 1:219,31 = A 3:312,8, qu Vism 198,4 and Mahvṛ 26,11 (VA 112,4 = DA 146,5 ≠ Vism 198,8: *so bhagavā* ~ *pi araham* ~ *pi sammā-sambuddho* ... *iminā ca iminā ca kāraṇenā ti vuttam hoti*). Translating *iti pi so* this way explains the double occurrence of *Bhagavā*. See L S Cousins, "Review of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*," in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4, 1997: 165. The Skt parallel to this opening reads: *Iti hi sa bhagavām tathāgato*, but *tathāgato* here is missing from the Pali version. See Dhajagga S (S 11.3), SD 15.5 (2).

<sup>78</sup> Sn 112, 317, 459; It 68; Nc 277; Pv 2.9.4; J 1:151, 3:280.

- (3) they have crossed over the various kinds of floods (*tinṇavi*);
- (4) they have escaped (*muttavi*) from all defilements;
- (5) they are of “that distinction” (*tan niddesa*): morally virtuous, faithful, energetic, mindful, mentally concentrated, wise, possessing the three knowledges,<sup>79</sup> endowed with the 6 knowledges.<sup>80</sup> (Nm 114 f; cf SnA 202; Miln 382)

**2.2.2.3** The way-conqueror of **the Cunda Sutta** is called “such” (Sn 86a). In **the Sabhiya Sutta**, the Brahman, the field-conqueror, the one with highest knowledge, and the adept in Dharma—all used in the early Buddhist sense—are called “such” (Sn 519-532). The silent sage (*muni*) of **the Nalaka Sutta** is “such both ways” (*ubhayan’eva tadi*), that is, under both circumstances (Sn 712c). **The Param’atṭhaka Sutta** speaks of the monk in such terms as “such a one who has gone across does not ‘return’” (*paraṅgato na pacceti tadi*, Sn 803d). The Buddha is described as “unattached” (*asita*) and “such” (*tadim*) at Sn 957a.<sup>81</sup>

**2.2.2.4 The Brahma, nimantanika Sutta** (M 49) records a dramatic confrontation between the Buddha and Māra the bad one in the high heavens, where Māra tries to hold sway over the god’s minds. The Buddha knows very well what is going on and declares himself as “**such**” (*tādiso*),<sup>82</sup> thus:

I know you, bad one. Do not think, “He does not know.” You are Māra the bad one! It is not out of compassion for their welfare that you speak thus. It is without compassion for their welfare that you speak thus.

You think thus, bad one:

“Those to whom the recluse Gotama teaches the Dharma will escape from my sphere!”

Those recluses and brahmins of yours, bad one, who claimed to be fully self-awakened were not fully self-awakened.

But I, who claim to be fully self-awakened, am (truly) fully self-awakened.

Bad one, if the Tathagata [Thus Come] teaches the Dharma to disciples, he is such (*tādiso*); and, bad one, if the Tathagata does not teach the Dharma to disciples, he is such.<sup>83</sup>

Bad one, if the Tathagata [Thus Come] guides disciples, he is such (*tādiso*) and, bad one, if the Tathagata does not guide disciples, he is such.

<sup>79</sup> These are **the 3-knowledge arhats** (*te, vijja arahata*), who, with samatha as basis, have attained 4 or more dhyanas. The 3 knowledges are nos (4-6) of the six knowledges: see foll n.

<sup>80</sup> These are **the 6-knowledge arhats** (*cha-ḷ-abhiñña arahata*), who, with samatha as basis, have attained 4 or more dhyanas. The 6 knowledges are: (1) psychic powers (*iddha, vidhā*); (2) the divine ear (*dibba, sota*) or clairaudience; (3) mind-reading (*paracitta, vijānana, ñāṇa*) or telepathy; (4) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives; (5) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421); cf below §3.3. The Abhidhamma lists **4 mental influxes** (*āsava*): (1) of sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) of (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) of views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), and (4) of ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). They are also known as the 4 “floods” (*ogha*) or 4 “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is more frequent in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). On other kinds of arhat, see **Te, vijja S** (D 13/1:235-252), SD 1.8(2.1).

<sup>81</sup> See N A Jayawickrama, on **the Muni S** (Sn 2.12), in *Pali Buddhist Review* 2,1 1997:32.

<sup>82</sup> On the gen form, *tādino*, see **Sabba Kamma Jaha S** (U 3.1,12/21) + SD 39.3 (1.4).

<sup>83</sup> *Tādiso*, ie, whether the Buddha teaches or not, he remains the Tathagata, Thus Come One. See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26), SD 1.11 (2.2) & M 49,30/1:331,18), SD 7.11.

What is the reason for this?

Because, bad one, the Tathagata has abandoned the mental influxes that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to further birth, decay and death. Bad one, he has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth.

In this manner, bad one, the Tathagata has abandoned the mental influxes that defile, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm-tree stump, done away with them so that they are not subject to further growth. (M 49/1:30), SD 11.7

### 2.2.3 The verse as a paritta

**2.2.3.1** The *Iti pi so gāthā* has been so popular that it has enjoyed a life of its own as a recollection or as a ward rune (P *paritta*, Skt *rakṣā*). The best known of such post-Buddha texts is **the Iti,pi,so Ratana,-mālā** (the *Itipiso* Jewel Garland), a verse text of uncertain date and authorship transmitted in both Siamese, Khmer and Laotian Buddhism. It devotes a whole verse to each of the syllable of all three formulas.<sup>84</sup>

**2.2.3.2** Elaborate works in Pali and Thai, such as **Mahā Phutthaakhun** (the Mahābuddhāguṇa), deals at length with each of the Buddha's epithets.<sup>85</sup> There is also a reverse trend, where the formula is compressed "into a potent mnemonic made up only of the initial letters" of the Buddha's nine qualities, thus: ***a saṃ vi su lo pu sa bu bha***.<sup>86</sup> Skilling also notes that

In South-east Asia—among the Mon, Shan, Thai, Khmer, and Burmese—and in Ceylon the syllables are arranged into intricate magical diagrams (*yantra*), popular today.<sup>87</sup> The formula (along with the alphabet, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha formulas, and the names of the Four Great Kings) is given on a tablet from Sukhothai, dated from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup> (1997:431)

## 2.3 USAGES OF TATHĀGATA

### 2.3.1 The 5 applications of tathāgata

The term **tathāgata** (anglicized as "tathagata") is the most important and pregnant of the numerous epithets of the Buddha. Its special importance is not only due to the fact that the Buddha himself uses it most frequently in reference to himself, but it is also used by others to address him. The early Commentators, in recognition of the term's pre-eminence, have given it various interpretations. The term *tathāgata* is used in the Canon and Commentaries in at least 5 applications or senses:

- (1) The Buddha (or any buddha of the past);
- (2) A pratyeka Buddha (*pacceka buddha*);
- (3) An arhat;

<sup>84</sup> François Bizot & Oskar von Hinüber, *Itipiso Ratanamālā, La guirlande de Joyaux*, Publication du Fonds pour l'Édition des Manuscrits, "Textes bouddhiques du Cambodge," Paris: École française d'Extrême-orient, 1995, & Skilling 1997:430-432.

<sup>85</sup> Several MSS are in the National Library, Bangkok. See Skilling 1997:431 n112 for refs.

<sup>86</sup> See eg "Aṭṭhakathā Mahābuddhaguṇa," in *Chumnum Nangsu Thesan* 1929:237.

<sup>87</sup> François Bizot, "Notes sur les yantra bouddhique d'Indochine," in Michel Strickmann (ed), *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of RA Stein* (MCB XX), Brussels, 1981:155-191; Ency Bsm 1:500-502 (Amulet).

<sup>88</sup> Supaphan 2529 [1986]:183-189. Skilling: "Although the inscription has been interpreted as a syllabary for the study of Sanskrit or Thai, I interpret it as an auspicious and apotropaic tablet for installation in a *caitya* or foundation. The alphabet has a magical virtue of its own." (1997:431 n116).

- (4) A being (whether awakened or not); and  
 (5) As a qualifier to a state or reality, meaning “thus come,” as used in **the Ratana Sutta** (Sn 2.1).

In this study, we shall mainly look at the first meaning, that is, the historical Buddha as *tathāgata*, as this is its earliest usage in the Buddhist texts, and will briefly comment on the other four usages.

### 2.3.2 Tathāgata as the Buddha

**2.3.2.1** The Sanskrit parallel to the opening line of the *Iti pi so gāthā* reads: *Iti hi sa bhagavām tathāgato*, but ***tathāgato*** here is missing from the Pali version. The term *tathāgata* is often used by the Buddha to address himself.<sup>89</sup> Often too others (usually monks) would address him personally or in his absence (in the third person) as Tathāgata.<sup>90</sup>

**2.3.2.2** The term, or at least the word, *tathāgata*, is pre-Buddhist. **Nakamura**, for example, notes that it is found in the Mahābhārata, in the sentence, *dvijaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā tathāgatam*, which he translates as “[He] saw a bird in suchlike [splendid] form.”<sup>91</sup> He thinks that the word *tathāgata*, “in that sense ... entered ancient Buddhist verse as an epithet meaning ‘perfect.’” He goes on to quote the Sutta Nipāta where it serves as an epithet to all the 3 Jewels, in **the Ratana Sutta** (Sn 2.1), thus:

<sup>89</sup> The Buddha ref to himself as *tathāgata*. **Dīgha: Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 2:93, 115-118, 138-140, 144, 147-149), **Janava,sabha S** (D 2:211), **Mahā Samaya S** (D 2:255);

**Majjhima: Mūla,pariyāya S** (M 1:5 f), **Cūḷa Sīhanāda S** (M 1:67), **Mahā Sīhanāda S** (M 1:71 f), **Dvedhā,vitakka S** (M 1:118), **Alagaddūpama S** (M 1:140), **Nivāpa S** (M 1:157 f), **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 1:171 f), **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 1:250), **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 1:318-320), **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 1:331), **Jīvaka S** (M 1:370 f), **Abhaya Rāja,kumāra S** (M 1:395 f), **Cūḷa Mālūṅkya S** (M 1:426-431) **Naḷakapāna S** (M 1:464), **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 1:486-488), **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 2:96), **Deva,daha S** (M 2:227 f), **Pañcattaya S** (M 2:229 f), **Sunakkhatta S** (M 2:260), **Gaṇaka Moggallāna S** (M 3:2 f, 6), **Acchariya,abbhūta S** (M 3:124), **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 3:254);

**Saṃyutta** 2.9/1:50, S 2.10/1:51, 4.14/1:111, 4.18/1:114, 4.25/1:127, 11.14/1:232, **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:10 f), 22.78/3:85 f, 22.84/3:108, 22.85/3:111 f, 22.94/3:140, 35.126/4:127, 24.15-18/3:215 f, 44.1/4:376-379, 45.139-5/42, 46.89/5:135, 46.143/138, 47.63/191, 48.83/240, 49.13/245, 50.13/250, 51.4/291, 53.13/308, 54.11/5:326, 54.12/5:327 f, **Tathāgatā S** (S 56.12/5:424 f), 5:431, 56.28/5:435;

**Āṅguttara** 1.11/1:19 f, 1.19.1/1:35, 2.2.5/1:53, 2.3.2-6/1:59 f, 2.5.6/1:72 f, 2.17.2/1:98 f, 3.22/1:121 f, 3.70.4/-1:207, 3.80.1/1:227, 3.111/1:266, 3.134/1:286, 4.8/2:8 f, 5.196/3:240-242, 6.10/3:285, 6.25/3:312, 6.26/3:314, 6.30/3:326 f, 328 f, 6.56/3:381-383, 6.64/3:417-420, 8.82/4:337 f, 9.20/4:395, 10.83/5:154 f, 11.12/5:329, 11.13/-5:333, 11.14/5:335 f, 11.15.14/5:341. For detailed discussions on the term ***tathāgata***, see Bodhi, *The Discourse on the All-embracing Net of Views* [Brahma,jāla S tr], Kandy, 1978a: 331-344 (pt 5), tr of Comy & Sub-Comy & Endo 1997: 195-206 (ch V).

**Sutta Nipāta**: Sn 1114; **Vinaya**: V 1:9, 43.

<sup>90</sup> ***Tathāgata* used by others to address the Buddha**: **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 1:141), **Jana,vasabha S** (D 2:208), **Mahā Govinda S** (D 2:221, 227), **Sakka,pañha S** (D 2:287); **Bāhitika S** (M 2:115 f), **Māra Tajjanīya S** (M 1:332 f, 338), **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 2:93 f), **Acchariya,abbhūta S** (M 3:118); S 16.12/2:222 f, S 22.85/3:111 f, **Anurādha S** (S 22.86/3:116-119), **Sabhiya Kaccāna S** (S 44.11/4:401). For detailed discussions on the term ***tathāgata***, see Bodhi, *The Discourse on the All-embracing Net of Views* [Brahma,jāla S tr], Kandy, 1978a: 331-344 (pt 5), tr of Comy & Sub-Comy & Endo 1997:195-206 (ch V).

<sup>91</sup> Mahābhārata 12.146.26 (Nakamura 2005:321 n34). The Mahābhārata (Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty), one of the two major Indian epics—the other being the Rāmāyaṇa (Romance of Rāma)—is believed to be based on actual events presumed to have occurred around 1400-1000 BCE. It is an important source of Hinduism as it evolved c400 BCE-CE 200. It reached its present form in about CE 200-500. See Basham1989, who notes that “[i]n several places the text mentions Hūṇas (Huns), who were hardly known in India until about 450.” (1989:70, 130 n3).

<i>tathāgataṃ ... buddhaṃ namassāma</i>	“We honour the Buddha thus come...”	(Sn 236),
<i>tathāgataṃ ... dhammaṃ namassāma</i>	“We honour the Dharma thus come...”	(Sn 237),
<i>tathāgataṃ ... saṅghaṃ namassāma</i>	“We honour the Sangha thus come...”	(Sn 238).

**2.3.2.3** Interestingly, the Ratana Sutta, “a paritta of later date with a good deal of *sacchikiriya* (aspiration),”<sup>92</sup> is probably a post-Buddha sutta-paritta, when the use of *tathāgata*, since the Buddha has passed away, was applied more broadly (again) to the 3 jewels. [2.2.5].

### **2.3.3 Tathāgata as pratyeka buddha and as arhat**

Later on, especially in post-canonical usage, the term is also applied to arhats and pratyeka Buddhas. An early example of this usage of *tathāgata* as noble disciple is found in **the Nandaka Thera, gāthā**,

<i>Mā purāṇaṃ amaññittho</i>	Do not think about the worn-out past [the body],	
<i>māsādesi tathāgate</i>	Do not offend the Tathagatas.	
<i>sagge pi tena rajjanti</i>	They delight not in the heavens:	
<i>kim aṅgā pana mānuse</i>	So what is there of human existence?	(Tha 280)

The Thera, gāthā Commentary here glosses *tathāgate* as *ariya, sāvake* (the noble disciples).<sup>93</sup>

### **2.3.4 Tathāgata as “being”**

**2.3.4.1** The Commentaries most often define *tathāgata* as “being,”<sup>94</sup> in the case of its usage in the unanswered questions (*avyākata*). In this Buddhist usage, *tathāgata* as “being” simply refers to a compound of impermanent formations that are “suffering” because they contain no abiding entity.<sup>95</sup>

A very clear example of where *tathāgata* is translated as “being” is found in **the Pañca, satā Paṭācārā Therī, gāthā**, where the nun Paṭācārā, reflecting on the loss of all her family on the same day,<sup>96</sup> reflects:

<u>Thus he comes, thus he goes—what is there to lament about?</u>	
<i>Yathāgato tathāgato, kā tattha paridevanā.</i>	(Thī 129)

**2.3.4.2** This however need not always be the case. For example, even though the Saṃyutta Commentary to **the Yamaka Sutta** (S 22.85)<sup>97</sup> glosses *tathāgata* as “a being” (*satta*) (SA 2:311). **Bodhi**, however, cautions,

I think [this] does not quite hit the mark. I take the subject of the discussion to be, not be a being in general, but the arahant conceived as a being, as a substantial self. Thus the catechism will show that Yamaka has abandoned his identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) regarding the arahant,

<sup>92</sup> N A Jayawickrama, “A critical analysis of the Sutta Nipāta,” in *Pali Buddhist Review* 1,3 1976:160.

<sup>93</sup> See Tha:RD 179.1 & Tha:N 175 n280. Also Nakamura 2005:216. However, cf Tha:N 288 n1207.

<sup>94</sup> For example, *Hoti tathāgato’ ti ādīsu satto tathāgato’ ti adhippeto* (DA 1:119; NmA 1:24, 244, 395); *Tathāgato’ ti satto* (DA 3:195; MA 3:141; SA 2:201, 311, 4:37; UA 3:40; NmA 1:193; cf MA 2:117); *Tathāgato’ ti sammā, sambuddho pacceka, buddho’ pi ettha eva saṅgahīto* (PmA 2:462); *Tathāgato’ ti satto arahāna ti eke* (Pm 2:453, cf 2:395).

<sup>95</sup> See S:B 1080 n165.

<sup>96</sup> ThīA 108 ff; AA 1:356 ff; DhA 2:260 ff, 3:434 f; DA 3746; MA 1:232; UA 127; J 6:481. See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004 ch 13.

<sup>97</sup> S 22.85/3:116.

and there with his view of the arahant as a self that undergoes annihilation. We find a similar transition from the arahant (*vimutta, citta bhikkhu*) to the Tathāgata at M 1:140 [**Alagaddûpama Sutta**] and 1:486-488 [**Aggi Vaccha, gotta Sutta**]. (Bodhi, S:B 1079 n152; emphasis added)

**2.3.4.3** In the **Anurādha Sutta** (S 22.86) the Buddha similarly admonishes the monk Anurādha, thus:

“But, Anurādha, when the Tathagata is not being apprehended by you as real and actual here in this very life, is it fitting for you to declare:

‘Avuso, when a Tathagata is describing a Tathagata—the highest person, the supreme person, the attainer of the supreme—he describes him apart from these four grounds:

the Tathagata exists after death, or  
the Tathagata does not exist after death, or  
the Tathagata both exists and not exist after death, or  
the Tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’”

“No, bhante.”

(S 22.86,21/3:118 f)

**2.3.4.4** Here, in the Anurādha Sutta, and similar context relating to speculation on the posthumous state, I think we have a special sense of *tathāgata* as referring to any being, unawakened or awakened. There is no spiritual benefit in such speculations as they have nothing to do with the quest for awakening.<sup>98</sup>

**2.3.4.5** Bodhi, commenting on the stock phrase, *tathāgato uttama, puriso parama, puriso parama, - pattipatto*, notes that:

This should establish that “the Tathāgata” here is not just “a being,” but a **Buddha or an arahant**; the expression recurs at S 44.9 [**Kuṭuhala, Sālā Sutta**].<sup>99</sup> The four theses [mentioned in the Anurādha Sutta] are all rooted in a conception of the Tathāgata as a self. The commentaries explain the first as eternalism, the second as annihilationism, the third as a syncretic view (partial-eternalism), the fourth as as evasive skepticism. Two whole chapters in [the Saṃyutta] deal with these issues, the Vacchagotta Saṃyutta (S 33) and the Abyākata Saṃyutta (S 44). See too S 16.12 [**Param, maraṇa Sutta**].<sup>100</sup> (Bodhi, S:B 1080 n163; emphasis added)

### **2.3.5 Tathāgata as one “thus come”**

**2.3.5.1** We have mentioned [2.3.4] the case where *tathāgata* has the sense of “a being” is found in the **Pañca, satā Paṭācārā Therī, gāthā**, where the nun Paṭācārā, reflecting on the loss of all her family on the same day,<sup>101</sup> thus:

Thus he comes, thus he goes—what is there to lament about?

*Yathāgato tathāgato, kā tattha paridevanā.* (Thī 129)

Here, the word is actually a literal translation, as “thus come,” which makes perfect sense here, but without any technical connotations.

<sup>98</sup> See **Avyākata S** (A 7.5) @ SD 40a.11 (2).

<sup>99</sup> S 44.9/4:398-400.

<sup>100</sup> S 16.12/2:222-224.

<sup>101</sup> ThīA 108 ff; AA 1:356 ff; DhA 2:260 ff, 3:434 f; DA 3746; MA 1:232; UA 127; J 6:481. See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004 ch 13.

**2.3.5.2** The three closing stanzas of **the Ratana Sutta** (Sn 2.1) provide the best examples, where *tathāgata* is not only applied to the Buddha [2.3.2]—*tathāgataṃ deva, manussa, pūjitaṃ, Buddhāṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu* (Sn 236)<sup>102</sup>—but also qualifies the Dharma and the Sangha:<sup>103</sup>

“Let us revere the Dharma thus come, honoured by gods and humans: may there be wellbeing!”  
*tathāgataṃ deva, manussa, pūjitaṃ, dhammaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu* (Sn 237)

“Let us revere the Sangha thus come, honoured by gods and humans: may there be wellbeing!”  
*tathāgataṃ deva, manussa, pūjitaṃ, saṅghaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu* (Sn 238)

**2.3.5.3** From all the above usages of *tathāgata*, we can conclude that the early Buddhists—and certainly the early Mahayanists—saw the Buddha not merely as a historical person but also as the physical embodiment of the Dharma itself. The Dīgha Sub-Commentary, in fact, states that the word *Tathāgata* “contains the entire practice of the Dharma as well as all the virtues of the Buddha.”<sup>104</sup>

## 2.4 THE 8 MEANINGS OF TATHĀGATA

The most comprehensive canonical description of the Tathagata is found in **the Sundarika Bhāra, dvāja Sutta** (Sn 455-486), which gives a list of his qualities that makes him worthy of offerings.<sup>105</sup> But the best known definitions of *tathāgata* as the Buddha are those given by Buddhaghosa in the Commentaries. We shall now examine these 8 definitions.

Buddhaghosa gives 8 basic explanations (rather than etymologies) as to why the Buddha is called *Tathāgata*; the main points are given here,<sup>106</sup> which we shall examine in turn.

**(1) “Thus come”** (Chin: 如來 *rú lái*), ***tathā āgato***, from *tathā*,<sup>107</sup> that is, one who has come into our midst bearing the message of deathlessness. The prefix *tathā* here indicates conformity to a pattern; the participle denotes the arrival at a goal. Together they show that the Buddha arises in this world not by chance but as a regular outcome of a universal pattern of events dependent on the right conditions.

Such a being is endowed with a complete set of practices and virtues, namely, the great aspiration,<sup>108</sup> the 10 perfections in their 3 degrees,<sup>109</sup> the 5 great givings (of limbs, eyes, wealth, kingship, and children and wife), the 37 limbs of awakening, etc.

<sup>102</sup> “Let us revere the Tathagata, honoured by gods and humans: may there be well being!”

<sup>103</sup> SnA 1:277. Norman however tr *Tathāgata* here, as an independent noun, as “the Tathāgata” (ie the Buddha) (Sn:N 26).

<sup>104</sup> DAṬ 1:142; see also Bodhi (tr), *The Discourse on the All-embracing Net of Views*, 1978a:50.

<sup>105</sup> See **Sundarika Bhāra, dvāja S** (Sn 3.4/455-486/79-86), SD 22.2.

<sup>106</sup> DA 1:59-67 = MA:Sb 1/61 ff. See also BA 15-19.

<sup>107</sup> Indecl/adv: so, thus; vl *yathā* (Sn 1052); opp: *aññathā* + *āgata* (adj: come, arrived, having reached; past part of *āgacchati*).

<sup>108</sup> “Aspiration,” ***patthānā***, fem (Skt neut *prārthana*, fem *prārthanā*), aiming at, wishing, desire, request, aspiration, prayer (S 2:99, 154; A 1:224, 3:47, 5:212; Nm 316, 337; Nc 112; B 11B:179; Dhs 1059; J 1:68; SnA 47, 50; DhA 1:47, 48, 3:83, 26, 4:200; BA 10, 92, 95, 119, 144; PvA 47; Nett 18, 27; Miln 3). Syns: *abhināhāra*, being bent on, ie taking oneself out to, resolve, aspiration; generally in the sense of an earnest wish (to become a Buddha, a Pratyeka Buddha, etc; S 3:267 f; A 2:189, 3:311, 4:34; J 1:14, 15; DhA 1:392, 2:82); *pañidhāna*, mental resolve (VvA 270; Sadho 344).

<sup>109</sup> “Perfections,” ***pāramī***, Skt *pāramitā*. The earlier (Pali) term *pāramī* [fr *parama*, supreme] was used in early Buddhism to mean completeness, perfection, highest state (M 3:28; Sn 1018, 1020; Nc 435; Pug 70; DhA 1:5; VvA 2; PvA 139; Miln 21, 22; Sadho 139). In later literature, a list of **10 perfections** (*dasa pāramiyo*) is given as the principal virtues of a Bodhisattva, viz: (1) giving (*dāna*), (2) moral virtue (*sīla*), (3) renunciation (*nekkhamma*), (4) wisdom (*paññā*), (5) effort (*virīya*), (6) patience (*khanti*), (7) truth (*sacca*), (8) determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), (9) loving-kindness (*mettā*), and (10) equanimity (*upekkhā*) (J 1:73; DhA 1:84). The Mahāyāna tradition evolved the tradition of



**(2) “Thus gone,” *tathā gato***, has two interpretations:

(i) The “going” of the Bodhisattva from various past Buddhas (from Vipassī down to Kassapa; that is, his meeting and consulting with them) up to the point of his miraculous birth at Lumbini.

(ii) The imagery of a journey, viewed from the opposite perspective, that is, from the standpoint of departure and transcendence rather than that of arrival.

The term “Thus gone” here therefore refers to the Bodhisattva’s complete spiritual practice culminating in complete liberation: the overcoming of the 5 hindrances,<sup>110</sup> the 8 dhyanas of samatha [calmness] meditation,<sup>111</sup> the 18 great insights,<sup>112</sup> beginning with ridding of the permanence-notion and ending with the giving up of the adherence to 10 fetters<sup>113</sup> and the realization of the 4 supramundane paths<sup>114</sup> that severs all the 10 fetters of existence. In short, the Buddha is one who has gone by his own practice of the path.

**(3) “One who has understood [has come to] the real characteristics,” *tatha,lakkhaṇaṃ āgato***, that is, the Buddha is one who has discovered and understood the inherent nature (*sabhāva*), characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) or essential form (*sarūpa*) of every existent (of whatever exists).

**(4) “Awakened to the real truths,” *tatha,dhamme yathāvato abhisambuddho***, where *tathā* connotes a sense of reality, and *gata*, the sense of knowledge which reflects the Buddha’s realization of the 4 noble truths and the dependent arising, and which in turn awakens others.

**(5) “A seer of the real,” *tatha,dassitāya***, which shows the Buddha’s vision covers all that can be seen, heard, sensed, or known by the mind in every detail.

**the 6 perfections (*pāramitā*)** [P Williams, *Buddhist Thought*, 2000:178-180] from the 3 trainings (*sikṣā*; Pali *sikkhā*). The moral virtue aspect is covered by (1) generosity (*dāna*), (2) moral conduct (*sīla*) and (3) patience (*kṣanti*). The concentration aspect is ramified into (4) effort (*vīrya*) and (5) meditation (*dhyāna*). The last item is (6) wisdom (*prajñā*). This is prob an earlier list than the Pali. When the Pali formula of the 10 perfections was devised, the Mahayanists, too, raised the number of their own set to 10, adding the following four: 7. skilful means (*upaya*), 8. resolution (*praṇidhāna*), (9) strength (*bala*) and (10) knowledge (*jñāna*). But it is also prob that this increase was a result of the invention of the decimal system of computation in the 3rd or 4th century CE [H Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine*, 1932:167]. The Buddhavaṃsa Comy speaks of 30 kinds of perfections, ie 3 levels of fulfillment of each of the 10, eg the sacrifice of external possessions is called a “perfection”; the sacrifice of one’s limb is a “higher perfection” (*upapāramī*); and the sacrifice of one’s life is the “highest perfection” (*paramattha,pāramī*) (BA 53, 59, 272). See also “Treatise on the Paramis” (tr of CA 276-332), in Bodhi (tr), 1978a: 254-330.

<sup>110</sup> The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*) are sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. They are so-called because they prevent one from attaining the fruits of meditation but they can be temporarily suppressed during the dhyanas. **Vitakka Saṅṭhāna S** (M 20), SD 1.6 gives the remedies for the hindrances as follows: (1) cultivating the opposite mental state; (2) considering the consequences of the negative thought; (3) non-attachment or non-consideration; (4) suppression; and (5) sheer determination (M 20/1:119-122). See **Saṅgā-rava S** (S 46.55/5:121-126), SD 3.12 & **Bhavānā**, SD 15.1 (8.2-3).

<sup>111</sup> That is, the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments.

<sup>112</sup> See **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (10.2).

<sup>113</sup> The 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojanā*) are: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,ditṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377). In some places, no 4 (*kāma,rāga*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmi*) (see **Ānāpānasati S**, M 118,10 @ SD 7.13). See Dhs bk 3 pt 3 ch 5 = Dhs:R 274 ff, esp 274.1.

<sup>114</sup> The 4 supramundane paths are the 4 kinds of saints: the arhat, the non-returner, the once-returner and the streamwinner. See **Aṭṭha,puggala S** (A 8.59), SD 15.10(3).

(6) “A speaker of the real,” *tatha, vāditāya* which is based on interpreting the suffix *-gata* as *-gada* [ie vocalizing the voiceless “t” to “d”], which means speech or sentence. Throughout the Buddha’s 45 years of public ministry, he speaks the truth to all he meets, benefitting all in one way or another.

(7) “A doer of his word,” *tathā, kāritāya* (literally, “doing such”), that is, he practises what he teaches. As he speaks, so he does; as he does, so he speaks (D 2:224, 229; Sn 357).

(8) “On account of being overpowering,” *abhibhavan’atthena*, in the sense that he is spiritually higher than all beings (or “Beings”): He is the King of kings, the Deva above devas, the God over gods, the Brahma surpassing Brahma himself.<sup>115</sup>

### 3 The 9 virtues of the Buddha<sup>116</sup>

#### 3.1 *Arahāṃ* (Skt *arhām*): arhat

(a) *ārakā*. He stands utterly far away from all defilements because he has removed all traces of them by means of the path—because of this remoteness (*āraka*), he is *araham* (worthy).

(b) *ari hata*. Those enemies (*ari*), that are the defilements, are destroyed (*hata*) by the path—because the enemies are thus destroyed, he is *araham* (worthy).

(c) *arā hatā*. The wheel of rebirth has a hub of ignorance and craving, and its rim is decay and death.<sup>117</sup> The spokes (*arā*), that are formations (merits, etc), are destroyed (*hata*) by the axe of wisdom—because the wheel’s spokes are thus destroyed, he is *araham* (worthy).

(d) *arahati*. He is worthy (*arahati*) of the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodging, medical support, and the distinction of being given homage because he is the one most worthy of offerings—because of his worthiness of requisites, he is *araham* (worthy).

(e) *rahābhāva*. He does not act like a fool in the world showing their cleverness and yet doing bad in secret for fear of a bad name—because he does no bad even in secret, he is *araham* (worthy).

#### 3.2 *Sammā, sambuddho* (Skt *samyak, sambuddho*): fully self-awakened one

*Sammā sāmaṇ ca sabbadhammānaṃ buddhattā pana sammā, sambuddho.*

He is “fully self-awakened” because of his awakening to (or discovering of) (*buddhattā*) all things rightly (*sammā*) and by himself (*sāmaṇ*).

In connection with his full mastery of the 4 noble truths in its 3 phases and 12 aspects [2.11], the Buddha declares:

<i>Abhiññeyyaṃ abhiññātaṃ</i>	What is to be directly known has been directly known;
<i>bhāvetabbaṃ ca bhāvitaṃ</i>	What is to be cultivated has been cultivated;
<i>pahātabbaṃ pahīnaṃ me</i>	What is to be abandoned has been abandoned by me;
<i>tasmā Buddho’smi brāhmaṇa</i>	Therefore, brahmin, am I awakened [Buddha]. (Sn 558)

<sup>115</sup> For a detailed technical study of the term *tathāgata*, see Bodhi 1978a:331-344 & 1978b.

<sup>116</sup> See esp Vism 7.2-67/198-213 & VA 1:112-125. See also Endo 1997:167-194 (ch 4).

<sup>117</sup> See M 1:55.

### **3.3 *Vijjā, carana, sampanno* (Skt *vidyācarana, saṃpanna*): accomplished in wisdom and conduct**

#### **3.3.1 CONSISTENCE IN WORD AND DEED**

There are two components to the compound *vijjā, carana*, that is, *vijjā* (wisdom) referring to the Buddha's knowing side, as it were, and *carana* (conduct), his doing side, both of which are balanced and wholesome. Here we are reminded of the transparent quality of the Buddha as compatible and consistent both in word and in deed.<sup>118</sup> Detailed explanations of the two components of *vijjā, carana sampanna* are found in **the Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3), **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2), and **the Sekha Sutta** (M 53).<sup>119</sup>

**The Mūla, pariyaṃya Sutta** (M 1) closes with 2 descriptions of the tathagata. The Sutta's 7<sup>th</sup> cycle (§§147-170) is a description of the Buddha's "liberating wisdom" (*vijjā*); and the 8<sup>th</sup> cycle (§§171-194) is on his "conduct" (*carana*), that is, in his teaching his disciples, and preserving the teachings so that it is handed right down to us to this day.<sup>120</sup>

#### **3.3.2 THE BUDDHA'S WISDOM**

**3.3.2.1** The Buddha's (spiritual) knowledge (*vijjā*) refers to his spiritual attainments, of which there are 3 kinds and 6 kinds.<sup>121</sup> The Buddha's knowledge or wisdom is usually known as "3 knowledges" or "threefold knowledges" (*te, vijjā*), as defined in **the Bhaya, bherava Sutta** (M 4) (and elsewhere)<sup>122</sup> are as follows:

- (1) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;
- (2) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
- (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (M 4, 27-33/1:22 f)

**3.3.2.2** The Blessed One is also said to possess the the sixfold knowledge (*cha-ḷ-abhiñña*), namely:

- (1) psychic powers (*iddha, vidhā*);
- (2) the divine ear (*dibba, sota*) or clairauidence;
- (3) mind-reading (*paracitta, vijānana, ñāṇa*) or telepathy;
- (4) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;
- (5) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
- (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)

**3.3.2.3** The Blessed One's eightfold knowledge (*aṭṭha vijjā*) are stated in **the Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3) as follows:

- (1) psychic powers (*iddha, vidhā*);
- (2) the divine ear (*dibba, sota*) or clairauidence;
- (3) mind-reading (*paracitta, vijānana, ñāṇa*) or telepathy;
- (4) retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;

<sup>118</sup> See 2.4(7) & **(Tathāgata) Loka S** (A 4.23.3a) = (2.1.2) above.

<sup>119</sup> Respectively: D 3.2.1-2/1:100; D 2.43-98/1:63-85 @ SD 8.10; M 53, 7-18/1:354-356 @ SD 21.14. See esp **Sekha S** (M 53, 24), SD 21.14. See also M:H 2:xi f & 24 n2.

<sup>120</sup> See SD 11.8 (4.3.4).

<sup>121</sup> See **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3, 2.1-2/1:100); **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2, 67-98/1:71-85), SD 8.10; **Sekha S** (M 53, 11-18/-1:354-356), SD 21.14.

<sup>122</sup> D 3:281; M 1:22-24, 34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421.

- (5) the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
- (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth;
- (7) insight knowledge (*vipassanā,ñāṇa*); and
- (8) the psychic power of the mind-made body (*mano,may'iddhi*). (D 3,2.2/110)

**3.3.2.4** The Blessed One is omniscient (*sabbaññū*), in that he knows everything there is to be known:

“All things are available to the adverting of the Awakened One, the Blessed One, are available at his wish, are available to his attention, are available to his thought.” (Pm 2:195; cf 1:131)

**3.3.2.5** In the **Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), the Blessed One declares his “omniscience” in this way:

Bhikshus, I will teach you the all (*sabba*).<sup>123</sup> Listen to it.

And what, bhikshus, is the all?

The eye and forms,  
the ear and sounds,  
the nose and smells,  
the tongue and tastes,  
the body and touches,  
the mind and mind-objects.<sup>124</sup>

This, bhikshus, is called the all.

Bhikshus, if anyone were to say thus: ‘Rejecting<sup>125</sup> this all, I shall make known another all’ — that would be empty talk on his part.

When questioned he would not be able to reply and, moreover, he would meet with vexation.

And what is the reason for this?

Because, bhikshus, that would not be within his domain. (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1

### 3.3.3 THE BUDDHA’S COMPASSION

**3.3.3.1** Details of the Buddha’s conduct (*carāṇa*), that is, his personal behaviour and deeds, are found in the **Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), the **Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3), and the **Sekha Sutta** (M 53).<sup>126</sup> In the **Sekha Sutta**, the Buddha instructs Ānanda to admonish Mahānāma on the higher training of the learner who has entered the way to awakening (*sekha pāṭipada*). Ānanda lists what Buddhaghosa later, in the **Visuddhi,magga**, calls “the 15 qualities” (*panna.rasa,dhammā*) in his own commentary on the Buddha’s conduct (*carāṇa*).<sup>127</sup>

**3.3.3.2** The **Sekha Sutta** (M 53) goes on to define in some detail, along with a delightful parable of the hatchlings, the following 6 sets of the learner’s qualities (which are also the Buddha’s qualities by way of “conduct”):

- (1) Restraint by moral virtue, *sīla,samvara*
- (2) Guarding of the sense-doors, *indriyesu gutta,dvāra*

<sup>123</sup> On the all (*sabba*), see **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1 Intro.

<sup>124</sup> “Mind-objects,” *dhammā*, alt tr “mental phenomena.”

<sup>125</sup> “Rejecting,” *paccakkhāya*, lit “having reject.”

<sup>126</sup> See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,43-66/1:63-71), SD 8.10; **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,2.1-2/1:100), SD 21.3; **Sekha S** (M 53,7-10/1:355 (SD 21.14).

<sup>127</sup> *Vism* 7.31/202.

(3) Knowing moderation in eating,	<i>bhojane mattaññutā</i>
(4) Devotion to wakefulness,	<i>jāgariyânuyoga</i>
(5-10) The 7 qualities, and	<i>satta saddhamma</i> <sup>128</sup>
(11-15) The 4 form dhyanas.	<i>rūpâvacara-j,jhāna</i>
	(M 53,5-18/1:354-356), SD 21.14

**3.3.3.3** While the Buddha’s “accomplishment in wisdom” (*vijja,sampadā*) consists in his omniscience [3.3.2], his “accomplishment in conduct” (*sīla,sampadā*) is his great compassion (*mahā karuṇā*),<sup>129</sup> on which Buddhaghosa comments:

He knows through omniscience what is beneficial and not beneficial for all beings, and through great compassion he warns them of what is not beneficial and urges them in what is beneficial. That is how he is accomplished in wisdom and compassion.

As such, his disciples have entered upon the good way, instead of entering upon the wrong way, like the self-mortifying disciples of those who are bereft of wisdom and compassion have done. (Vism 7.32/203)

### **3.4 Sugato (ts): well-farer**

The Blessed One is called *sugato* (well gone), thus:

- (1) *sobhana,gamana*, because of a manner of going that is good, that is, the noble eightfold path;
- (2) *sundaran ṭhānaṃ gatattā*, because of his having gone to a beautiful place, that is, nirvana, the deathfree;
- (3) *sammā,gatattā*, because of his having gone rightly, that is, his sainthood, having abandoned the defilements, he does not return to them, or ever since he made his resolve to Buddhahood at the Buddha Dīpaṅkara’s feet, he has fulfilled the 30 perfections;<sup>130</sup> and
- (4) *sammā,gadattā*, because of his speaking rightly, that is, he speaks only suitable speech on a suitable occasion, as stated in **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58), thus:

Even so, O prince, such speech as the Tathagata knows

- (a) to be untrue, false and not connected with the goal,  
and that is unpleasant and disagreeable to others.<sup>131</sup>

the Tathagata does not utter such speech.

- (b) to be true, real but not connected with the goal,  
and that is unpleasant and disagreeable to others:

the Tathagata does *not* utter such speech.

<sup>128</sup> The 7 qualities are: being endowed with faith (*saddho*), with moral shame (*hirimā*), with moral fear (*ottappī*), with wide learning (*bahussuto*), with energy [initiative] (*āradḍha,viriyo*), with mindfulness (*upaṭṭhita,sati*), and with wisdom (*paññavā*) (D 3:252; **Sekha S**, M 53,11-17/1:356 (SD 21.14)). Ñāṇamoli notes that PED “traces **saddhamma** (as ‘the true Dharma,’ etc) to *sant + dhamma*; but it is as likely traceable to *srad + dhamma* = (good ground) for the placing of faith (*saddhā*).” (Vism:Ñ 214 n8)

<sup>129</sup> Pm 1:126.

<sup>130</sup> See 3C(1) above n on Perfections.

<sup>131</sup> *Abhūtaṃ ataccharṃ anatta,sarṇhitariṃ, sā ca paresarṇ appiyā amanāpā*. “Untrue” (*abhūta*) here and “true” (*bhūta*), I think, refer to the truthfulness of the statement. “Unreal” (*ataccha*) and “real” (*taccha*) concern correct reference, whether the words actually reflect the fact. “The goal” (*attha*) here is arhathood or nirvana, or at least, spiritual development. “Unpleasant” (*appiya*) and “pleasant” (*piya*) concern the civility and propriety; while “disagreeable” (*amanāpa*) and “agreeable” (*manāpa*) refer urbanity and aesthetics.

- (c) to be true, real and connected with the goal,  
but that is unpleasant and disagreeable to others:  
the Tathagata *knows the time* to use such speech.
- (d) to be untrue, false and not connected with the goal,  
but that is pleasant and agreeable to others:  
the Tathagata does *not* utter such speech.
- (e) to be true, real but not connected with the goal,  
but that is pleasant and agreeable to others:  
the Tathagata does *not* utter such speech.
- (f) to be true, right and connected with the goal,  
and that is pleasant and agreeable to others:<sup>132</sup>  
the Tathagata *knows the time* to use such speech.  
Why is that? Because the Tathagata is compassionate to beings. (M 58,8/1:395), SD 7.12

### **3.5 Loka, vidū (Skt loka, vid): knower of worlds**

**3.5.1** The Blessed One is a knower of world because he knows the worlds in every way, and he knows every form of world.

(1) The Blessed One understands the world, its arising, its ending and the way to its ending, as he has said in **the Rohitassa Sutta** (S 2.26):

However, friend, without having reached **the world's end**,<sup>133</sup> there is no making an end to suffering, I say.

Friend, in this very fathom-long body<sup>134</sup> endowed with perception and with its mind that I make known

the world,  
the arising of the world,  
the ending of the world, and  
the way leading to the ending of the world.

**356** The world's end can never be reached  
By way of going (through the world),  
And yet without reaching the world's end  
There is no release from suffering.

**357** Therefore, truly, the world-knower, the wise one,  
Gone to the world's end, the holy life fulfilled,  
Having known the world's end, he is at peace:  
He longs not for this world or the next. (S 2.26,9/1:62), SD 7.2

<sup>132</sup> *Bhūtaṃ tacchaṃ attha, saṃhitāṃ, sā ca paresaṃ piyā manāpā.*

<sup>133</sup> By "world" (*loka*) here the Buddha means the "world of formations" (*saṅkhāra, loka*), speaking on the level of "ultimate truth" (*param'attha, sacca*) in response to Rohitassa question based in reference to the "physical world" (*okāsa, loka*), that is, on the level of "conventional truth" (*sammuti, sacca*). On the two levels of language, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9/1:178-203) in SD 7.14 (4).

<sup>134</sup> "In this very fathom-long body," *imasmiñ-ñ-eva vyāma, matte kaḷevare*. The word *kaḷevare* is probably cognate with the English "cadaver." Comy glosses these 4 statements as those of the 4 noble truths. Thus the Buddha shows: "I do not, friend, make known these four truths in external things like grass and wood, but right here in this body composed of the 4 great elements." (SA 1:117 f)

(2) The Blessed One understands the 3 worlds, that is,

- |                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| i. the world of beings                | <i>satta,loka</i>                   |
| ii. the world of space [location] and | <i>okāsa,loka</i>                   |
| iii. the world of formations          | <i>saṅkhāra,loka</i> <sup>135</sup> |

i. He understands the world of beings (*satta,loka*), that is, the kind speculated, for example, by Māluṅkya,putta, thus:

(Whether) the world is eternal, or the world is not eternal, etc.

**Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (M 63,2/1:426), SD 5.8

**3.5.2** Any such speculation is not useful as we are only attributing ideas to what is beyond our thought and language, and does not serve any purpose in our spiritual cultivation. The most meaningful statements we can make about the world of beings or “the living world” is that it is impermanent, unsatisfactory (suffering) and without an abiding self.

ii. He understands the world of space (*okāsa,loka*), that is, the physical world of space and time that is referred to in such statements where Baka Brahmā’s world is said to stretch over this vastness of the universe, thus:

As far as the sun and moon course their way, lighting the quarters with their radiance, over that thousandfold world, your might holds sway.

**Brahmā Nimantaṇika Sutta** (M 49,9/1:328), SD 11.7

The Buddha states that above the brahma Baka’s realm lies Ābhassara (streaming radiance), Subha,kiṇṇa (radiant glory) and Vaha-p,phala (abundant fruit), of which he is unaware.<sup>136</sup> The Brahmā Baka may hold sway over a thousand world-systems, but above him, even in the same dhyana plane, other Brahmās lord over many more world-systems.<sup>137</sup>

**3.5.3** Another reference to the world of space or “the physical world” is made in **the Andha,kāra Sutta** (S 56.46), which opens with the words:

Bhikshus, there are world-interspaces (*lok’antarika*, “intermundia”), unsupported (*agha*), fathomless (*asaṁvuta*), regions of blinding darkness and gloom, where the light of the sun and the moon, so powerful and mighty, reach not... *But darker than this is the ignorance of the four noble truths!* (S 56.46/5:454; D 14,1.17/2:12; M 123,7/3:120; A 4.127/2:130)<sup>138</sup>

iii. He understands the world of formations (*saṅkhāra,loka*), thus:

The one world: all beings are sustained by food. (Pm 1:122)

<sup>135</sup> The 3 worlds are (1) the physical world (*okāsa,loka*), ie, the space-time dimension; (2) the world of beings (*satta loka*), ie, living beings and organic life; and (3) the world of formations (*saṅkhāra,loka*), ie, the mentally created world that defines us (Vism 7.37/204 f; DA 1:173 f; MA 1:397, 2:200).

<sup>136</sup> These are gods of the highest realms respectively of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> dhyanas. (M 49,10/1:329 @ SD 11.7).

<sup>137</sup> **Saṅkhār’upapatti S** (M 120 @ SD 3.4) says that in the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana plane, there is the brahmā of 1,000 (*sahasso brahmā*); the brahmā of 2,000 (*dvi,sahasso brahmā*); the brahmā of 3,000 (*ti,sahasso brahmā*); the brahmā of 4,000 (*catu,sahasso brahmā*); the brahmā of 5,000 (*pañca,sahasso brahmā*); the brahmā of 10,000 (*dasa,sahasso brahmā*); the brahmā of 100,000 (*sata,sahasso brahmā*); and many more powerful and more beautiful gods in even higher dhyana planes. See MA 2:409.

<sup>138</sup> See further **Aggañña S** (D 27), SD 2.19 App.

**3.5.4** This is not the physical world, but the existential nature of living beings, that is, while our bodies are sustained by *physical food*, our minds are sustained by *sense-contacts*, our existence by *mental volition*, and our being (body and mind) by *consciousness*.<sup>139</sup> While body or form (*rūpa*) is made up of the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind),<sup>140</sup> and the mental aspects are feelings, perception, formations and consciousness. These are the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*).<sup>141</sup> This is the world where karma and rebirth operate. This is the world that incurs suffering upon us, and from which we need to be freed.

(3) Furthermore, **the world of formations** (*sāṅkhāra,loka*) is also known to the Blessed One, thus:

1 world:	all beings are sustained by food.	<i>sabbe sattā āhāra-ṭ,ṭhiti</i> <sup>142</sup>
2 worlds:	name and form.	<i>nāmañ ca rūpañ ca</i> <sup>143</sup>
3 worlds:	the 3 kinds of feelings.	<i>tisso vedanā</i> <sup>144</sup>
4 worlds:	the 4 kinds of food.	<i>cattāro āhāra</i> <sup>145</sup>
5 worlds:	the 5 aggregates of clinging	<i>pañc'upādāna-k,khandha</i> <sup>146</sup>
6 worlds:	the 6 internal senses.	<i>cha ajjhattika āyatana</i> <sup>147</sup>
7 worlds:	the 7 stations of consciousness.	<i>satta viññāṇa-ṭ,ṭhiti</i> <sup>148</sup>
8 worlds:	the 8 worldly vicissitudes.	<i>attha loka,dhamma</i> <sup>149</sup>
9 worlds:	the 9 abodes of beings.	<i>nava satt'āvāsa</i> <sup>150</sup>
10 worlds:	the 10 sense-bases.	<i>das'āyatana</i> <sup>151</sup>
12 worlds:	the 12 sense-bases.	<i>dvādas'āyatana</i> <sup>152</sup>
18 worlds:	the 18 elements.	<i>aṭṭha,rāsa dhātu</i> <sup>153</sup>

**3.5.5** In short, the Blessed One knows the various personality types and the temperaments of individuals;<sup>154</sup> and he knows the structure and the nature of the world system and universes;<sup>155</sup> above all, the Blessed One knows how to be liberated from all this, and is thus fully liberated himself.

<sup>139</sup> On the 4 kinds of food, see **Putta,maṁsa S** (S 12.63/2:97-100) + SD 20.6 (1+2)

<sup>140</sup> On the 4 elements, see **Khandha 1 Rūpa**, SD 17.2a (2).

<sup>141</sup> See **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56//3:58-61 @ SD 3.7 Intro).

<sup>142</sup> See **Moḷiya Phagguna S** (S 12.12/2:13), SD 20.5; Pm 1:122.

<sup>143</sup> **(Paṭicca,samuppādā) Desanā S** (S 12.11/2:11).

<sup>144</sup> That is, pleasant, painful and neutral. **Bahu,vedanīya S** (M 59/1:396-400), SD 30.4.

<sup>145</sup> That is, solid food, sense-contact, mental volition, and consciousness. See **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9.11/1:48) & MA 1:207 f; **Putta,maṁsa S** (S 12.63/2:97-100) + SD 20.6 (1+2).

<sup>146</sup> That is, form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. **(Dve) Khandha S** (S 22.48/3:37 f), SD 17.1a.

<sup>147</sup> That is, eye, ear, nose tongue, body and mind. See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

<sup>148</sup> Beings classified according to the nature of their consciousness: (1) different body, different perception (eg humans, sense-world gods); (2) different body, same perception (eg the subhuman realms); (3) same body, different perception (Ābhassara devas); (4) same in body and perception (Veha-p,phala devas); (5) sphere of infinity of space; (6) sphere of infinity of consciousness; and (7) sphere of nothingness. **D 33,2.3(10)/3:252, 34.1.8(3)/3:282; A 7.41/4:39**. See **Viññāṇa-ṭ,ṭhiti**, SD 23.14.

<sup>149</sup> That is, gain and loss, fame and lack of fame (obscurity), praise and blame, happiness and sorrow. See **D 33,-3.1(9)/3:260; A 8.5/4:156 f**.

<sup>150</sup> That is, (1-7) the 7 stations of consciousness + (8) the non-conscious beings; and (9) sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. See **D 33.3.2(3)/3:263**.

<sup>151</sup> **VismṬ: das'āyatanāni ti dasa rūp'āyatanāni**, ie eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

<sup>152</sup> That is, 6 internal sense-bases + 6 external sense-objects (Vbh 70).

<sup>153</sup> That is, 6 internal sense-bases + 6 external sense-objects + 6 sense-consciousnesses, also known as the 18 elements (*dhātu*) (Vhh 87; Vism 484).

<sup>154</sup> Cf Pm 1:121.



### **3.6 Anuttaro purisa,damma,sārathi (Skt anuttarah puruṣa,damya,sārathi): peerless guide of tamable persons**

**3.6.1** The Blessed One is peerless [incomparable] (*anuttaro*) because there is none so distinguished in virtues than him. In **the Gāraṇa Sutta** (S 6.2), the Buddha surveying the world, realizes that:

... in this world with its gods, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers<sup>156</sup> and people, I do not see any ascetic or brahmin more accomplished in moral virtue than myself, whom I, honouring, respecting, should dwell in dependence on.

(S 6.2/1:139 f), SD 12.3

**3.6.2** Likewise in such discourses as **the Agga-p,pasāda Sutta**,<sup>157</sup> the Buddha declares: “No teacher have I!” (A 2:34; It 87). In **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26), the Blessed One declares:

No teacher have I,<sup>158</sup>  
 An equal to me there is none.  
 In all the world, with its gods, there is no rival to me.  
 An arhat, indeed, am I in this world.

Peerless teacher am I.  
 Alone am I fully self-awakened,  
 Quenched, whose fires are all extinguished. (M 26,25/1:171), SD 1.11

**3.6.3** The Blessed One is **the peerless guide of tamable persons** (*anuttaro purisa,damma,sārathi*)<sup>159</sup> because he guides (*sāreti*) tamable persons (*purisa,damme*).

The Blessed One has tamed animal persons (*tiracchāna,purisa*),<sup>160</sup> such as the naga-rajah Apalāla, Cūḷodara, Mahodara, Aggi,sikha, Dhūma,sikha, the naga-rajah Āravāla, and the elephant Dhana,pālaka.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>155</sup> For details, see Vism 7.40-44/205-207.

<sup>156</sup> *Deva*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati,deva*), ie kings. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti,deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi,deva*), ie the buddhas, pratyeka buddhas and arhats (Nc 307 KhA 123).

<sup>157</sup> A 4.34 = It 3.5.1. The Aṅguttara version, with the noble eightfold path, has 4 factors; the **Cundī S** (A 5.32/3:35 f), adding the noble virtues, has 5 factors. **Agga-p,pasāda S** of Iti,vuttaka, however, has only 3 factors (the verse section does not mention it, too), and “is perhaps the oldest of the three” (It:W 178 n4).

<sup>158</sup> According to Comy on **Ghaṭikāra S** (M 81), the Bodhisattva had learned all of Kassapa Buddha’s teachings and was effectively on the brink of streamwinning (MA 3:282). As such, the Buddha’s proclamation here that he has no teacher apparently refers to the fact none of his teachers are alive then. See Analayo on M 81, 2005:8. **Kathā,vatthu** (Kvu 4.8/286) discusses the question how far the Buddha did not have a teacher (**Ariya Pariyesanā S**, M 26,25-/1:170 @ SD 1.11) when, as a Bodhisattva he had been Kassapa Buddha’s disciple, and how the Buddha’s awakening was an insight into “things unheard of before” (**Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S**, S 56.11,9-12/5:422- f; V 1:10-12), SD 1.1. See also Comy ad loc (KvuA 78).

<sup>159</sup> **Purisa,damma sārathi**. Here *-damma* (adj) is grd, meaning “to be tamed or restrained,” often spoken of a young bullock (M 1:225, *bala,gāvā damma,gāvā*, “the strong cattle and cattle to be tamed,” ie bulls and young steers); also of other animals: *assa,damma,sārathi*, a horse trainer (A 2:112); It 80. In *purisa,damma sārathi*, fig (“the trainer of the human steer”) of unconverted persons, likened to a refractory bullocks; D 1:62 (wr *-dhamma*) = 2:93 = 3:5; M 2:38; A 2:112; Vv 17.13; cf VvA 86.

<sup>160</sup> The Comys usu tr *purisa* as “male,” but historically we see the Buddha helping members of both sexes. As such I have given a freer tr for the sake of a broad-based meditation.

The Blessed One has tamed human persons (*manussa, purisa*), such as the young nirgrantha Saccaka, the brahmin youth Ambaṭṭha, Pokkhara, sāti, Soṇa, daṇḍa, and Kūṭa, danta.<sup>162</sup>

The Blessed One has tamed non-human persons (*amanussa, purisa*), such as the yakshas Āḷavaka, Sūci, loma and Khara, loma, and Sakra, the lord of the devas.<sup>163</sup>

**3.6.4 In the Kesī Sutta** (A 4.111)—which Buddhaghosa cites as a Sutta expounding on the Buddha’s virtue as “the peerless guide tamable persons” (SA 1:120)—this is the teaching in that connection:

**9** “Kesī, I, too, train a tamable person with gentleness; I train him with harshness, too; I train him with both gentleness and harshness, too.

**10** In using gentleness, Kesī, I train thus:

‘Such is good bodily conduct.	Such is the result of good bodily conduct.
Such is good verbal conduct.	Such is the result of good verbal conduct.
Such is good mental conduct.	Such is the result of good mental conduct.

Such are the devas. Such are human beings.’

**11** In using harshness, Kesī, I train thus:

‘Such is bodily misconduct.	Such is the result of bodily misconduct.
Such is verbal misconduct.	Such is the result of verbal misconduct.
Such is mental misconduct.	Such is the result of mental misconduct.

Such is hell. Such is the animal birth. Such is the preta realm.

**12** In using gentleness and harshness, Kesī, I train thus:

‘Such is good bodily conduct.	Such is the result of good bodily conduct.
Such is bad bodily misconduct.	Such is the result of bad bodily misconduct.
Such is good verbal conduct.	Such is the result of good verbal conduct.
Such is bad verbal misconduct.	Such is the result of bad verbal misconduct.
Such is good mental conduct.	Such is the result of good mental conduct.
Such is bad mental misconduct.	Such is the result of bad mental misconduct.

Such are the devas. Such are human beings.

Such is hell. Such is the animal birth. Such is the preta realm.”

**13** “And if, bhante, a tamable person submits to neither being trained with gentleness nor being trained with harshness—what would you do?”

**14** “If, Kesī, *a tamable person submits to neither being trained with gentleness nor being trained with harshness*—then I ‘destroy’ him, Kesī!” (*hanāmi naṃ kesīti*).

**15** “But, bhante, it is not proper for our Blessed One to take life! And yet the Blessed One just said, ‘I destroy him, Kesī!’”

**16** “It is true, Kesī, that it is not proper for a Tathagata to take life.

**17** But if *a tamable person submits to neither being trained with gentleness nor being trained with harshness nor being trained both with gentleness and harshness*, then, the Tathagata would consider that he should not be spoken to, not to be admonished.

His wise companions in the holy life, too, consider that *he should not be spoken to, not be admonished*.

<sup>161</sup> Refs: Apalāla (Mahv 242), “dwelling in the Himalayas” (VismṬ 202); Cūḷodara & Mahodara (Dīpv 21-23; Mahv 7 f); Aggissikha & Dhūmasikha (“inhabitants of Lanka,” VismṬ 202), Āravāla & Dhanapālaka (V 2:194-196; J 5:333-337).

<sup>162</sup> Refs: Saccaka (M 35 & 36); Ambaṭṭha (D 3); Pokkharasāti (D 1:109); Soṇadaṇḍa (D 4); Kuṭadanta (D 6).

<sup>163</sup> Refs: Āḷavaka (Sn p31); Sūciloma & Kharaloma (Sn p47 f); Sakka (D 1:263 f).

**18** For this, Kesī, is ‘killing’ (*vadha*) in the noble discipline, that is, when the Tathagata considers that he should not be spoken to, not to be admonished. His wise companions in the holy life, too, consider that he should not be spoken to, not be admonished.”

**19** “Wouldn’t one, indeed, be truly gone to destruction, bhante, when the Tathagata considers that he should not be spoken to, not to be admonished; when his wise companions in the holy life considers that he should be spoken to, not to be admonished!

[Kesī then goes for refuge.]

(A 4.111/2:112 f) + SD 52.3 (1.3.3)

**3.6.5** Then, the Blessed One further trains those tamed persons: to those whose moral virtues are purified, he declares to them the dhyanas; and to the higher paths (sainthood), namely, streamwinning and so on.

In the **Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), the Blessed One said this:

“Amongst the teachers devoted to training (*yogg’ācāriya*), it is he that is called the peerless guide of tamable persons.” So it is said, bhikshus; in what connection is this said?

Guided by the elephant-tamer, bhikshus, the tamable elephant goes only in one direction — east, west, north, or south.

Guided by the horse-tamer, bhikshus, the tamable horse goes only in one direction—east, west, north, or south.

Guided by the ox-tamer, bhikshus, the tamable ox goes only in one direction—east, west, north, or south.

Bhikshus, guided by the Tathagata, arhat, fully self-awakened, the tamable person goes in 8 directions. (M 137,25-26/3:222), SD 29.5

**3.6.5** The “8 directions” here refers to **the 8 liberations** (*aṭṭha vimokkha*) (MA 5:28):<sup>164</sup>

THE 8 LIBERATIONS.

(1) One with physical form sees physical forms.<sup>165</sup> This is the 1<sup>st</sup> liberation.

(2) One does not see physical form internally, but sees physical forms externally.<sup>166</sup> This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> liberation.

(3) One is liberated after contemplating the idea of the beautiful.<sup>167</sup> This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> liberation.

(4) Through the utter transcending of the perception of physical form, the passing away of the perception of impingement, and non-attention to the perception of diversity, [contemplating,] ‘Space is infinite,’ one enters and dwells in the sphere of infinite space. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> liberation.

<sup>164</sup> See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.33/2:111 f), SD 9.

<sup>165</sup> *Rūpī rūpāni passati*. Perceiving form on one’s own body, one sees forms externally. This is said in connection with *kaṣiṇa* meditation. This is one of the “spheres of sovereignty” (*abhibhāyatana*), ie, one of the 8 stages of mastery over the senses through dhyana (*jhāna*); see D 2:110; M 77/2:13; A 8.675/4:305, 10.29/6:61. See **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15), SD 5.17 (10).

<sup>166</sup> *Ajjhattaṃ arūpa,saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*. Not perceiving forms on one’s own body, one see forms externally. See **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15), SD 5.17 (10).

<sup>167</sup> ‘*Subhan’ t’eva adhimutto hoti*. This consists of concentrating the mind on perfectly pure and bright colours as *kaṣiṇa*-object. See Intro (10).

(5) Through the utter transcending of infinite space, [contemplating,] ‘Consciousness is infinite,’ one enters and dwells in the sphere of infinite consciousness. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> liberation.

(6) Through the utter transcending of the sphere of infinite consciousness, [contemplating,] ‘There is nothing,’ one enters and dwells in the sphere of nothingness. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> liberation.

(7) Through the utter transcending of the sphere of nothingness, one enters and dwells in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This is the seventh liberation.

(8) Through the utter transcending of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, one enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> liberation.<sup>168</sup>

Bhikshus, guided by the Tathagata, arhat, fully self-awakened, the tamable person goes in 8 directions.

### **3.7 Satthā deva,manussānaṃ (Skt śāstā deva,manuṣyānām): teacher of gods and humans**

#### **3.7.1 DEFINITIONS**

The Blessed One is a teacher (*satthā*) because he teaches (*anusāsi*) by means of the here and now, of the next life, and of the ultimate goal. Furthermore, according to **the Mahā Niddesa** (Nm 1:446), it is said:

“Teacher (*satthā*)”: the Blessed One is *satthā*<sup>169</sup> because he is a caravan leader [a bringer-back of caravans] (*sattha,vāha*) (*satthā ti satthā bhagavā sattha,vāho*).

Just as a caravan leader brings a caravan across a wilderness (*kantāra*), across a robber-infested wilderness, across a beast-infested wilderness, across a foodless wilderness, across a waterless wilderness, brings them right across (*uttāreti*), fully across (*nittāreti*), properly across (*patāreti*), brings them to a safe land; even so, the Blessed One gets them across a wilderness, across the wilderness of birth (*jāti,kantāra*). (Nm 1:446)

“Of gods and humans” (*satthā deva,manussānaṃ*). This is said by way of defining the best (*ukkaṭṭha*) and those who are capable of spiritual progress (*bhabba*).

For the Blessed One as a teacher gives teachings to animals, too. Even animals can, through listening to the Blessed One’s Dharma, even his calming sonorous voice, gain the benefit of spiritual support (*upānissaya*), and with that benefit, they go on to gain the oath and its fruit in their second or their third rebirth.<sup>170</sup>

#### **3.7.2 MAṆḍŪKA VIMĀNA VATTHU**

Such stories like that of **the devaputra Maṇḍūka** is an example here. While the Blessed One was teaching the Dharma to the inhabitants of Campā on the bank of the Gaggarā lake, it is said that **a frog** (*maṇḍūka*) took hold of the Blessed One’s voice as a sign.

<sup>168</sup> This last stage requires both concentration and insight, and can be attained only by non-returners and arhats who have mastered the formless attainments. See Bodhi (tr), *The Great Discourse on Causation*, 1984:47-51.

<sup>169</sup> *Sattha* has many meanings (see PED, sv), but here it means “caravan” (V 1:152, 292; D 2:130, 339; Dh 123), while *sathār* (Skt *śāstrī*) or *satthāra* means “teacher, master” (D V 1:12; 1:49, 110, 163, 230; A 1:277; Sn 153, 179, 343; It 79).

<sup>170</sup> For such accounts, see eg Reflection, “Animals go to heaven,” R68a, 2009.

A cowherd who was standing nearby, leaned on a stick, and it pierced the frog's head. He died and was right away reborn in a golden celestial palace (*vimāna*) twelve yojanas<sup>171</sup> wide in the Tāvātimsa heaven.

Seeing himself there, as if waking up from sleep, surrounded by a host of celestial nymphs, he said, "So I have actually been reborn here. Now what karma have I done?"

He saw that it was none other than his taking hold of the Blessed One's voice as a sign.

He at once went with his celestial palace to the Blessed One and saluted his feet. The Blessed One, knowing this, asked:<sup>172</sup>

Who pays homage at my feet, | Shining with power and fame,  
Lighting up all the quarters | With such brilliant beauty?

A frog was I in my last life, | One who haunts the waters.  
While I was listening to your Dharma, | A cowherd's crook killed me.

(Mañūka Deva,putta Vimāna, Vv 51/5.1/49; VvA 216 ff)

The Blessed One taught him the Dharma. Eighty-four thousand beings realized the Dharma. As soon the devaputra was established in the fruit of streamwinning, he smiled and then vanished.

### **3.8 Buddho (ts): awakened**

The Blessed One is one awakened (*buddha*) to the knowledge that belongs to the fruit of liberation, since everything that can be known has been discovered (*buddha*) by him.

The Blessed One has awakened (*bujjhi*) to the 4 truths by himself, and has awakened (*bodhesi*) others to them; thus for such reasons, and others, he is *Buddha*.

"He awakens" (*bujjhati*) means that he has arisen from the slumber of the continuum of the defilements, or that he has penetrated the 4 noble truths, or that he has realized nirvana.<sup>173</sup>

### **3.9 Bhagavā (Skt bhagavām): blessed**

*Bhagavā* is a term of respect and veneration given to him as the Blessed One as the highest of beings, one who is distinguished by his virtues.<sup>174</sup>

(1) ***Bhāgavā ti bhagavā***, "he is *bhagavā* because he partakes of his share (of virtues)," that is, his virtues are shared by none,<sup>175</sup> or that he is a possessor of parts (*bhāgavā*)<sup>176</sup> because he has the Dharma aggregates of moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>171</sup> A *yojana* is about 11.25 km = 7 mi.

<sup>172</sup> The foll qu at SA 961, MA 1:29, 2:124, AA 3:375, KhA 114.

<sup>173</sup> DhsA 217; VbhA 310.

<sup>174</sup> Buddhaghosa gives his exegeses of *bhagavā* in two ways: one based on **the Mahā Niddesa** (Nm 1:142 f) and the other apparently his own or some other unknown source (which is highly etymological and fanciful). His exegeses at Vism 1:122-125 are also at VA 1:122-125 and KhpA 106-109; cf NmA 2:264. Of these Vism & VA are almost identical. It is possible that KhpA is a reworking of either, but with some vll. The most elaborate exegesis is found in Dhammapāla's ItA 1:5-17, with his UA 23 f giving an abridged version. The foll is based on Dhammapāla (ItA 1:5-17 & UA 24 f, 29), also at VismT 241-246. See also Vism:Ñ 229 n30 (ad Vism 7.65) & Endo 1997:190-194.

<sup>175</sup> See ItA 1:7 f.

<sup>176</sup> *Bhāga* (parts) + *vant* (possessor of).

<sup>177</sup> UA 24.

- (2) ***Bhatavā ti bhagavā***, “he is *bhagavā* because he is supported (by his virtues),” that is, he is well supported by his perfections accumulated in numerous past lives, and his present wisdom,<sup>178</sup> or that he is a possessor of what is borne, because he has borne the perfections to fulfillment.<sup>179</sup>
- (3) ***Bhāge vanī ti bhagavā***, “he is *bhagavā* because he is bestowed (*vanī*) with attainments (*bhāge*),” that is, he is blessed with happiness in this life and world itself,<sup>180</sup> or that he has developed (*vanī*) the various attainments.<sup>181</sup>
- (4) ***Bhage vanī ti bhagavā***, “he is *bhagavā* because he has cultivated the wealth (*bhaqa*) not possessed by others,<sup>182</sup> or that he has cultivated blessings (*bhaga*), mundane and supramundane.<sup>183</sup>
- (5) ***Bhattavā ti bhagavā***, “he is *bhagavā* because he has devotees (*bhattavā*), because the devoted (*bhatta*) show him devotion (*bhatti*) on account of his attainments.<sup>184</sup>
- (6) ***Bhage vami ti bhagavā***, “he is *bhagavā* because he has rejected (*vami*, lit “vomited”) such blessings (*bhaqa*) as glory, lordship, fame, etc.<sup>185</sup>
- (7) ***Bhāge vami ti bhagavā***, “he is *bhagavā* because he has rejected (*vami*, lit “vomited”) such parts (*bhāqa*) as the 5 aggregates, the sense-bases, the elements, etc.<sup>186</sup>

### 3.10 USING MANTRAS FOR REFLECTION

#### 3.10.1 Buddha mantra

**3.10.1.1** The word *mantra* (P *manta*) comes from the root √MAN, “to think,” which is also the root for words like *mano* (the mind), *muni* (wise sage on account of his mental silence), *mantā* (a wise man, counsellor or advisor). A mantra then is a kind of mental tool that expedites our efforts in stilling our mind. It is a safe mind-stilling method which relies on effort and mindfulness, and fruits in wisdom.

**3.10.1.2** MANTRA-BASED MEDITATION. The ancient brahmins used the term *mantā* to refer to the verses of the Vedas (their scripture).<sup>187</sup> The Buddha rejects such teachings and practices where they are exploitative and based on false views. In other cases, he would adapt in a Dharma-spirited way so that they expedite our spiritual life. Where monastics have difficulty meditating, for example, there are commentarial accounts of the Buddha teaching them mantra-based reflections along with Dharma teachings.

One of the best known cases of such a meditation is that of **the elder Cūḷa Panthaka**, said to be amongst the slowest of the monks. After he becomes a monk, in the course of 4 months, he is still unable to remember even a single stanza of teaching. His brother tells him to return to lay-life, so that he himself contemplates on giving up the training. Learning of this, the Buddha teaches him a special but simple mantra-based meditation.

He is told to sit facing the sun (eastward), and holding a clean piece of rag on his palm and rubbing it mindfully, while repeating the word *rajôharaṇam* (literally “removing dust,” “dusting away”). As he does this, the rag becomes more and more soiled. Then he thinks, “This piece of rag was perfectly clean. But

<sup>178</sup> See ItA 1:8.

<sup>179</sup> UA 24.

<sup>180</sup> See ItA 1:8 f.

<sup>181</sup> UA 24.

<sup>182</sup> See ItA 1:9.

<sup>183</sup> UA 24.

<sup>184</sup> See ItA 1:10; UA 24.

<sup>185</sup> See ItA 1:11; UA 24.

<sup>186</sup> See ItA 1:11 f; UA 24.

<sup>187</sup> A learned brahmin is often said to be a “mantra-reciter, a mantra expert” (*ajjhāyaka manta, dhara*), amongst other things, eg D 3,1.3/1:88 (SD 21.3).

on account of this person here, it has lost its old nature and become soiled. Impermanent indeed are formations [things in the world]!”<sup>188</sup>

Grasping the thought of decay and death, he develops insight. The Buddha, learning that wisdom has arisen in him, says, “Cūḷa Panthaka, you should not merely see [perceive] that only this piece of rag has become soiled with dirt, but even within you are the dust of lust and so on. Remove them!”<sup>189</sup> The Buddha then teaches him that it is greed, hate and delusion, not dust (*reṇu*), that are really “dirt” (*raja*), and one who has rid himself of this real dirt, dwells “dirt-free” (awakened) in the teaching.<sup>190</sup> Upon hearing this instruction, Cūḷa Panthaka becomes a full-fledged arhat.<sup>191</sup>

In due course, in connection with the occasion, the Buddha utters this Dhammapada verse before the assembly:

<p><i>Uṭṭhānen’appamādena saññāmena damena ca dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati</i></p>	<p>By striving, by diligence, by restraining and self-control, the wise makes himself an island which no flood can overwhelm.</p>	<p>Dh 25<sup>192</sup></p>
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**3.10.1.3 RIPENING OF PAST KARMA.** It is said that when **Mahā Kappina**, the rajah of Kukkuṭa, vatī, hears the word “Buddha (*buddho*)” from the merchants visiting his capital, at once experiences rapture (due to the ripening of his past good karma). On learning that the Buddha has arisen in the world, he rides off with his entourage to see him. So deep is his faith, it is said, that the whole band crosses *three* rivers, without his or any of his entourage even wetting their horses’ hoofs!<sup>193</sup>

The significance of this story is that faith can move mountains—or at least allow us to move at high speed and unimpeded by anything. A simpler, more practical explanation is that the rajah’s mind is so focused on the word “Buddha” that he is able to move most comfortably and speedily to his spiritual goal.

This story is also significant in showing that even a short, single-word mantra—“Buddha” (*buddho*)—is good enough for mental concentration and wholesome accomplishment. Indeed, the best mantras

<sup>188</sup> *Idaṃ pilotika, khaṇḍaṃ ativiya parisuddhaṃ, imaṃ pana atta, bhāvaṃ nissāya purima, pakatiṃ vijahitvā evaṃ kiliṭṭhaṃ jātaṃ, aniccā vata saṅkhārā’ti.*

<sup>189</sup> *Cūḷa, panthaka, tvaṃ pilotika, khaṇḍaṃ eva saṅkiliṭṭhaṃ rajaṃ rajan’ti mā saññāṃ kari, abbhantare pana te rāga, raj’ādayo atthi, te harāhīti.* Comys says that, in a past life, when Cūḷa Panthaka was a king, going on his tour of duty of his capital, he wiped his sweat with a piece of cloth, and noticing it was soiled, reflected in the same way (DhA 1:247).

<sup>190</sup> This is the essence of the 3 embedded Dh verses (*antarā, gāthā*), a popular set in the later works: (1) *Rāgo rajo na ca pana reṇu vuccati, | rāgass’etaṃ adhivacanaṃ rajo’ti || etaṃ rajjaṃ vippajahitva bhikkhavo | viharanti te vigatarajassa sāsane ||* (2) *Doso rajo na ca pana reṇu vuccati | dosass’etaṃ adhivacanaṃ rajo’ti || etaṃ rajaṃ vippajahitva bhikkhavo | viharanti te vigata’rajassa sāsane ||* (3) *Moho rajo na ca pana reṇu vuccati | mohass’etaṃ adhivacanaṃ rajo’ti || etaṃ rajjaṃ vippajahitva bhikkhavo | viharanti te vigata’rajassa sāsane’ti ||* (Nm 2:505; Nc:Be 154; ThaA 2:241; ApA 319; J 1:117; PmA 3:659)

<sup>191</sup> **Cūḷa Panthaka Thera Vatthu** (DhA 2.3b/1:245-250), SD 92.3; AA 1:209-220; ThaA 2:237; J 4 = 1:114-123; PmA 3:658; VA 4:802 f; also Divy 35.483-515. On the need of dhyana for attaining arhathood, see **Samatha & vipassana**, SD 41.1 (2.2.2.4). See also **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (13); **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a (2.2-2.5); **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5 (9).

<sup>192</sup> From line d, it is clear that *dīpa* in line c must mean “island” (and not “lamp”). For philological nn, see Dh:N 67 n25. Parallels of this verse at Dh:G 117 (7.8); Dh:Patna 17 (2.4); Uv 4.10. See Anandajyoti, *A Comparative Edition of the Dhammapada*, 2007:42.

<sup>193</sup> DhA 6.4/2:120 f. See **Miracles**, SD 17.5a (5.1.7).

for meditation are often the shortest and easiest to remember. Once our minds are focussed with the mantra's help (if we need such a help), then we gently flow with our meditation into mental stillness.<sup>194</sup>

### **3.10.2 Bodhi Rāja,kumāra's mantra**

**The Bodhi Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 85) records the unique manner in which prince Bodhi<sup>195</sup> goes for refuge. On meeting the Buddha, he exults, "O the Buddha! O the Dharma! O that the Dharma is well taught!" (*aho buddho, aho dhammo, aho dhammassa svākkhatatā*). His servant boy, the brahmin youth Sañjīkā,putta, perplexed by the prince's action, asks him why he does not go for refuge to "the 3 jewels" by reciting the traditional formula, which is the usual way.

Prince Bodhi then explains that even while he was in his mother's womb, she went before the Buddha and declared that her child (be it a boy or a girl) had gone for refuge to 3 jewels: this is his first refuge-going. Then, when the Buddha was staying in the Bhesakaḷā forest, outside Suṃsumāra,giri, his nurse, holding him on her hips, again declared to the Buddha that prince Bodhi went for refuge to the 3 jewels.

Then on this occasion itself (the event recounted in the Bodhi Rāja,kumāra Sutta), he himself goes for refuge to the 3 jewels—for the *third* time! So he rejoices in the Buddha.<sup>196</sup> As such, this is a beautiful mantra we can use to recall this joyful event or our own devotion to the 3 jewels, before we start our meditation.

### **3.10.3 The brahminee Dhānañjānī's mantra**

**3.10.3.1 The (Brahma,cārī) Saṅgārava Sutta** (M 100) recounts how once the young brahmin student Saṅgārava sees the lady Dhānañjānī trip, and hears her exclaiming thrice, "Homage to the Buddha, the arhat, the perfect self-awakened one" (*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassa*). He chides her for extolling a shaveling monk, but when she tells him of the Buddha's marvellous qualities, he desires to see him.<sup>197</sup>

**3.10.3.2** This is the "opening mantra" or "universal mantra," known even in the suttas themselves, and is as such not invented by mantra-makers or teachers of later times. The point here is that of simplicity and authenticity. By understanding the marvellous history of this salutation (*vandanā*) to the Buddha, we at once connect with the suttas and related sacred words voiced since the Buddha's own times, beyond any ethnicity or sectarianism, beyond Buddhism itself, back to the Buddha Dharma.

**3.10.3.3** The *namo tassa* mantra can be recited any time we wish, recalling the Buddha and his virtues as we do this, or simply reflecting on the impermanence of its sound or thought. A good daily habit is this: just as we close our eyes preparing to fall asleep, we should mindfully and joyfully recite *namo tassa* as many times as we like. Over time, the mantra might even arise naturally by itself in our heart,so that we need only to focus our mind on it, stilling it and falling asleep happily and waking happily, again with the *namo tassa* mantra on our mind.

<sup>194</sup> Further see **(Nīvaraṇā) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55/5:121-126), SD 3.12 & **(Manta) Saṅgārava S** (A 5.193/3:230-236), SD 73.3.

<sup>195</sup> Prince Bodhi (*bodhi rāja.kumāra*) is the son of Udena, rajah of Kosambī and queen Vasulā,dattā, daughter of king Caṇḍa Pajjota of Avantī, and live in Suṃsumāra,giri in the Bhagga country. After he has completed building his palace called Kokanada, he invites the Buddha to be its first occupant so as to bless it. (M 85/2:91-97), SD 55.; MA 3:217.

<sup>196</sup> M 8,60/2:96 @ SD 55.2.

<sup>197</sup> M 100,1-2/2:209 @ SD 10.9 & **Dhanañjānī S** (S 7.1/1:160), SD 45.5.



### **3.11 Benefits of the recollection of the Buddha** (Vism 7.66-67/212 f)

**66 [A SUCCESSFUL RECOLLECTION.]** When he has suppressed the mental hindrances, by preventing obsession (*pariyuṭṭhāna*) by greed, etc, and his mind is straight (*uju*) before the meditation subject, then his initial application and sustained application occur with an inclination towards the Blessed One’s virtues.

As he continues to exercise initial application and sustained application on the Blessed One’s virtues, zest (*pīti*) arises in him. With a zestful mind, with the zest as a basis [proximate cause], his bodily and mental disturbances gain tranquillity (*passaddhi*). When the disturbances have been tranquillized, bodily and mental joy (*sukha*) arise in him. Being joyful, his mind, taking the Blessed One’s virtues as objects, becomes concentrated (*samādhīyati*), and so the dhyana factors eventually arise in a single thought-moment.

But due to the depth of the Buddha’s qualities, or else due to his being occupied in recollecting qualities of many kinds, he only reaches access concentration,<sup>198</sup> not full concentration (*appanā*), that is, dhyana. That (access concentration) is itself regarded as “the recollection of the Buddha,” because it has arisen by virtue of the recollecting of the Buddha’s qualities.

**67 [BENEFITS.]** When a monk is devoted to this recollection of the Buddha, he is respectful and deferential to the Buddha. He attains great faith, great mindfulness, great wisdom and great merit. He has much zest and gladness. He conquers fear and dread. He is able to withstand pain. He comes to feel that he is living in the presence of the Buddha.

And his body, while occupied with the recollection of the Buddha’s virtues, is worthy of veneration as a shrine-hall (*cetiya,ghara*). His mind tends towards the plane of the Buddhas.

When he is confronted by an opportunity for transgression, due to his clear recollection of the Buddha’s good qualities, he is established in moral shame and moral fear as though he were before the Teacher himself.

If he penetrates no higher, he would at least cross over to a happy destiny.

Therefore one who is truly wise would surely cultivate heedfulness,

In this way, one always has great power (*anubhāva*) through recollection of the Buddha.

(Vism 7.66-67/212 f)

## **4 Recollecting the Buddha as a person**

### **4.1 THE BUDDHA’S PHYSICAL FORM**

After the Buddha’s passing, Buddhists often turned to physical representations of the Buddha, especially the Buddha image (*Buddha,rūpa* or *Buddha paṭima*) or Buddha relics to recall. However, due to the dead and physical nature of such objects, unable to speak for themselves (like the Teacher), they often come to assume (in the minds of the devout and desperate) powers and promises of superhuman proportions.

The Commentaries gives us a good idea of how people tend to measure others, by way of what we today know as charisma. Here are summarized the glosses concerning the doctrine of “measure” (*pamā-*

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<sup>198</sup> “Access concentration” (*upacāra*). In meditation, an entirely clear and immovable image (*nimitta*) arising at a high degree of concentration is called **counter-image** (*paṭibhāga,nimitta*). As soon as this image arises, the stage of neighbourhood (or access) concentration (*upacāra,samādhi*) is reached. For details, see SD 13.1 (3.1.4(7)); also see BDict: *kasiṇa,samādhi*.

*ṇa*)<sup>199</sup> as given in the Dhammapada Commentary, the Sutta Nipāta Commentary and the Puggala Paññatti Commentary, using the first as the main text with explanations from the other two texts [given within square brackets]:

There are 4 measures among those who dwell together in the world (*loka,sannivāse*).

Having seen the Perfect Self-awakened One, there is none who is not inspired. For those whose measure is form (*rūpa-p,pamāṇikā*) look upon the golden-hued body of the Tathagata [Buddha Thus Come], adorned with the major and minor marks [all complete and whole (Pug-A)],<sup>200</sup> [(his) radiant aura extending for a fathom around his body (SnA)], and are inspired by what they see.

Those whose measure is the voice (*ghosa-p,pamāṇikā*) listen to the report of the Teacher's virtues through many hundreds of births and to his voice endowed with the eight qualities [distinct, intelligible, lovely, audible, full, clear, deep, resonant],<sup>201</sup> [(sounding) like the Indian cuckoo, sweet (like honey), noiseless and divinely deep (SnA)], in the teaching of the Dharma and are inspired by what they hear.

<sup>199</sup> See **The teacher or the teaching?** SD 3.14.7.

<sup>200</sup> **The 32 major marks of the great man** (*mahā,purisa,lakkhaṇa*): (1) He has feet with a level tread; (2) On the soles of his feet are wheels, each with a thousand spokes, all rimmed and hubbed, complete in every way; (3) He has projecting heels; (4) He has long fingers; (5) He has soft, tender hands and feet; (6) His fingers and toes are net-like [reticulated or evenly spaced]; (7) His ankles are high-raised [over the exact middle of the tread]; (8) His legs are shapely like an antelope's; (9) Without stooping, he can touch and rub his knees with both hands at once; (10) His male organ is covered with a sheath; (11) He has a golden complexion; (12) His skin is so delicate and smooth that no dust or dirt settle on it; (13) His body-hairs are separate, one to a pore; (14) They grow upwards, bluish-black like collyrium, curling to the right; (15) His body is perfectly straight [like Brahmā's]; (16) He has seven convex surfaces [on hands, feet, shoulders, trunk]; (17) The front of his body is like a lion's; (18) There is no hollow between his shoulders; (19) His proportions are like a banyan tree: his arm-span equals his height; (20) The curve of his shoulders is evenly rounded; (21) He has a perfect sense of taste; (22) His jaw is like a lion's; (23) He has forty teeth; (24) His teeth are even; (25) There are no spaces between his teeth; (26) His canine teeth are very bright; (27) His tongue is very long and flexible [able to touch his forehead]; (28) His perfect voice [like Brahmā's] is sweet like the sound of a *karavīka* [Indian cuckoo]; (29) His eyes are deep blue; (30) His eye-lashes are [long and shapely] like a cow's; (31) The hair between his eye-brows is white, soft like cotton-down; (32) His head is shaped like a royal turban (D 14/2:17 f, 136 f; D 30/3:142 ff).

This tradition of the 32 marks is a very late one. Indeed, if the Buddha were to literally show all these marks, he would look very odd indeed (see D:W 610 n939). It is highly unlikely that the Buddha would physically manifest such characteristics. However, it is more probable that the Buddha could manifest any or all of these marks at will, showing them to whomever he wishes. This is supported by the evidence that not everyone could at once recognize the Buddha on seeing him; eg, (1) **Sāmaññaphala S** records that Ajātasattu has to ask Jīvaka which of the monks in the assembly is the Buddha (D 2.11/1:50); (2) **Dhātu,vibhaṅga S** (M 140/3:237-247) records how the monk Pukkusāti recognizes the Buddha only after discovering the similarities of the teachings that they profess (but MA here however says that the Buddha willfully hid his marks to avoid detection). Nevertheless, even if the Buddha historically has none of these characteristics, his authenticity and spirituality are in no way affected or diminished, and that those characteristics (based on ancient Indian tradition) should then be taken to be mythical symbolism of the fruits of his past good karma as detailed in **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30), SD 36.9.

<sup>201</sup> **Brahmāyu S** (M 91): *visaṭṭho ca viññeyyo ca mañju ca savanīyo ca bindu ca avisārī ca gambhīro ca ninnādī ca* (M 2:140; J 1:96; VvA 217; of Brahmā Sanañ,kumāra's speech D 2:211=227; BHS *aṣṭ'aṅgapeta śvara*, Avadāna Śāta-ka (Speyer) 1:149). I B Horner: "it is distinct and intelligible and sweet and audible and fluent and clear and deep and resonant" (M:H 2:326); Walshe: "distinct, intelligible, pleasant, attractive, compact, concise, deep and resonant" (D:W 296). See MA 3:382 f & BA 61 f.

Those whose measure is austerity or “holiness” (*lūkha-p, pamāṇikā*) are inspired by his austere robes [such as its dull colour (PugA)], [austere bowl (austere in colour, form and material (PugA)), physical austerities (SnA, PugA) austere seat (PugA)] and so forth.

Those whose measure is truth (*dhamma-p, pamāṇikā*), [examining the aggregates of his nature, beginning with moral conduct (SnA)], reflect, “Such is the moral virtue, the concentration, the wisdom of the one with the ten powers,<sup>202</sup> without an end, without a peer.” Thus they are inspired.

Indeed, those who praise the virtues of the Tathagata lack words to express their praises.

[Amongst all the living beings, out of three, two measure (others) by *form*, one does not; out of five, four measure (others) by *voice*, one does not; out of ten, nine measure (others) by *austerity*, one does not; out of a thousand, only one measures (others) by truth [Dharma], the rest do not. (PugA)]  
(AA 1:134; DhA 3:114 f; SnA 242; PugA 229 f)

## 4.2 PHUSSA,DEVA OF KĀḶAKANDARA MONASTERY

**4.2.1** If one has done some practice in the perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*),<sup>203</sup> then one could use a suitable Buddha image to reflect on the Buddha’s virtues, or if one is inclined to, one could visualize that one is in the living presence of the Teacher.<sup>204</sup> When the joy is strong enough, one should go on to reflect on impermanence. In other words, one uses calmness as a basis for insight. We see this in the stories of Phussa,deva (here) and of Upagupta [4.3].

**4.2.2** Post-Buddha Buddhist hagiography often relate how faith (*saddhā*) or devotion (Skt *bhakti*) in the Buddha helps in one’s meditation. One of the most beautiful of such stories is that of the monk **Phussa,deva** of Kāḷandara Monastery in Sri Lanka. The legend of Phussa,deva finds its fullest version in the **Sīhala, vatthu-p, pakaraṇa**,<sup>205</sup> a Sinhalese Pali anthology dating back from perhaps the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Here is John Strong’s summary of the story based on the French translation by Ver Eecke (1980):

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<sup>202</sup> “The one with the ten powers,” *dasa, bala* or more fully *dasa, bala, ñāṇa*. The 10 powers are: (1) knowledge of the possible and the impossible (*ṭhānāṭhāna ñāṇa*), such as in the analysis of karma (M 57, 135, 136), and the possibility regarding the realm, circumstances, time and effort, all of which would impede or reinforce the result; and also the cause of karma, etc; (2) knowledge of the result of karma (*kamma, vipāka ñāṇa*); (3) knowledge of the way leading to all destinies and goals (*sabbattha, gāminī, paṭipadā*); (4) knowledge of the world with its various elements (*nānā, dhātu ñāṇa*) (M 115.4-9/3:62 f); (5) knowledge of the different dispositions of beings (*nānādhimuttika ñāṇa*); (6) knowledge of the maturity level of beings in terms of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*indriya, paropariyatta ñāṇa*) (Vbh §§814-827); (7) knowledge of the defilements, cleansing and emergence in the cases of the meditations, liberations, concentrations and attainments (*jhān’ādi, saṅkiles’ādi ñāṇa*); (8) knowledge of the recollection of (his own) past lives (*pubbe, nivāsānussati ñāṇa*); (9) knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings (according to their karma) (*cutūpapāta ñāṇa*); (10) knowledge of the destruction of the mental defilements (*āsava-k, khaya ñāṇa*) (M 1:69; A 5:33; Vbh 336). See **Mahā Sihanāda S** (M 12.9-20/ 1:69-71) for details.

<sup>203</sup> See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7. The perception of impermanence helps, at least, to prevent us from seeing the physical state as an aid for recollecting the virtues of the Buddha and showing our gratitude to our Teacher, remembering his last words to take only Dharma as refuge, ie, devoting ourselves to moral virtue and mental cultivation for spiritual liberation.

<sup>204</sup> See **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17) @ SD 36.12 (5.2).

<sup>205</sup> See Ver Eecke 1980:iii. Phussa,deva is often mentioned in **Visuddhi, magga, Sahassa, vatthu-p, pakaraṇa**, and in later Sinhalese anthologies such as **Sāra, saṅgaha** and **Saddharma, ratnākara**. See T Rahula, “The *Rasavāhinī* and the *Sahassavatthu*: A comparison.” *Journal of the International Association Buddhist Studies* (1984) 7:179 & W Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1956:xxxiii.

The elder Phussa,deva was a Sri Lankan monk who resided at the Kāḷandara monastery. One day, when he had finished sweeping the courtyard of the Bodhi tree and was contemplating the tree, recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, Māra arrived and created a sudden gust of wind. The dust raised made the elder close his eyes, and, in that moment of blindness, Māra threw some thrash into the Bodhi-tree enclosure and went away. The elder had to sweep it again.

“Then once more,” the text goes on, “the elder recollected the qualities of the Buddha, but Māra came again, as a monkey: he grabbed this and that branch [of the Bodhi tree] and made a mess. Again the elder swept and recollected the qualities of the Buddha. Then, Māra became an old ox, and, walking back and forth, he trampled the courtyard of the Bodhi tree.”<sup>206</sup>

At this point, Phussadeva wonders who is causing all these disturbances, and, realizing it is Māra, he denounces him. Māra, knowing he has been found out, shows himself in his true form. Then, Phussadeva declares:

“You are able to fashion magically and manifest the form [rūpa] of the Buddha. I wish to see that form, Bad One, and I ask you to show it.”

“Very well,” Māra consented, and he made clearly manifest the figure of the Great Sage, in the [seated] posture of a Buddha [under a Bodhi tree] and bearing the thirty-two excellent bodily marks. The elder Phussadeva, seeing the form of the Buddha, proffered an añjali, and,...tears in his eyes, with great faith, pondering the conduct of the bodhisattva from the time of the wholly enlightened Dīpaṅkara, he recollected the qualities of the Buddha.<sup>207</sup>

Then follows a long, ecstatic description of the Buddha’s body, starting at his feet and working up to the top of his head, touching on each of the thirty-two marks of the Great Man. Clearly, Phussadeva, like Upagupta [4.3], is getting carried away by his devotion and vision. Just at that point, however, where one would expect him to prostrate himself on the ground in front of Māra, he abruptly switches gears and declares the truth of impermanence: “Such is the wholly enlightened Jina, the best of all beings,” he announces, “but he has succumbed to impermanence, gone to destruction. One cannot see him.”<sup>208</sup>

He then resumes his description of the Buddha body that Māra has fashioned for him, this time from the head to the toes and with an interesting twist:

“Your shining black hair with its curl turning to the right...and your uṣṇīṣa;<sup>209</sup> they are *gone to destruction and cannot be seen*.

Your ūṛṇā<sup>210</sup> with the colour and brilliance of the full moon, like the froth of cow’s milk, illuminating a thousand worlds, today has *gone to destruction: it is not seen*.

Your eyes, long, wide, black, pure, and bright, have *gone to destruction and are no longer seen*.

<sup>206</sup> *Sīhalavatthupparāṇa* p19 (French tr [omitting one verse], Ver Eecke 1980:22). In these multiple transformations of Māra, there is an interesting parallel in [Loka-p,paññatti] story of Upagupta and Māra. (Strong’s fn). See following [4.3].

<sup>207</sup> *Sīhalavatthupparāṇa* p20 (French tr Ver Eecke 1980:23). Phussadeva is here recollecting the past lives of the Buddha when he devoted himself to the practice of various perfections. (Strong’s fn)

<sup>208</sup> *Sīhalavatthupparāṇa* p21 (French tr, Ver Eecke 1980:23). “I have corrected ‘amicca’ to ‘anicca’ and ‘kayam’ to ‘khayam’,” (Strong’s fn)

<sup>209</sup> P *uṣṇīṣa*, an excrescence or protuberance on the head (either a top-knot of hair or a growth in the skull) (see BHSD: *uṣṇīṣa*).

<sup>210</sup> P *uṇṇa*, the whorl of hair between the Buddha’s eye-brows.

Your large tongue, red lips, and beautiful lion's jaw, the mouth and resplendent nose, are *gone to destruction and cannot be seen.*"<sup>211</sup>

**4.2.3 John Strong**, in his book, *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta*, comments:

In this way, all the marks of the Great Man, which have just been glorified, are realized to be impermanent—and, in fact, no longer existing. Thus, "the elder had insight into the form created by Māra, and, developing that insight, he attained arhatship." Māra, realizing that Phussa-deva had attained the goal, thought, "I have been tricked by the elder"; and, defeated and distressed, he disappeared."<sup>212</sup> (Strong 1992:112 f)

## 4.3 THE UPAGUPTA LEGEND

### 4.3.1 Upagupta

A well known story similar to that of Phussa,deva, but more elaborate, is found in the Sanskrit and Burmese traditions about the saint **Upagupta**,<sup>213</sup> "the apostle of bhakti,"<sup>214</sup> desires to contemplate on the physical form (*rūpa,kāya*) of the Buddha, that is, to physically meet the Buddha, which as we know from Buddhist hagiography, our own Sakyamuni did 91 aeons before Dīpaṅkara Buddha's time.<sup>215</sup> Realizing that Māra has seen the living Buddha, he actually seeks Māra's help in this matter.

### 4.3.2 Kumārajīva's version

**4.3.2.1** In **Kumārajīva's** version of the story, Upagupta, after befriending Māra,<sup>216</sup> takes the flower garland that Māra has just placed around his neck and, feigning friendship and respect, garlands him in return. Upagupta then uses his psychic powers to change the garland into a stinking corpse of a dog, which Māra, to his horror, finds he cannot remove!<sup>217</sup> In the southeast Asian version (Burmese and Thai), after Māra is temporarily bound with the dog carcass, he is then bound by Upagupta with a monastic belt (*kāya,bandhana*) and held for seven years.<sup>218</sup>

<sup>211</sup> *Sīhalavatthupparāṇa* p21 (French tr, Ver Eecke 1980:24): emphasis added by Strong.

<sup>212</sup> *Sīhalavatthupparāṇa* p21 (French tr, Ver Eecke 1980:24).

<sup>213</sup> In the northern tradition, the forest saint **Upagupta** is regarded as the foremost amongst monks who teach meditation (Ray 1994:119, and the emperor Aśoka's guru and object of devotion (Strong 1992:10 f). He lived on Mt Urumuṅḍa, in the region of Mathura, sometime between 3<sup>rd</sup> cent BCE and 1st cent CE. He is not mentioned in the Pali texts. Although he is featured in non-canonical Pali literature, he only became prominent in Theravada countries (esp Myanmar) from around the 12<sup>th</sup> cent on, due to his importance in the Skt sources. In the Sarvāstivāda he is the 5<sup>th</sup> patriarch after Mahā Kaśyapa, Ānanda, Madhyāntika, and Śāṅkavāsin, and in the Chan tradition, he is regarded as the fourth. He features prominently in Avadāna literature (chs 21 & 27 of the **Divyāvadāna** have the fullest account of his life). He is said to have lived during the time of Aśoka, who held him in high esteem. (Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism). See esp Strong 1992 & Ray 1994:118-131,

<sup>214</sup> Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, 1962:116. However, see John Strong, 1992: 117.

<sup>215</sup> I am unable to find the citation for this.

<sup>216</sup> Cf Divy 357, 361, 363.

<sup>217</sup> Sylvain Lévi, "La Dṛṣṭāntapankti et son auteur," *Journal Asiatique*, 1927:121. See Strong 1992:98.

<sup>218</sup> See Strong 1992:99 f.

**4.3.2.2** Upagupta declares that he will only release Māra after he has shown him the Buddha's body. Māra promises, but warns: "I will create it for you, but you must not salute me!"<sup>219</sup> **The Divyāvadāna** gives a fuller version of the story:

"When," [Māra declares] "all at once you look upon me wearing the costume of the Buddha, do not prostrate yourself [before me] out of respect for the qualities of the Omniscient One. If, your mind tender from your recollection of the Blessed One, you should bow down, I will be consumed by fire, O mighty one. Do I have the power to endure the prostration of one whose passions are gone? I am like the sprouts of the eranda tree that cannot bear the weight of an elephant's trunk."

"So be it," said the elder, "I will not bow down before you." (Divy 360)<sup>220</sup>

**4.3.2.3** Māra, then, according to the Sanskrit account, displays not only the form of the Buddha, but also a mandala of saints:

Then Māra, after he had gone far into the forest and magically taken on the form of the Buddha, emerged from that wood like an actor wearing a bright costume... He fashioned the form of the Blessed One with a pure fathom-wide nimbus, and the form of the elder Śāriputra on the Buddha's right, and the elder Mahāmaudgalyāyana on his left, and the Venerable Ānanda behind him, his hands occupied with the Buddha's bowl. And he also created the forms of the other great disciples, starting with the elders Mahākaśyapa, Anuruddha, and Subhūti; and he made manifest the figures of 1350<sup>221</sup> monks gathered in a half moon around the Buddha. Then Māra approached the elder Upagupta, and Upagupta rejoiced, thinking, "This is what the form of the Buddha looked like!" With a joyful heart, he rose from his seat and exclaimed:

Woe! Woe! to that pitiless impermanence  
That cuts off forms with qualities such as these!  
For the Great Sage's body which is like this  
has been touched by impermanence  
and has suffered destruction.

(Divy 360 f; Strong's tr, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 1983b:192 f; also 1992:109 f)

**4.3.2.4** Upagupta, overwhelmed by devotion, forgets his agreement with Māra, thinking that this image *is* the Buddha, falls at Māra's feet "like a tree cut off at the root." The terrified Māra immediately reminds Upagupta of his promise. Upagupta then gets up from the ground and replies in a stammering voice.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>219</sup> **Loka,paññatti** 1:173 (French tr E Denis, *La Lokapaññatti et les idées cosmologiques du bouddhisme ancien* (3 vols, Lille) 1977 2:152). See also **Damamūka, nidāna Sūtra** (T202.4:43b, Eng tr of the Mongolian, S Frye, *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish (mdo bdzans blun) or the ocean of narratives (üliger-ün dalai)*, Dharmasala, 1981: 241 (German trs of Tibetan, IJ Schmidt, *h.Dsang's blun oder der Weise und der Thor*. (St Petersburg, 2 vols) 1843 2:388 f. Cf **Avadāna, kalpalatā** (ed Vaidya, 1959) 2:53; see also Lévi (op cit) 1927: 122. See Strong 1992:107.

<sup>220</sup> Eng tr J Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, Princeton, 1983b:192 f. Cp J Przulski, *La légende de l'empereur Açoka (Açokāvadāna) dans les texts indiens et chinois*, Paris, 1923a:359 f. Much the same details are found at **Kalpanā, maṇḍitikā**, T201.4.308c-9a (French tr E Huber, *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, 1908:269 f). See also Strong 1992:109 f.

<sup>221</sup> Traditionally, the figure 1250 is more common, but here I qu John Strong verbatim.

<sup>222</sup> He is stammering possibly out of spiritual zest (*pīti*) or perhaps momentarily embarrassed on realizing the truth of Māra's statement.

Of course, I know that the Best of Speakers  
has gone altogether to extinction,  
like a fire swamped by water.  
Even so, when I see his figure,  
which is pleasing to the eye,  
I bow down before that Sage.  
But I do not revere you!

“How is it,” replied Māra, “that I am not revered when you thus bow down before me?”  
“I shall tell you,” said the elder ...

Just as men bow down  
to clay images of the gods,  
knowing that what they worship  
is the god not the clay,  
so I, seeing you here,  
wearing the form of the Lord of the World,  
bowed down to you,  
conscious of the Sugata,  
but not conscious of Māra.

(Divy 363; Strong's tr, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 1983b:195 f; also 1992:110 f)

#### 4.4 SŪRA AMBAṬṬHA

**4.4.1** The Upagupta legend should be read and reflected alongside the story of **Sūra Ambaṭṭha** (Skt Śūra Ambaṣṭha), declared by the Buddha to be the foremost amongst laymen who have wise faith (*aggānam avecca-p,pasannānam*, A 1:26).<sup>223</sup> Before coming to Buddhism, he is a rich but avaricious merchant from Sāvattḥī, and who supports the heterodox (non-Buddhist) ascetics. Here is a summary of Sūra's story according to the Commentaries:

One day, the Buddha comes to his door for alms, and Sūra, impressed by the Buddha's demeanour, invites him in and serves him a meal. After the meal, the Buddha admonishes him with a discourse, which further impresses Sūra, who becomes a streamwinner. The Buddha then departs.

Sometime later, Māra decides to test Sūra's newfound faith. Changing himself to look just like the Buddha, complete with all the 32 marks of the great man, and with bowl and robe, he goes to Sūra's house. Surprised to see the Buddha, Sūra nevertheless invites him in, and asks him why he has returned. The “Buddha” then says: “Ambaṭṭha, when I taught you the Dharma, there was one thing I taught without thinking properly about it. I said that all the aggregates are impermanent, characterized by suffering, and without a self. But this is not true of all of them. Some of them are actually permanent, stable and eternal.”

Sūra reflected on this and then decides that, since Buddhas do not teach anything without thinking about it first, this surely is not the Buddha before him.

<sup>223</sup> Cf A 3:451, where he is listed amongst 11 lay followers who have been awakened through faith, namely, the householders Tapussa, Bhallika, Sudatta Anāthapiṇḍika, Citta Macchikā,saṇḍika, Hatthaka Āḷavaka, Mahānāma Sakka, Ugga Vesālika, Uggata, Sūra Ambaṭṭha, Jīvaka Komāra,bhacca, Nakula,pitā, Tava,kaṇṇika, Pūraṇa, Isi,data, Sandhāna, Vijaya, Vajjiya,mahita and Meṇḍaka; and the laymen Vāsetṭha, Ariṭṭha and Sāragga (A 6.131-151/3:451).

“You are Māra!” he declares, and then, proclaiming that all formations are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*), he chases Māra away from his door. (DA 2:864; AA 1:197 f)<sup>224</sup>

**4.4.2 John Strong** shows two important connections between the Sūra story and the Upagupta legend.<sup>225</sup>

First, it shows clearly that one of the principal dangers with Māra lies in not seeing the impermanence of things, in falling into the illusion that certain things (the body of the Buddha among them) are stable and eternal. It is no accident that Māra tries to trick Śūra into falsely believing in the permanence of the skandhas, and, significantly Śūra, in chasing Māra away, uses almost as a mantra the doctrinal proclamation “*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*”—all conditioned things are impermanent. Similarly, Upagupta will have to struggle to reconcile his sight of the Buddha with his knowledge that the Buddha’s body has gone to destruction.

Second, the Śūra story raises again the important theme of the necessity of seeing through outward appearances, applying it this time not to courtesans and beautiful women, but to the physical form of the Buddha himself. Śūra does not trust his vision of the Buddha’s rūpa; instead, he trusts his knowledge of the Buddha’s Dharma. As he puts it in the **Kalpanā,maṇḍitikā**:

“You can mislead the eye of flesh, but you cannot mislead the eye of Dharma.” (1992:109)<sup>226</sup>

**4.4.3** Such stories are reminders, especially in religion, how appearances and the imagination can, and often do, deceive us. Without a good understanding and proper practice of the Dharma, we can easily be drawn to zealous or worldly gurus. Or, we might blindly accept the words of teachers, especially the charismatic and the famous, as being true and good, when they really are not.<sup>227</sup> As long as we keep on asking the right questions, analyzing the answers, and verifying them with the suttas, we would progress. On the positive side, such stories and the Buddha recollection energize us with profound happiness and faith that are the bases for us to grow spiritually on the path to awakening.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Eng tr E Hardy, “Māra in the guise of Buddha,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1902:951-955 see p952.

<sup>225</sup> For fuller discussion, see Strong, 1992:108 f.

<sup>226</sup> See E Huber (French tr), *Sūtrālamkāra*, 1908:954; also Strong 1992:108.

<sup>227</sup> On the fact that even famous teachers can have wrong views, see **(Ahita) Thera S** (A 5.88), SD 40a.16

<sup>228</sup> Sūra’s story should also uplift those victimized by religious evangelical zealots trying to shake their faith in Buddhism, and to safeguard the impressionable faithful against worldly gurus and simonists who twist Buddhism for their own ends.



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