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Mahā,samaya Sutta

The Discourse on the Great Assembly | D 20

Theme: A god-believer's way to the Buddha

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008

1 Sutta summary and structure

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY and highlights

1.1.1 The Mahā,samaya Sutta,¹ the discourse on the great assembly, is the 20th sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.² It is a fascinating and ancient list of the names of various gods and other non-humans, including Māra and his army, found in early Buddhist folklore.

1.1.2 The Sutta locates the event in the great forest (*mahā,vana*) outside Kapila,vatthu, where the Buddha is staying with **500 arhats** [1.2.1]. The gods of the “tenfold world systems” [§1.3] assemble before the Buddha and the monks to venerate him [§1], and are joined by 4 gods from **the pure abodes** (*suddh'āvāsā*), who sing paeans in praise of the event and the arhats [§§2-3; 1.3.1.1].

1.1.3 The Buddha then addresses the monks and gives this Sutta teaching [§§4-20; 1.1.2], which, apparently, is also heard by the assembled deities. The Sutta closes with 2 verses on **Māra** [§§21-22]—on the danger he poses and how we are fully freed from him.

1.2 SUTTA AGE AND HIGHLIGHTS

1.2.1 The Mahā,samaya Sutta gives us an insight into **early Indian Buddhist folklore** and the apotropaic aspect of popular Buddhism. Metrically, the verses on the exotic non-humans [§§4-20] are old, and those of **the prologue** [§§1-3.5] are younger. This gives us some idea on the possibility that it is a composite work based on older teachings.³

1.2.3 Traditionally, the Mahā,samaya Sutta is recited, usually by monastics, for weddings as a form of protective and merit-making ritual for wedding couples, their families and others. The text is known to the laity who follow popular Buddhism, which includes it amongst those texts (suttas or excerpts) with apotropaic (protective) power when properly recited, that is, by keeping the precepts and with a heart of lovingkindness.

1.2.4 The envoi—the concluding 7 verses on Māra [§§21-22]—was probably inserted by the council elders for the sake of completeness and a dramatic climax to the whole narrative (for, there is very little teaching). After all, **Marā** resides in the heaven of the gods who delight in creating (*nimmāna,-ratī*), the penultimately highest gods of the sense-world. Māra's power, however, extends throughout the universe of the unawakened, even up to the highest of the formless realms, so to speak.⁴

¹ **Sammā,paribbājaniya S** (Sn 2.13), SD 103.8, is also called “Mahā,samaya Sutta” because it is taught on the same day. (SA 352,2-4)

² A Chinese parallel exists as 大會經 *dà huì jīng* (一九、長阿含經第 12 卷經第十五, 19 *cháng ā hán jīng juǎn dì 12 jīng dì shíwǔ*, DĀ 19 ,T79b02- 81b25).

³ Saṃyutta Comy of **Sammā,paribbājaniya S** (Sn 2.13), SD 103.8, alludes to these 4 verses by the pure-abode deities as also be found in **Sa,gāthā,vagga**: ie as (**Devatā**) **Samaya S** (S 1.37/1:26,7-14), SD 86.12 [1.3.1.1].

⁴ On Māra, see **Māra**, SD 61.8; SD 11.7 (2.1.1); SD 36.4 (2.3).

1.3 SUTTA STRUCTURE

1.3.0 The Sutta comprises 3 main parts:

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|---|---------|
| (1) The prologue | [§§1-3] | 4 verses | The assembly and the pure-abode devas' verses | [1.3.1] |
| (2) The assembly | [§§4-20] | 53 verses | The Buddha's teaching and list of non-humans | [1.3.2] |
| (3) The envoi | [§§21-22] | 7 verses | Māra and his army threaten the assembly | [1.3.3] |

1.3.1 Part 1 [§§1-3]

1.3.1.1 Part 1 is the prologue, comprising 4 verses of praise by the 4 deities from the pure abodes (*suddhāvāsā*)⁵ [1*-4*]. This prologue is elsewhere preserved as a separate episode in **the (Devatā) Samaya Sutta** (S 1.37).⁶ Clearly, the (Devatā) Samaya Sutta and the Mahā,samaya Sutta refer to the same occasion.⁷

1.3.1.2 The significantly shorter (Devatā) Samaya Sutta (S 1.37) is probably a later canonical text. Like the envoi [1.3.3], which was appended as a dramatic climax to the core of 53 exotic verses [1.3.2], the 4 paeans were inserted to serve as the Sutta's introduction [1.3.1], and also especially to spice up the otherwise apotropaic text with some traditional Dharma from the very mouths of non-returners from the pure abodes.

1.3.1.3 In fact, the other beings, the deities and non-humans, mentioned in the main part of the Sutta—"the assembly" in 53 verses [5*-58*]—only a handful of the massive gathering of deities and non-humans are streamwinners, but none of the deities or non-humans mentioned in the "assembly" section are arhats.

We know that **Canda** (Candimā) and **Suriya** are streamwinners [2.2.1(b)]. Although **Indra** (Sakra)⁸ is mentioned by name and title (*purindada*) [42f*], he is the most prominent of the deities in the Sutta, albeit only obliquely as *inda,nāma*, "those with Indra's name" [20a*, 22a*, 24a*, 26*]. He is a streamwinner, too (SD 15.13(2.10)), especially when this is his best loved title: "the one who gave offerings before."

The brahmas are mentioned in 3 verses [56*-58*] of §20 but we do not know if Brahma Ghaṭikāra, a non-returner,⁹ is amongst them. Only the brahmas **Sanañ,kumara** and **Tissa** are mentioned by name [56c*] but we have no information that they have attained any Buddhist path of sainthood.

The point again: there are only a handful of deities in the Mahā,samaya, the great assembly, who have attained the path.

1.3.2 Part 2 [§§4-20]

1.3.2.1 Part 2 of the Mahā,samaya Sutta [§§4-20], on "the assembly"—that bulk of the Sutta with its 53 verses—opens with the Buddha's words, followed by a list of the devas and other beings¹⁰ who have assembled to pay homage to the Buddha and the arhats. It is a long list of exotic names given in verse, mostly doggerel,¹¹ like a mantra—which suggests its lateness and purpose (for the

⁵ On the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), see SD 10.16 (13.1.6).

⁶ S 1.37/1:26 f (SD 86.12).

⁷ See (1.2.1) n.

⁸ On Sakra, see SD 15.13 (2).

⁹ See SD 49.13 (1), with 2 Ghaṭikāras Suttas (S 2.24 + 1.50).

¹⁰ A similar list of devas appears in Mahā,vastu (Mvst 1:245, 3:68, 77); the addition of "Siva" to this list is significant, attesting to the Skt text's lateness. Another list of gods is found in **Āṭānāṭiya S** (D 32), SD 101.1.

¹¹ A comic or burlesque verse, usu of irregular measure.

benefit of a growing local lay following). Many of the beings mentioned are to us now mere names, of which we have little or no information.

1.3.2.2 Most of them were probably local deities, the personification of natural phenomena, guardian spirits, fairies, harpies, naiads, dryads, and others, who are here represented as followers of the Buddha, who have come to pay him homage. It is noteworthy that even the most important gods, such as Brahmā, Varuṇa and Soma, are simply mentioned, as if incidentally, without any special distinction.

1.3.3 Part 3 [§§21-22]

1.3.3.1 Part 3 of the Sutta, the envoi (the 2 concluding verses), were probably inserted by the council elders, reminding us of **Māra's fierce attacks on the Buddha** during the night just before the great awakening¹² [§§21-22]. The verses remind us that Māra is always lurking within and without to distract us from our spiritual vision and quest. Māra, however, has no power over arhats, those free from lust and fear, or when our mind is wholesomely calm and clear, especially when we are absorbed in dhyana.

1.3.3.2 The envoi [59*-64*] serves as a somber reminder that even this great assembly can be violated by a darker, even more powerful, force: that of Māra and his army—the personifications of the 3 unwholesome roots in all their dimensions. It is a reminder that as long as we are unawakened, even with the protection of the gods or God himself, Māra or death still lords over us [1.3.4.3]. His subtlest (but most powerful) presence is in our thoughts, our views—only when our mind is fully emptied by awakening, never again to be filled by the worldliness, are we liberated from Māra, which in the final analysis, the notion of an abiding self, whether eternal or not. [1.3.4]

1.3.4 Māra and his army

1.3.4.1 Of all the deities present in the great assembly, **Māra** is surely the most interesting—and most formidable—figure in the great assembly, as well in the whole universe itself. As **Maccu**, death personified,¹³ he has power over all unawakened beings, up to the highest heavens.¹⁴

He is present with his “great army” (*mahā,sena*), ready again to challenge all who have assembled to honour the Buddha and the arhats—this is to challenge Māra's power! Hence, he fiercely barks in a stentorian voice: “Surround them all around! | Let none escape ... !” [60*]

1.3.4.2 Then, he dramatically **strikes the earth** with a fearsome sound [61*]. Apparently, he does this in mockery of **Mother Earth** who has defeated him before, when he tries to assault the meditating Bodhisattva under the Bodhi tree just before the great awakening.¹⁵ All the deities are either standing on her or hovering above. Mother Earth in her humble, yet supportive, earth dwelling does not rise up. Moreover, the Buddha has not summoned her. Māra knows this and delights in this development.

1.3.4.3 Māra is **the Buddhist apotheosis of evil** (all that opposes or distracts our efforts for self-understanding and liberative good) embodied as a powerful divine being. Hence, Māra, like **Thanatos** of Greek mythology, has power over all that exists: all that arise and, hence, must also end. Since we can only exist in time, we also must pass away with time. So, too, with gods and mortals.

¹² On Māra's assault on the awakening bodhisattva, see SD 52.1 (16).

¹³ On Māra as Death, see SD 48.2 (2.1.2.2).

¹⁴ On Māra and the devas, see SD 52.1 (9.1).

¹⁵ See SD 52.1 (16.2).

In Greek mythology, Thanatos almost never appears in person, but death needs to visit us only *once* in a life-time! Thanatos does not seem to have to do much since, in Greek mythology, death is a permanent end to whatever lives or exists. His sister, **Nemesis**, is the goddess of balance in life, that is, justice—this is close to the Buddhist teaching of karma. Then, again, in early Buddhism, karma is a very personal mind-based process.

While Nemesis is an embodiment of karmic justice, **Dike** or Dice (Greek, Δίκη) is the Greek goddess of social justice. Her task is to ensure moral order and fair judgement based on ancient customs and universal conventions. In this sense, she is represented by the scales of justice. In early Buddhism, the basis for such social order and goodness is **moral virtue** (*sīla*). Simply put, the good society is only possible with moral beings, whose virtue is effected by keeping to the moral precepts, resulting in the highest quality of life and related values.¹⁶

Māra delights in our acting on karma—both bad and good. This is a duality: one only exists in contrast to the other; hence, to a significant extent, socially defined. Nevertheless, the duality of good and bad—especially in terms of our intention—keeps us in samsara: this is what karma does. In this sense, Māra wants to ensure that we keep going in our karma. In such a karmic existence, **death** is only a temporary end to a temporary phenomena.

Death, in a Māra-dominated universe, is like when Sisyphus’s rock reaches inertia deep down at the bottom of the valley. Happily, he runs to his rock (karma) and pushes it up the hill all over again (life). When his rock reaches the peak, it runs wildly downhill again on its own momentum (death). Sisyphus is again delighted with his great “achievement.” This is what Māra does to us: we are but flies and hamsters with which Māra toys with for his amusement.¹⁷

1.3.4.4 The figure of Māra as personifying or embodying **all our senses, thoughts and worldliness** stands unique in the history of religion. Apparently, all other religious notions of evil as opposed to Godliness or good, makes him a reality that is external to us, an I-Thou dichotomy. Such a duality simply “blames” evil in some external way, instead of our taking personal responsibility for creating and seeing this evil ourself. Māra, then, is really within us, our own creations. When we realize this, we understand the true meaning and real purpose of self-emptying, self-effort and self-realization; in short, the conquest of the mind in an inner battle: self-mastery.

2 SUTTA SOURCES AND BACKGROUND

2.1 DETAILED COMMENTARIAL SOURCES

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| | <u>DA 2</u> | <u>SA 1</u> | <u>DhA 3</u> | <u>SnA 1</u> | <u>JA 5</u> ¹⁸ |
| accounts of the Rohinī incident are bulleted | | | | | |
| • how the Rohinī incident started | 672 | 67 | 254 | 357 | 412 |
| • teachings given by the Buddha; | 674 | 68 | 256 | 358 | 413 |
| • all the assembled clansmen feel samvega, then faith (<i>pasannā</i>) | 675 | 70 | | 358 | 414 |
| • peace of the clans: the gift of 250 Sakya and 250 Koliya youths | 675 | 70 | | 358 | 415 |
| • teaching the 500 monks; they attain streamwinning, etc | 676 | 72 | | 359 | 415 |
| • teaching the 500 monks; they attain arhathood | 676 | 72 | | 359 | 456 |
| the Mahā,samaya assembly [D 20] | 676 | 72 | | 360 | 456 |
| the verses of the 4 brahmas from the pure abodes [1*-4*] | 679 | 75 | | 360 | |
| the Buddha’s lion-roar [§4] | | | | 361 | |
| Sammā,paribbājanīya Sutta, etc, & the 6 personality-types [2.3] | 682 | | | 361 | |

Table 2a. Details of sources

¹⁶ On the 5 values of moral virtue, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.4.3); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

¹⁷ On Māra and king Yama (lord of the hells), see SD 48.10 (3.4.3; 1.1.1.3).

¹⁸ JA is often shortened to simply J, which refers to both the canonical verses and their commentaries.

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Commentary | on | |
| 1 Dīgha Comy | Mahā,samaya Sutta (D 20) | DA 2:672,1-678,3 |
| 2 Saṃyutta Comy | Samaya Sutta (S 1.37/1:26-f) | SA 1:67,18-77 [2.2.1] |
| 3 Dhammapada Comy | Ñāti,kalahavūpasamana Vatthu (Dh 197-199) | DhA 15.1/3:254-257 [2.3] |
| 4 Sutta,nipāta Comy | Sammā,paribbājanīya Sutta ¹⁹ (Sn 2.13) | SnA 1:357,13-361,26 |
| 5 Jātaka Commentary | Kuṇāla Jātaka (J 536) | JA 5:412,13-456,17 |

Table 2b. Summary of sources

2.2 SOURCES ALLUDING TO THE ROHINĪ INCIDENT RELATED TO THE MAHĀ,SAMAYA

2.2.1 Saṃyutta Nikāya Commentary (SA 1:67-77 + 109). [Table 2a]

(a) This is the main commentary on the Mahā,samaya Sutta. Hence, it contains all the episodes and sections listed above²⁰ [Tables 2a+b].

(b) SA further makes a brief note of the Mahā,samaya Sutta, in connection with the deities Candimā (the moon), called Candā here [41d*], and Suriya (the sun) [42b*], as recorded respectively in **the Candimā Sutta** (S 2.9) and **the Suriya Sutta** (S 2.10).²¹ The Commentary states that both Candimā and Suriya attained streamwinning on the day of the Mahā,samaya Sutta teaching. (SA 1:109,13 f)

2.2.2 Majjhima Nikāya Commentary (MA 5:95) on the Nandak'ovāda Sutta (M 146), SD 68.12. [Table 2a]

Nandaka renounced the world and attained arhathood. When “the daughter of the head of the women-slaves” came of age, she was made Suddhodana’s chief queen.²² The other princes each set up their own families. During the Rohinī incident, the 500 youths, after listening to the Buddha’s teaching, renounced.

At the Kuṇāla lake (*kuṇāla,daha*), having listened to **the Kuṇāla Jātaka** (J 536), they attained streamwinning. Then, on the day of the Mahā,samaya (D 20), attained arhathood. The 500 women (erstwhile wives or partners²³ of the renounced princes) then decided to renounce, too, in the presence of Mahā Pajāpatī.²⁴ (MA 5:95,22-96,4).

2.2.3 Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary (AA 1:313+340, 4:132) on Nandaka Thera and Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī Therī.

¹⁹ This is the last of the teachings given to the Mahā,samaya assembly.

²⁰ SA 1:67-75.

²¹ S 2.9 + 2.10 have been tr respectively in SD 86.20 + 86.21.

²² Subcomy says that this refers to Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī (MAṬ:Be 2:426). Suddhodana married both sisters (ThĀ 141,4 f), Mahā Māyā first; after her death, he married Mahā,pajāpatī (AA 1:340,20-23).

²³ “Wives or partners,” *pāda,p[aricārikā]*: see SD 54.8 (1.4.3.8).

²⁴ *Nandaka-t,thero'pi pabbajitvā arahattam patto, jeṭṭhaka,dāsi,dhītā vayarā āgamma suddhodana,mahā.-rājassa agga,mahesi-ṭ,thāne thitā, itarā'pi tesam tesam raja,puttānam,yeva gharam gatā. Tāsam sāmikā pañca,satā raja,kumārā udaka,cumbaṭa,kalahe satthu dhamma,desanam sutvā pabbajitā, raja,dhītarō tesam ukkanṭhanattham sāsanam pesesum. Te ukkanṭhite bhagavā kuṇāla,daham netvā sotāpatti,phale patiṭṭhapetvā mahā,samaya,divase arahatte patiṭṭhāpesi. Tāpi pañca,satā raja,dhītarō nikkhamitvā mahā,pajāpatiyā santike pabbajimsu.* (MA 5:95,22-96,4). Some time must have passed between the princes’ renunciation and their wives following suit since Mahā Pajāpatī only renounces after Suddhodana’s death, ie, during the 5th year of the ministry, while the Buddha was observing the rains-retreat in the Hall of the Pinnacled House in the great wood outside Vesāli (ThĀ 3,29-31, 141,6-10). This is in the 5th year of the ministry (BA 3,24).

AA refers to the Mahā,samaya in two places in its commentaries on **the Eka,nipāta**, that is, on the elder Nandaka (AA 1:313)²⁵ and on the nun Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī (AA 1:340 f).²⁶

(a) **On Nandaka Thera** (AA 1:313). After the Tathagata quelled the conflict on the banks of the Rohinī river, 500 Sakya²⁷ youths went forth. Then, dissatisfaction arose in them. When they came to the Kuṇāla lake, he related to them **the Kuṇāla Jātaka** (J 536). When samvega (a sense of spiritual urgency) arose in them, he taught them the 4 noble truths and they attained streamwinning.²⁸

Later, when **the Mahā,samaya Sutta** (D 20) had been taught, they attained arhathood.²⁹

The erstwhile wives [partners] of those elders thought, “What shall we do now?” Then, they, all of one mind, decided to approach Mahā,pajāpatī to entreat for going-forth. And the 500 received the going-forth and ordaining in the elder nun’s presence.³⁰ In due course, they were instructed by the elder Nandaka and they attained arhathood (AA 1:314,15-17).

(b) **On Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī Therī** (AA 1:340 f). Some time after the Bodhisattva renounced the world and attained omniscience for the good of the world, the Buddha, in stages, reached Kapilavattu, and entered the city on almsround. Then, his father, king Suddhodana, hearing the Dharma right in the middle of the street, attained streamwinning. On the 2nd day, Nanda renounced; on the 7th, Rāhula.³¹

On another occasion, the teacher dwelled in the Hall of the Pinnacled House outside Vesālī (during the 5th year of the ministry, BA 3,24). At that time, Suddhodana attained arhathood while still ruling under the white parasol and passed away [ThīA 141]. The thought of renunciation then arose in Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī.³²

At the end of the teaching of **the Kalaha,vivāda Sutta** (Sn 4.11), 500 young men, having gone forth, their wives were all of one mind with the desire to go forth, too. Following the lead by Mahā,-pajāpatī, they all went along with her to go forth before the Blessed One.³³

2.2.4 Therī,gāthā Commentary (ThīA 3 f). [Table 2a]

On a later occasion, when the teacher was living in the Hall of the Pinnacled House outside Vesālī, king Suddhodana attained arhathood while still ruling under the white parasol and passed away

²⁵ A 1.14.4.11/1.229/1:25; AA 1:313.

²⁶ A 1.14.5.1/1.235/1:25; AA 1:340 f.

²⁷ In the other comy sources, it is 250 Sakya youths and 250 Koliya youths (eg AA 4:132,11).

²⁸ *Tathāgato’pi kho rohiṇī,nadī,tīre cumbaṭaka,kalahe nikkhamitvā pabbajitānaṃ pañcannaṃ sākiya,kumara,-satānaṃ anabhiratiyā uppanāya te bhikkhū ādāya kuṇāla,dahaṃ gantvā kuṇāla,jataka,kathāya* (J 536) *nesaṃ samviggā,bhāvaṃ ṇatvā catu,sacca,kathaṃ kathetvā sotāpatti,phale patiṭṭhāpesi.* (AA 1:313,7-12)

²⁹ *Apara,bhāge mahā,samaya,suttaṃ* (D 20) *kathetvā agga,phalaṃ arahattaṃ pāpesi.* (AA 1:313,12 f). The other sources, however, tell us that the monks became arhats before the Mahā,samaya, and that it celebrated that occasion: see Table 2b.

³⁰ *Tesaṃ therānaṃ purāṇa,dutiyikā* “amhe dāni idha kiṃ karissāmāti vatvā sabbāva eka,cittā hutvā mahā,-pajāpatim upasaṅkamitvā pabbajjaṃ yāciṃsu. Tā’pi pañca,satā theriyā santike pabbajjaṃ ca upasampadaṃ ca labhiṃsu. (AA 1:313,13-15)

³¹ *Aparena samayena bodhisatto mahā’bhinikkhamanaṃ nikkhamitvā sabbaññutaṃ patvā lokānuggahaṃ karonto anukkamena kapilavatthum patvā nagaraṃ piṇḍāya pāvisi. Athassa pitā suddhodana,mahārājā antara,vīthiyā yeva dhamma,kathaṃ sutvā sotāpanno ahoṣi. Atha dutiya,divase nando pabbaji, sattame divase rāhulo.* (AA 1:340,25-341,2). See also AA 4:132.

³² *Satthā aparena samayena vesālīm upanissāya kūṭāgāra,sālāyaṃ viharati. Tasmim samaye suddhosana,-mahārājā seta-c,hattassa heṭṭhā arahattaṃ sacchikatvā parinibbāyi. Tadā mahā,pajāpati,gotamī pabbajjāya cittaṃ uppādesi.* (AA 1:341,3-6)

³³ *Tato rohiṇī,nadītīre kalaha,vivāda,sutta,pariyosāne* (Sn 862-876) *nikkhamitvā pabbajitānaṃ pañcannaṃ kumara,satānaṃ pāda,paricārikā sabbāva eka,cittā hutvā* “mahā,pajāpatiyā santikaṃ gantvā sabbāva satthu santike pabbajissāmā’ti mahā,pajāpatim jeṭṭhikaṃ katvā satthu santikaṃ gantvā pabbajitu,kāmā ahesuṃ. (AA 1:341,6-12)

[ThĀ 141]. Then, the thought of going forth arose in Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī. After that, being of one mind, the wives of the 500 youths, who had renounced at the end of the teaching of **the Kalaha,vivāda Sutta** (Sn 4.11) on the Rohinī river bank [3.1], went to Mahā,pajāpatī. Following the lead by Mahā,pajāpatī, they all, too, had the thought of going forth before the teacher.³⁴

Now, Mahā,pajāpatī had, on a previous occasion, once entreated the teacher for the going-forth but was unable to attain it. Then, she sent for a barber, had her hair cut off, put on yellow robes and, taking all those Sakya women with her, went to Vesālī [2.3.3.3(6) n]. She got the elder Ānanda to entreat the Buddha, and gained the going-forth by accepting the 8 rules of respect.³⁵ The rest, however, were all ordained by the one side (that is, by the bhikkhu,sangha).³⁶

This is only briefly stated here but the details have come down to us in various places in the Pali canon.³⁷ [2.4.2]

2.3 WHAT THE SOURCES TELL US

2.3.1 Events leading up to the Mahā,samaya

2.3.1.1 From the tables showing the collation of sources [Tables 2a+b] and the sources themselves [2.2], we can deduce that the roots of **the Mahā,samaya Sutta** go back to the Rohinī incident [3]. To prevent an impending battle between the two feuding parties (the Sakyas and the Koliyas) over the use of the dwindling level of their common source of river-water, the Buddha gave them a series of teachings and admonitions.

When the two parties felt samvega, abandoned their conflict and resolved the problem, they each instructed 250 of their youths to ordain as monks under the Buddha. This is a gesture of gratitude to the Buddha having resolved their troubles, thus saving all their lives and establishing peace.

2.3.1.2 Understandably, these youths, who were married, at first felt dissatisfied as monks. The Buddha, however, taught them the **Kuṇāla Jātaka** (J 536) and they became streamwinners. Seeing them filled with samvega (a sense of spiritual urgency), the Buddha then taught them the 4 noble truths, as a result of which they attained arhathood.

The Buddha and these 500 arhats then gathered in the great wood outside Kapilavatthu. This is famously called **the Mahā,samaya** (the great assembly), from which we get the name of the teachings given there (D 20). [2.2]

2.3.2 Beginning of the nuns' sangha

2.3.2.1 A second development in the Rohinī incident is **the renunciation of the 500 women**, the erstwhile wives of the 500 young arhats. Since their husbands have joined the order, they, too, decided to do the same. This is probably because, without their husbands, it would be difficult for them to live by themselves, and more so because they were spiritually ready for renunciation. [3.3.1]

³⁴ *Athāparena samayena satthari vesālīm upanissāya kūtāgāra,sālāyaṃ viharante suddhodana,mahātājā setacchattassa heṭṭhā'va arahattaṃ sacchikatvā parinibbāyi. Atha mahā,pajāpatiyā gotamiyā pabbajjāya cittaṃ uppajji, tato rohinī,nadī,tīre kalaha,vivāda,suttanta,desanāya () pariyosāne nikkhamitvā, pabbajitānaṃ pañcannaṃ kumara,satānaṃ pāda,paricārikā ek'ajjhāsaya'va hutvā mahā,pajāpatiyā santikaṃ gantvā, sabbā'va "satthu santike pabbajissāmāti mahā,pajāpatim jeṭṭhikaṃ katvā satthu santikaṃ gantu,kāmā ahesuṃ. (ThĀ 3,29-4,2)*

³⁵ V 2:253-256; A 4:274-278.

³⁶ V 2:256 f; cf J 2:392.

³⁷ *Ayañ ca mahā,pajāpati pubbe'pi eka,vāraṃ satthāraṃ pabbajjaṃ yācitvā nā'attha, tasmā kappakaṃ pak-kosāpetvā kese chindāpetvā kāsāyāni acchādetvā sabbā tā sākiyāniyo ādāya vesālīm gantvā ānanda-t,therena dasa,balaṃ yācāpetvā, aṭṭha,garu,dhamma,paṭiggahaṇena pabbajjaṃ upasampadañ ca alattha. Itarā pana sabbā'pi ekato upasampannā ahesuṃ. Ayam ettha saṅkhepo. Vitthārato pan'etaṃ vatthuṃ tattha tattha pāli-yaṃ āgatam eva. (ThĀ 3,29-4,9)*

2.3.2.2 All the commentarial sources we have culled [2.2] generally agree in telling us that they first approached **Mahā,pajāpatī Gotamī**, who, following her husband Suddhodana’s death, had herself decided to become a nun. This is probably because without the king (*rājā*), she would be a helpless widow, but more so because she was spiritually ripe for renunciation.

Mahā,pajāpatī herself was admitted into the nun’s sangha by her acceptance of the 8 rules of respect (*garu,dhamma*). The 500 women, on the other hand, were admitted by “the one side” (*ekato*), that is, the monks’ sangha itself—this is a unique arrangement for these women, as noted by Dhammapāla (ThīA 141,15-19). The details of Mahā,pajāpatī’s unique form of ordination are given in **the Vinaya** and **the (Aṭṭhaka) Gotamī Sutta** (A 8.51).³⁸

2.3.3 The date of the Mahā,samaya

2.3.3.1 The commentarial sources [2.1+2.2] further provide us with vital clues for **the date of the teaching of the Mahā,samaya Sutta**. How do we work this out? There are facts we know directly and facts that indirectly help us triangulate our reasoned conclusion. In this case, we have a series or network of events, all of which are somehow related, even conditioning the other.

A key direct fact comes from the Buddhavaṃsa Commentary (BA 3,24) which tells us that the Buddha spent **the 5th year** (that is, the year ending with the 5th rains-retreat, June-October) in Vesālī.³⁹ With this textual reference as an “anchor fact,” we work with the sequences and connections of other related events mentioned in the suttas and the Commentaries. From what we know, we are able to work out what we do not know but want to know—that is, the date of the Mahā,samaya.

2.3.3.2 The sequence of events leading to the Mahā,samaya or somehow connected with it are as follows. From all the information we have gathered so far, this is the probable chronological sequence of events.

It is said that the news of **king Suddhodana’s death** came to the Buddha while he was keeping the rains-retreat in the Hall of the Pinnacled House in the great wood outside Vesālī in the 5th year.⁴⁰ Back in Kapilavatthu, with the death of Suddhodana, his surviving chief queen (the Buddha’s foster mother), **Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī**, decided to renounce the world.⁴¹

It is likely that **the Rohinī incident** occurred soon after this, in the May-June (*jetṭha,mūla*) of the 6th year of the Buddha’s ministry. The Buddha brought peace to the Sakyas and Koliyas. Out of gratitude, each clan instructed 250 of their youths (totaling 500) to join the order—they became **the 500 arhats**. The Buddha then brought all of them to the great wood outside Kapilavatthu.

2.3.3.3 In **summary**, we have this chronology of events up to the Mahā,samaya and soon after:

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | The Buddha’s rains-retreat in Vesālī (July-September, 5 th year): Suddhodana’s death | [2.3.3.2] |
| 2 | Mahā,pajāpatī decides to renounce (Kapila,vatthu) | [2.3.2.2] |
| 3 | The Rohinī incident involving the Sakyas and the Koliyas (May-June, 6 th year) | [3] |
| 4 | The 500 youths from both clans become arhats | [3.3, 4] |
| 6 | The great assembly (<i>mahā,samaya</i>) | [1.1] |

³⁸ Cv 10.1-2 (V 2:253-257); **(Aṭṭhaka) Gotamī S** (A 8.51/4:274-279), SD 102.1.

³⁹ The monastic rains-retreat (*vassāvāsa*) last 3 lunar months. The lunar day marking the 1st entrance into the rains-retreat (*vass’upanāyikā*) is fixed by the full moon passing one day in the asterism of Āsāḷha (Jun-Jul or 8th Siamese lunar month): begins on the full moon of Āsāḷha (June-July) and ends on the dawn after the full moon of Poṭṭhapada (Aug-Sep). The late entrance would thus be the full moon day of the full month (1st day of the 9th waning moon): Sāvana (July-Aug) to Assayuja (Sept-Oct) or Kattikā (Oct-Nov) full moon. See **(Duka) Vassūpāniyika S** (A 2.10) SD 51.7. For the Indian months, see DEB, App 1.

⁴⁰ BA 3,24; ThīA 3,29-31, 141,6-10

⁴¹ See (2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4).

- 7 The 500 women (the erstwhile wives of the 500 monks) decide to renounce, too [2.3.2.1]
 8 They go to Mahā Pajāpatī (who decide to renounce after Suddhodana’s death)⁴² [2.3.2.2]

We can reasonably conclude that the great assembly took place in **the 6th year** of the ministry.

3 The Rohinī incident

3.1 Drought

3.1.0 The Rohinī incident [3.1.1] is an important commentarial story that preceded **the Mahā,samaya Sutta**. It also mentions the teaching of 5 Jātaka stories and the Atta,daṇḍa Sutta (Sn 4.15) [3.2.2]. It is recounted in the following Commentaries (cf Tables 2.0a+b):

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Dīgha Nikāya Commentary | DA 2:672,12-677 | a detailed Dīgha account |
| Saṃyutta Nikāya Commentary | SA 1:67,25-70,15 | a detailed Saṃyutta account |
| Dhammapada Commentary | DhA 3:254-256 | the story behind Dh 197-199 |
| Sutta,nipāta Commentary | SnA 1:357,13-359,24 | the most detailed account |
| Jātaka Commentary | JA 5:412-456,17 | commentary on the Kunāla Jātaka (J 536) |

Given below [3.2] are the teachings given in connection with the Rohinī incident based on all these sources, along with some explanatory comments.

3.1.1 Experts have identified Rohinī as a small stream called the Rowai or Rohwaini, that rises in the Chure or Siwalik Hills in Kapilavastu and Rupandehi Districts of Nepal’s Lumbini Zone and flows south into India’s Uttar Pradesh state. At Gorakhpur, it becomes a left-bank tributary of the West Rapti River. This, in turn, joins the Ghāghara above Gaura Barhaj, which then flows into the Ganges.⁴³

3.1.2 Dhammapāla says that the Rohinī flows from north to south and that Rājagaha lies to the southeast of it (ThaA 2:224). It was a small river dividing the lands of the Sākya clan and the Koliya clan. A dam was constructed across the river, and the people on the two sides used the water to cultivate their fields. Once, in the month of Jeṭṭha,mūla (May-June), there was a drought, and a violent quarrel arose between the two clans over the use of the dwindling level of water.

When a battle was imminent, the Buddha visited the opposing forces assembled on river banks. He instructed and convinced them of the folly of violence and death just for the sake of a little water.

3.2 The value of water and of life

3.2.1 The “price of water” dialogue

3.2.1.1 The Commentaries [2] give an almost identical account of the Buddha’s “key negotiation” or peace dialogue with the feuding Sakyas and Koliyas. The common thread of that significant dialogue that effectively ends the confrontation and seals the common peace goes as follows.

The Buddha, it is said, first cast widespread darkness over the gathering of the feuding clans. Appearing mid-air, sitting in meditation over the river, he then dramatically radiated the 6-coloured

⁴² Comy says that Mahā,pajāpatī and the 500 women [2.3.2.1] approach the Buddha in the Hall of the Pinnacled House in Vesālī, where they receive ordination. On another occasion, at the teaching of **Nandk’ovāda S** (M 146), SD 66.12, the 500 nuns attained arhathood (J 2:392,12-16). This event is famously announced by 2 deities in **(Brahmā) Tissa S** (A 7.53,2), SD 54.5. This event cannot be in the 5th rains, but a later occasion when the Buddha visited in Vesālī again.

⁴³ See Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India* 1879, 12:190 ff; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohini_River.

rays (*cha-b,baṇṇa,raṁsi*).⁴⁴ Having gained the full attention of these clansmen, he addressed those assembled on both banks of the Rohinī.

3.2.1.2 When the Buddha had determined the cause and nature of the conflict, the following famous **“price of water” dialogue** with their leaders ensued:

“Maharajahs, how much is water worth?”

“Little, bhante.”

“How much, then, is earth worth, maharajahs?”

“It is priceless, bhante.”

“What about kshatriyas, what is their worth, maharajahs?”

“Kshatriyas are priceless, bhante!”

“It is not fitting, then, maharajahs, that for a little water you should destroy kshatriyas who are priceless!”⁴⁵ They were silent.

Then the teacher addressed them and said:

“Maharajahs, why do you act in this way? Were I not here today, you would have set flowing a river of blood!”

3.2.2 Common racial stock

3.2.2.1 On that occasion, say the Commentaries,⁴⁶ the Buddha gave the opposing armies the following teachings:

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| the Phandana Jātaka ⁴⁷ | J 475 |
| the Paṭhavī Uddīyana Jātaka ⁴⁸ = the Daddabha Jātaka ⁴⁹ | J 322 |
| the Laṭukika Jātaka ⁵⁰ | J 357 |
| the Sammodamānā Jātaka ⁵¹ | J 33 |
| the Rukkha,dhamma Jātaka ⁵² | J 74 |
| the Atta,daṇḍa Sutta ⁵³ | Sn 4.15/935*-954* |

3.2.2.2 The Sutta,nipāta Commentary on **the Sammā,paribbājaniya Sutta** (Sn 2.13) records the Buddha as detailing the origin and ancestries of the 2 clans: first, of the Sakyas (SnA 352-354), and

⁴⁴ See SD 27.5b (3.1.1); SD 36.9 (4.5.2); SD 54.18 (2.3.1.2).

⁴⁵ *Appa,mūlakam udakam nissaya kim attham anagge khattiye nasetha, mahārājā'ti?* (DA 2:674,11; SA 1:69,24). *Ayuttam* [Be; Ee *Na yuttam*] *tumhākam appamattatam udakam nissaya anagge khattiye nasetun'ti* (DhA 3:256,8). *App'aggham udakam nissaya kasmā anagge khattiye nasetha, mahārāja* (JA 5:414,11).

⁴⁶ Eg SnA 1:357 f.

⁴⁷ A lion, hit by a falling tree branch, asks a wood-cutter in quest of wood to cut down the tree. The tree spirit retaliates by telling the woodcutter to use lionskin to cover his cartwheel. The woodcutter kills the lion and cuts the tree. (J 475/4:207).

⁴⁸ So called only in DA 2:674,21; SA 1:70,2.

⁴⁹ While a timid hare was sleeping under a tree, a ripe fruit fell on it. Startled, it thought the sky was falling, and ran headlong towards the ocean, panicking other animals, too, to follow it. A wise young lion stops and saves them. (J 322/3:74 f). Also called **Duddubha J.**

⁵⁰ A rogue elephant, despite being requested by a quail, destroyed the bird's nest and nestlings. In revenge, the quail got the help of other forest denizens to wreak revenge, killing the rogue elephant. (J 357/3:174 f)

⁵¹ A wise quail instructs other quails that whenever a fowler imitates their cry to net them, they should just fly away. Two quarrelsome quails do not heed the instruction and were netted. (J 33/1:208 f)

⁵² Some tree-spirits are told by Vessavaṇa to move to a new location. The spirit leader advises his kinsmen to resort to trees that are growing close together. Some rather choose to inhabit lonely trees. A storm comes and uprooted the isolated trees. (J 74/1:327 f)

⁵³ It deals with various aspects of self-control and a description of a true sage (*muni*). (Sn 4.15/935*-954*/-182-185)

then of the Koliyas (SnA 354-356), and how through intermarriages, they became well bonded into a common stock (SnA 356 f).

3.2.3 Reconciliation

3.2.3.1 At the end of these teachings, the Buddha declared:

“Why have you acted in this manner, which is unbecoming of you? You live in enmity, indulging in the 5 kinds of hatred.⁵⁴ I live free of hatred. You live afflicted with the sickness of passions. I live free from disease. You live in restless pursuit of the cords of sense-pleasures.⁵⁵ I live free of such pursuit.”

Having said that, he pronounced these verses beginning with *susukhaṃ vata jīvāma ... (Dh 179-199)*.⁵⁶

3.2.3.2 Dh 197-199 read as follows:

| | | |
|--|----------|---|
| <p><i>susukhaṃ vata jīvāma</i> <i>verinesu averino</i> <i>verinesu manussesu</i> <i>viharāma averino</i></p> | (Dh 197) | <p>Happily indeed do we live hate-free amongst the hateful; amongst humans who hate let us dwell unhating.</p> |
| <p><i>susukhaṃ vata jīvāma</i> <i>āturesu anāturā</i> <i>āturesu manussesu</i> <i>viharāma anāturā</i></p> | (Dh 198) | <p>Happily indeed do we live disease-free amongst the diseased; amongst humans who are diseased let us dwell healthily.</p> |
| <p><i>susukhaṃ vata jīvāma</i> <i>ussukesu anussukā</i> <i>ussukesu manussesu</i> <i>viharāma anussukāti</i></p> | (Dh 199) | <p>Happily indeed do we live without restlessness amongst the restless; amongst restless humans let us dwell restfully.</p> |

The Commentary then concludes: “At the end of the teaching, many gained the fruits of streamwinning and so on.”⁵⁷

This account of the Rohinī incident preserved in the Dhammapada Commentary⁵⁸ is only a brief one, but, as we have noted, it contains the key dialogue on “the value of water and of life” [2.3.1], which is the turning-point in the Rohinī conflict, when the Buddha succeeded in bringing peace to the feuding parties.

⁵⁴ The 5 kinds of hatred (*pañca,vera*) refers to the breaking of the 5 precepts (Vbh 278,24-26); cf *pañca,vidham veran’ti pāṇātipāt’ādi,pañca,vidham veram*, DAṬ 2:223; DANṬ:Be 1:283, 333, 2:349). See **Pañca,vera,bhaya S 1** (S 12.41), SD 3.3(4.2), where Comy glosses as “volitions of fear and hate” (*bhayāni verāṇīti bhaya,vera,cetanāyo*, SA 2:72,22 f).

⁵⁵ *Pañca,kāma,guṇa*, ie, the pleasure of the 5 physical senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching/feeling): M 13,7 (SD 6.9); A 6.63,3.2 + SD 6.11 (2.2.2.6).

⁵⁶ *Kasmā mahārājāno eva,rūpaṃ karoṭha, mayi asanta ajja lohita,nadim pavattissatha, ayuttam vo kataṃ. Tumhe pañcahi verehi sa,verā viharatha. Aham avero viharāmi, tumhe kiles’aturā hutvā viharatha, aham anāturo; tumhe kiles’aturā hutvāviharatha, aham anāturo, tumhe kāma,guṇe pariyesan’ussukā hutvā viharatha, aham anussuko viharāmīti vatvā imā gāthā abhāsi*: Dh 197-199 [2.3.3].

⁵⁷ *Desanāvasāne bahū sotāpatti,phal’ādīni pāpuṇimsūti* (DhA 3:257,9).

⁵⁸ DhA 15.1/3:254-257 on Dh 197-199.

3.3 THE 500 YOUTHS

3.3.1 The “gift” of the 500 youths. All the commentarial sources agree on that with the peaceful resolution of Rohinī incident, the two parties (the Sakyas and the Koliyas), showed their profound gratitude to the Buddha for his timely intercession: each side “gave” the Buddha 250 youths to be ordained as monks.⁵⁹

This was not a gift of slaves (which is not permissible according to the Vinaya).⁶⁰ It was a tribal system where the rajahs (kings) and elders had great influence on matters affecting their clans.

Anyway, since these youths were married, understandably, their wives were clearly troubled and concerned. They tried to entice their husbands to return to them.

3.3.2 Teaching the 500 monks

3.3.2.1 To prevent the 500 youths from being distracted from their spiritual training, the Buddha, took them all to the Himalayan region (*himavā*). There, on the shore of Kuṇāla lake (*kuṇāla,daha*),⁶¹ he taught them **the Kuṇāla Jātaka** (J 536).

At the conclusion of the teaching, the monks attained various fruits of the path, from stream-winning to non-returning. Then, the Buddha returned to the great forest (*mahā,vana*) outside Kapilavattu.

3.3.2.2 Now that the 500 monks were learners (*sekha*), that is, saints of the path short of being arhats, it was much easier for the Buddha to continue his Dharma instruction for them. With further instructions, when their minds are sufficiently calm and clear, the Buddha taught them the 4 noble truths. Fully comprehending these truths of reality through their meditation, they all became **arhats**.

Then, in the evening (*sayanṇa,samaya*), they assembled before the teacher to pay him homage. It was also an observance day (*uposatha*), the fullmoon of Jeṭṭha,māsa (May-June). On account of the Rohinī peace [3.2] and to the assembly of 500 arhats, the deities of the 10 directions of the universe (*dasa,loka,dhātu*) gathered in the great forest to rejoice in the occasion. [§1.2]

4 Teaching the great assembly

4.1 THE READY AND THE UNREADY. The Buddha told the assembled monks the names of the deities present as they arrived. Then, the Buddha, by his “unimpeded knowledge” (*appaṭihata,ñāṇa*), surveyed the great assembly and saw that the gathered deities were of **2 kinds**, one capable of benefiting from his teaching (*bhabbā*) and the other incapable (*abhabbā*) of it at that time.⁶²

Those who are incapable of benefitting from the teaching either have not accumulated enough past good karma to be mindful enough (to pay attention) to the teaching or wise enough to understand it and to awaken accordingly. It is also likely that their present conditions, too, are not conducive to understanding the Dharma because of the incapacitating dominance of lust or hate and definitely of delusion.

4.2 THE 6 PERSONALITY TYPES

4.2.1 Of those capable of benefitting from his teaching, he saw them as comprising 6 groups according to temperament or personal trait (*carita*), that is, those of lustful (*rāga,carita*), hating (*dosa,carita*),

⁵⁹ DA 2:675,10-11; SA 1:70,25-27; SnA 1:358,12-13; JA 5:415,2.

⁶⁰ See eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,45.3(14)/1:64), SD 8.10.

⁶¹ This is said to be one of the 7 great lakes in the Himalayas (*himavā*). It is said that the sun’s rays never reached the waters of the lake, which, as such, were never warm (SnA 2:407).

⁶² *Evaṃ sabbattha appaṭihata,ñāno bhagavā sabbā pi tā devata bhabbābhabba,vasena dve koṭṭhāse akāsi* (DA 2:682,9-11).

deluded (*moha,carita*), faithful (*saddhā,carita*), intellectual (*buddhi,carita*) and speculative temperaments (*vitakka,carita*).⁶³

4.2.2 The 6 suttas

4.2.2.1 To these 6 kinds of beings, respectively, the Buddha taught them 6 suttas, each conducting to clearing up the 3 unwholesome roots (lust, hate and delusion) to some level at least. In this case, he presented his teachings in the form of a dialogue (like a radio talk show or TV interview). The Commentaries tell us that the Buddha mentally projected a holographic (*nimitta*) buddha-figure.⁶⁴

It should be noted this is *only* holographic projection the Buddha uses as a skillful means for teaching by catechism (question and answer). It is neither possible nor necessary for 2 fully awakened buddhas to appear in the same universe, which is clearly stated in such texts as **the Bahu,dhātuka S** (M 115,14), SD 29.1a.

4.2.2.2 These special teachings the Buddha gives for the benefit of the deities and non-humans present are recorded in 6 different suttas. Each of these suttas, especially as taught by the Buddha, addresses one of **the 6 temperaments**. The 6 suttas the Buddha taught in this connection are as follows:

| | <u>reference</u> | <u>theme</u> | <u>temperament</u> |
|--|------------------|---|--------------------|
| Sammā,paribbājaniya S ⁶⁵ | Sn 2.13 | freedom from all attachments, views etc | lustful |
| Kalaha,vivāda Sutta | Sn 4.11 | the origin of quarrels and disputes ⁶⁶ | hating |
| Mahā,viyūha Sutta | Sn 4.13 | the wise avoids views and disputations | deluded |
| Tuvaṭṭaka Sutta | Sn 4.14 | qualities needed for liberation | faithful |
| Cūla,viyūha Sutta | Sn 4.12 | attachment to views leads to disputations | intellectual |
| Purābheda Sutta | Sn 4.10 | qualities of a true silent sage | speculative |

4.2.3 The Mahā,samaya Sutta is often quoted as one of those suttas the teaching of which brings countless numbers of beings the attaining of the path as streamwinner and so on.⁶⁷ The teaching of the Mahā,samaya Sutta is among the incidents of the Buddha's life depicted in sculpture in the relic-chamber of the Mahā Thūpa in Sri Lanka. (Mahv 30.83).

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⁶³ DA 2:682,9-24; NmA 316,1-14. On meditations for the various temperaments, see DA 2:562; MA 3:259; AA 2:74, 4:145; DhsA 189. On the 6 temperaments (*carita*): SD 10.7 (2); SD 2.16 (15.2.3.1); cf SD 18.3 (3.8).

⁶⁴ DA 2:683,12; SnA 1:352.

⁶⁵ Also called "Mahā,samaya Sutta" because it is taught on the same day. (SnA 1:352,2-3)

⁶⁶ Mahā,pajāpatī having heard the sutta, renounces the world (AA 1:341; ThīA 3).

⁶⁷ AA 1:101, 2:135; SnA 1:174,1; Miln 20, 350.

Mahā,samaya Sutta

The Discourse on the Great Assembly

D 20⁶⁸

1 Thus have I heard.

1 THE PROLOGUE

[§§1-3]⁶⁹

The devas assemble

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in the great wood (*mahā,vana*) outside Kapila,-vatthu, among the Sakyas, together with a large community of some 500 monks, all of them arhats.

1.3 Most⁷⁰ of the deities of the tenfold world-systems⁷¹ had assembled to see the Blessed One and the community of monks.⁷²

The devas of the pure abodes

2 Then, it occurred to 4 devas of the host of **the pure abodes** (*suddh'āvāsa,kāyika*):⁷³

“The Blessed One is dwelling in the great wood outside Kapila,vatthu, among the Sakyas, together with a large community of some 500 monks, all of them arhats.

2.2 Most of the deities of tenfold world-systems had assembled to see the Blessed One and the community of monks.

Let us, too, approach the Blessed One and let us each speak a verse in his presence.”

3 Then, just as a strong man would stretch his flexed arm or would flex his stretched arm, [254] the devas vanished from the pure abodes and reappeared before the Blessed One.

3.2 Then, the devas approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and stood at one side.

Standing thus at one side, the devas uttered this verse before the Blessed One:

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>mahā,samayo pavanasmim deva,kāyā samāgātā āgatamha imarṃ dhamma,samayarṃ dakkhitāye⁷⁴ aparājita,saṅghan'ti</i></p> | <p>Great is this gathering on the hill-side forest, a gathering of the hosts of deities who have come to this Dharma assembly to see the invincible community.</p> |
| (1) | |

⁶⁸ Pali MSS editions: Be = Burmese; Be:Ka in some Be MS/MSS; Ce = Sinhala (BJT); Ee = Pali Text Society; Ke = Khmer (Cambodian); Se = Siamese (Thai); Se:MC = Mahachulalongkorn Royal Univ; Se:SR = Syam Ratṭha (Royal Siamese). The running numbers (in round-brackets) in between the Pali and its tr refer **the verse number** in this Sutta tr.

⁶⁹ See (1.2.1).

⁷⁰ “Most,” *yebhuyyena*, lit “mostly” (adv). Comy explains that “many more are slow in assembling” (*bahutarā sannipatitā mandā*) and that the unconscious beings and the deities of the formless-sphere attainments are not there (*na sannipatitā asaññā,arūpāvacara,devatā samāpanna,devatā va*) (DA 2:678,4 f). On *yebhuyyena* (adv), “mostly,” see **Aggañña S** (D 27,10.2) + SD 2.19 (2.5).

⁷¹ “**10 world-systems**,” *dasahi ca loka,dhātuhi* (all MSS), this expression apparently found only here. D:RD 2:-284 wrongly says “the ten thousand world systems.” Comy first “corrects” this to “the 10,000-fold universe” (*dasa,sahassa,cakkavāḷarṃ hi idha dasa,loka,dhātuyo'ti adhipetā*, DA 2:678,20) and then says that the deities who assembled are from “the whole of all the universe” (*sakala,cakkavāḷa,gabbharṃ*) (21-24). Hence, “10” (*dasa*) here refers to the 10 directions (the 4 quarters, the intermediate directions, above and below) from a geocentric aspect.

⁷² *Dasahi ca loka,dhātuhi devatā yebhuyyena sannipatitā honti bhagavantarṃ dassanāya bhikkhu,saṅghañ ca*.

⁷³ On the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), see SD 10.16 (13.1.6) & Punnadhammo 2018:3.6.17-20.

3.3 Then, another deity uttered this verse before the Blessed One:

| | | |
|--|-----|--|
| <i>tatra bhikkhavo samādahaṃsu cittam attano ujukaṃ akaṃsu</i> ⁷⁵ <i>sārathī’va nettāni gahetvā indriyāni rakkhanti paṇḍitā’ti</i> | (2) | Therein, the monks are mentally concentrated, each with their mind made straight. Like a charioteer, having gripped the reins, the wise guard the senses. |
|--|-----|--|

3.4 Then, another deity uttered this verse before the Blessed One:

| | | |
|--|-----|---|
| <i>chetvā khīlaṃ chetvā palighaṃ inda,khīlaṃ ūhacca</i> ⁷⁶ - <i>m-anejā</i> <i>te caranti suddhā vimalā cakkhumatā sudantā susunāgā’ti</i> | (3) | Broken the bar, broken the bolt, Indra’s pillar is raised: ⁷⁷ unshaken, ⁷⁸ they live stain-free and pure, with clear vision like well-trained young elephants. |
|--|-----|---|

3.5 Then, another deity uttered this verse before the Blessed One:

| | | |
|--|-----|---|
| <i>ye keci buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gatāse na te gamissanti apāya,bhūmiriṃ pahāya mānusaṃ dehaṃ deva,kāyaṃ paripūressantīti</i> | (4) | Who go for refuge in the Buddha goes not to the woeful realms. Having given up the human body, they fill the celestial hosts full. |
|--|-----|---|

2 THE GREAT ASSEMBLY

[§§4-20]⁷⁹

[255]

THE BUDDHA’S LION-ROAR

4 Then, the Blessed One addressed the monks:

4.2 “Bhikshus, *most of the deities of tenfold world-systems have assembled to see the Blessed One and the community of monks.*⁸⁰ [§1.3]

4.3 Bhikshus, as it was with the blessed ones, arhats, fully self-awakened ones of the distant past, the deities assembled only for the sake of these blessed ones, so it is now with me.⁸¹

4.4 Bhikshus, as it will be with the blessed ones, arhats, fully self-awakened ones of the distant future, the deities will have assembled only for the sake of these blessed ones, *so it is now with me.*

4.5 **I will tell you, bhikshus, the names of those of the celestial hosts;** I will proclaim *the names of those of the celestial hosts;* I will teach *the names of those of the celestial hosts.*⁸²

4.6 Listen well to it; attend to it: I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante,” replied the monks to the Blessed One.

⁷⁴ Be Ce Ee *dakkhitāye*; Ke Se *dakkhitāy’eva*.

⁷⁵ Be *ujukaṃ akaṃsu*; Ce Ee Se *ujukam akaṃsu*.

⁷⁶ Be Ce Ee Se:MC *ūhacca*; Be:Ka *uhacca*; Se:SR *ohacca*-.

⁷⁷ “Indra’s pillar” or gate-post (*inda,khīla*) a strong post or solid stone sunk into the ground at the house-door, palace-gate, city-gate or village entrance against which the door or gate is closed; a symbol of strength and unshakeability (V 3:46,28, 4:160,26; D 3:133,6; S 1:27,4*; Sn 229; Tha 663; J 1:89,7; Pm 1:176,14); SD 32.14 (3.1.1.1). Cf the “city pillar,” SD 52.13 (1.4.1.2).

⁷⁸ By lust.

⁷⁹ See (1.3.2.1), (4).

⁸⁰ *Yebhuyyena bhikkhave dasasu lokadhātūsu devatā sannipatitā honti* [Be Se; Ce Ee omit] *tathāgataṃ dasanāya bhikkhu,sanḅhañ ca.*

⁸¹ *Ye’pi te bhikkhave ahesuṃ atītam addhānaṃ arahanto sammā,sambuddhā, tesam pi bhagavantānaṃ eta,-paramā yeva* [Be *etaṃ paramā yeva*; Ce Ee Se *eta,paramā yeva*] *devatā sannipatitā ahesuṃ seyyathāpi mayham etarahi.*

⁸² *Ācikkhissāmi bhikkhave deva,kāyānaṃ nāmāni, kittayissāmi bhikkhave deva,kāyānaṃ nāmāni, desessāmi bhikkhave deva,kāyānaṃ nāmāni.*

5 The Blessed One said this:

| | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| <p><i>silokam anukassāmi</i>⁸³ <i>yattha bhumma tad assitā</i> <i>ye sitā giri, gabbharam</i> <i>pahitattā samāhitā</i></p> | (5) | <p>I will sing slokas:⁸⁴ whatever ground that they resort to, even in the bowels of the hills, they are self-resolute in samadhi.</p> |
| <p><i>puthū, sīhā'va sallinā</i> <i>loma, haṃsābhisambhuno</i> <i>odāta, manasā suddhā</i> <i>vippasannam anāvilā</i>⁸⁵</p> | [256] (6) | <p>Like a pride of lions resting secluded, free from hair-raising fear; pure white in mind, radiant, undisturbed.</p> |

THE NARRATOR:

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| <p><i>bhiyyo pañca, sate ñatvā</i> <i>vane kāpilavatthave</i> <i>tato āmantayī satthā</i> <i>sāvake sāsane rate</i>⁸⁶</p> | [1cd* 63cd*] [11d*] (7) | <p>Having known, the teacher spoke in Kapilavatthu's forest to the 500 and more, those disciples who love the teaching.</p> |
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THE BLESSED ONE:

| | | |
|---|-----------------|--|
| <p><i>deva, kāyā abhikkantā</i>⁸⁷ <i>te vijānātha</i>⁸⁸ <i>bhikkhavo</i> <i>te ca ātappam akarum</i>⁹⁰ <i>sutvā buddhassa sāsanaṃ</i></p> | [64bcd*] (8) | <p>The celestial hosts have come. Bhikshus, heed them,⁸⁹ and with zeal exert yourselves, having heard the Buddha's teaching.</p> |
|---|-----------------|--|

THE NARRATOR:

| | | |
|--|------|--|
| <p>6 <i>tesaṃ pāturahu ñāṇaṃ</i> <i>amanussāna dassanaṃ</i> <i>appeke satam addakkhum</i> <i>sahassaṃ atha sattarim</i>⁹²</p> | (9) | <p>To them in whom knowledge have arisen, they see⁹¹ a vision of these non-humans: some see a hundred, or a thousand or 70 thousand;</p> |
| <p><i>sataṃ eke sahassānaṃ</i> <i>amanussānaṃ addasum</i> <i>app'eke'nantam addakkhum</i> <i>disā sabbā phuṭā ahum</i>⁹³</p> | (10) | <p>some of them see a hundred thousand non-humans. Yet others see numbers without end crowding all the quarters.</p> |

⁸³ *Anukassāmi*, of uncertain derivation: (1) *anu-* ("with, along, after, behind") + *kassati*, "goes, draws, drags"; or (2) for **anugassāmi*, fut of *anugāyati*, "sings after, repeats, recites." Comy is technical: *akkhara, padaniyamitam vacana, saṅghātaṃ pavattayissāmi* (DA 684,17).

⁸⁴ The Buddha is addressing the assembled monks: cf 7*.

⁸⁵ Be Se *vippasannam anāvilā*; Be:Ka Ce Ee *vippasannā-m-anāvilā*.

⁸⁶ This line refrains at 11d*.

⁸⁷ At 12a*, this line warns regarding Māra's arrival.

⁸⁸ *Te vijānātha*, lit "you must understand!", rendered as a warning at 64b*.

⁸⁹ Cf tr at 64b*.

⁹⁰ *Akarum*, 3 pl aor of *karoti*, "to do," here tr as present tense to better fit the narrative present context.

⁹¹ The verbs are in the past tense, but they are rendered as present here to flow with the rest of the poem.

⁹² Be Ce Se *sattarim*; Ee *sattatim*. Comy glosses as "70,000" (*sattati sahassāni*, DA 2:685,18). On *sattari* as "70," see S 2:59,34; Ap 248. Contextually, it is possible, even makes good sense, to read as *atha-s-uttarim*, where *uttari* = "more than."

⁹³ Be Se *phuṭā ahum*; Ce Ee *phuṭā ahū*.

tañ ca sabbaṃ abhiññāya [22cd* 63*] And directly knowing all things,
vavakkhitvāna⁹⁴ cakkhumā the seeing one, the teacher, surveying,
tato āmantayī satthā spoke to them,
sāvake sāsane rate [7d*] (11) *the disciples who love the teaching.*

THE BLESSED ONE:

deva,kāyā abhikkantā⁹⁵ The celestial hosts that have arrived,
te vijānātha bhikkhavo well aware of you, bhikshus,
ye vōham kīttayissāmi of them I will proclaim to you
girāhi anupubbaso (12) with words in good progress.

THE YAKSHAS

7 *satta,sahassā te yakkhā* There are seven thousand **yakshas**,⁹⁶
bhum mā kāpilavatthavā earth-bound,⁹⁷ from Kapilavatthu,
iddhimanto jutimanto⁹⁸ with wondrous powers, splendidous,
vaṇṇavanto yasassino beautiful, renowned—
modamānā abhikkāmurū [31cd*] they have come rejoicing
bhikkhūnam samitiṃ vanam⁹⁹ (13) in the monks gathered in the forest.

cha,sahassā hema,vatā Six thousand are **Hema,vata**'s¹⁰⁰
yakkhā nānatta,vaṇṇino *yakshas of diverse kinds,*
iddhimanto jutimanto¹⁰¹ *with wondrous powers, splendidous,*
vaṇṇavanto yasassino *beautiful, renowned—*
modamānā abhikkāmurū *they have come rejoicing*
bhikkhūnam samitiṃ vanam (14) *in the monks gathered in the forest.*

sātāgirā ti,sahassā Three thousand are **Sāta,gira**'s¹⁰²
yakkhā nānatta,vaṇṇino *yakshas of diverse kinds,*
iddhimanto jutimanto¹⁰³ *with wondrous powers, splendidous,*

⁹⁴ Be Ce Se:MC *vavatthjtvāna*; Ee Se:SR *vavakkhitvāna*; Subcomy:Be *avekkhitvāna*.

⁹⁵ See 8ab*; cf 64ab*.

⁹⁶ A **yaksha** (*yaksha*; Skt *yakṣa*), in Indian mythology, is a class of nature spirits or “non-human” (*amanussa*), often serving as local guardians of the earth and of trees and treasures hidden there. They have supernatural powers, such as the power to fly, to change their appearance or to disappear, which they can use for good or for evil. In the Buddhist texts, some of them serve as benevolent protectors and the Buddha’s messengers. The best known of them is **Vajira,pāṇī** (the thunderbolt wielder) who protects the Buddha [SD 21.3 (4.3)]. Another is **Sūci,loma** who is wise in metaphysics and ethics: **Sūci,loma S** (S 10.3), SD 114.4. They are the followers and soldiers of Kuvera [25a*] or Vessavaṇa, guardian-king of the north. They are said to inhabit Uttara,kuru (the northern continent) and Sri Lanka —prob based on accounts of autochthonous cannibals in those regions. See SD 21.3 (4.2.5); SD 51.11 (3.1.1.2); SD 54.2 (3.2.2.2) (4). See Punnadhammo 2018:3.4.2.

⁹⁷ On the earth-bound deities, see 20a* n on “those with Indra’s name.” On earth-bound and space-bound deities, see Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.2.

⁹⁸ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

⁹⁹ This is the Sutta’s most common refrain: 13f* 14f* 15f* 16f* 17f* (18f*) 20e*22e* 24e* 26e* 31d* 40e* 43f* 46f* 49f* 51f* 53f*.

¹⁰⁰ *Hemavatā*, alt tr: “from the Himalayas.” Hemavata (from the Himalayas), the famous yaksha chief, friend of Sātāgira (from Sāta,pabbata). They are 2 of the 28 yaksha leaders. They were monks in Kassapa Buddha’s time, now disciples of Gotama Buddha. For their dialogue: **Hemavata S**, also called **Sātāgira S** (Sn 1.9), SD 87.7.

¹⁰¹ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁰² Sata,gira (from Sāta,pabbata), a famous yaksha chief, friend of Hemavata: 14a* n.

- vaṇṇavanto yasassino
modamānā abhikkāmum
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam* (15) *beautiful, renowned—
they have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.*
- icc-ete soḷasa,sahassā
yakkhā nānatta,vaṇṇino
iddhimanto jutimanto¹⁰⁴
vaṇṇavanto yasassino
modamānā abhikkāmum
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam* [257] (16) *Thus these sixteen thousand
yakshas of diverse kinds,
with wondrous powers, splendid,
beautiful, renowned—
they have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.*
- 8 *vessā,mittā pañca,satā
yakkhā nānatta,vaṇṇino
iddhimanto jutimanto¹⁰⁶
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmum
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam* (17) *Five hundred are **Vessā,mitta**'s¹⁰⁵
yakshas of diverse kinds,
with wondrous powers, splendid,
beautiful, renowned—
they have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.*
- kumbhīro rājagahiko
vepullassa nivesanaṃ
bhiyyo naṃ sata,sahassaṃ
yakkhānaṃ payirupāsati
kumbhīro rājagahiko
so p'āgā¹⁰⁸ samitiṃ vanam* (18) ***Kumbhīra**¹⁰⁷ of Rājagaha,
that house of greatness—
more than a hundred thousand
yakshas attend to him—
Kumbhīra of Rājagaha,
he, too, has come to the forest gathering.*

THE 4 GREAT KINGS

- 9 *purimañ ca disaṃ rājā
dhataratṭho pasāsati
gandhabbānaṃ adhipati
mahā,rājā yasassiso¹¹¹
puttā'pi tassa bahavo* (19) ***Dhata,raṭṭha**¹⁰⁹ rules
as rajah of the eastern quarter,
lord of the gandharvas,¹¹⁰
a great king, renowned,
numerous are his sons—*

¹⁰³ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁰⁴ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁰⁵ **Vessā,mitta** (Skt *viśvā,mitra*), a yaksha chief with 500 followers of the same name. So called because he lives on a mountain of that name (DA 2:686,14, 3:970,23). **Āṭānāṭiya S** (D 32) mentions him in a list of protectors of yakshas (D 32,10/3:205), SD 101.1.

¹⁰⁶ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁰⁷ **Kumbhīra**, a yaksha living on Mt Vepulla, outside Rājagaha (DA 2:686,15). He is also chief of the Kumbhaṇḍas (J 6:272). It is said that when Bimbisāra wishes to visit Paduma,vaṭī in Ujjenī, his purohit would get Kumbhīra's help to transport him there (ThīA 39).

¹⁰⁸ Be Se:MC *so p'āgā*; Ce Ee Se:SR *so p'āga*.

¹⁰⁹ **Dhata,raṭṭha** (Skt *dhṛtarāṣṭra*), the guardian of the eastern quarter is lord of the gandharva (*gandhabba*): see foll. See DPPN sv.

¹¹⁰ The gandharvas (*gandhabba*) or divine minstrels are the followers and soldiers of Dhataratṭha, guardian-king of the east. The most famous gandharva is Pañca,sikha [30d*]. See SD 7.10 (3) & DPPN sv.

¹¹¹ These 2 lines, describing the 4 great kings, recur at 19de* 21de* 23de* 25de*.

- inda, nāmā maha-b, balā*¹¹²
*iddhimanto jutimanto*¹¹⁴
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmuṃ
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanaṃ (20) those with Indra's name,¹¹³ of power great,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,
beautiful, renowned—
they have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.
- dakkhiṇaṃ ca disaṃ rājā*
*virūḷho taṃ pasāsati*¹¹⁶
kumbhaṇḍānaṃ adhipati
*mahārājā yasassiso*¹¹⁸
puttāpi tassa bahavo (21) And **Virūḷha**¹¹⁵ rules
as rajah of the southern quarter,
lord of the kumbhandas,¹¹⁷
a great king, renowned,
numerous are his sons—
- inda, nāmā maha-b, balā*¹¹⁹
*iddhimanto jutimanto*¹²⁰
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmuṃ
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanaṃ (22) those with Indra's name, of power great,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,
beautiful, renowned—
they have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.
- pacchimaṃ ca disaṃ rājā*
virūpakkho pasāsati
nāgānaṃ ca adhipati
*mahā, rājā yasassiso*¹²³
puttāpi tassa bahavo (23) And **Virūpakkha**¹²¹ rules
as rajah of the western quarter,
lord of the nagas,¹²²
a great king, renowned,
numerous are his sons—
- inda, nāmā maha-b, balā*¹²⁴
*iddhimanto jutimanto*¹²⁵
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanaṃ those with Indra's name, of power great,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,
beautiful, renowned—

¹¹² This verse refrains at 20* 22* 24* 26* in connection with each of the 4 great kings.

¹¹³ "Those with Indra's name," *inda, nāmā* [20a* 22a* 24a* 26*]. Indra is **Sakra** (*sakka*): SD 54.3d (2.2.3.5) & Punnadhammo 2018: 3.5.16. The expression *inda, nāmā* means that either they serve Indra (such as the 4 great kings and his followers) or those deities are from Tāvātimsa, whose lord is Indra. These realms form the earth-bound heavens: see Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.3+5 & SD 54.3a (3.5.1).

¹¹⁴ Lines **bcde** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹¹⁵ **Virūḷhaka** (Skt *virūḍhaka*), the guardian king of the south is lord of the kumbhandas (*kumbhaṇḍa*): see below. See DPPN sv.

¹¹⁶ Be *taṃ pasāsati*; Ke Se:MC *tap pasāsati*.

¹¹⁷ **Kumbhandas** (*kumbhaṇḍā*) are followers and soldiers of Virūdhaka, guardian king of the south. They are said to be stout, with huge stomachs and pot-size genitals; hence, their name (DA 3:964). **Vidhura, paṇḍita J** (J 546) mentions Kumbhīra [18a*] as one of their chiefs (J 6:272). See DPPN sv & Punnadhammo 2018:3.4.5.

¹¹⁸ These 2 lines, describing the 4 great kings, recur at 19de* 21de* 23de* 25de*.

¹¹⁹ This verse refrains at 20* 22* 24* 26* in connection with each of the 4 great kings.

¹²⁰ Lines **bcde** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹²¹ **Virūpakkha** (Skt *virūpākṣa*), the guardian king of the west is lord of the nagas (*nāga*): see foll. See DPPN sv.

¹²² "Nagas" are serpent-beings, said to inhabit in the bowels of the earth and in the depths of rivers. One of the most famous of them is Mucalinda who shelters the Buddha during the 5th week after the awakening: SD 36.5 (2.1.2.4); SD 27.5a (6.2.1.1). On *nāgas*, see SD 27.5a (6.2.0) n & DPPN sv.

¹²³ These 2 lines, describing the 4 great kings, recur at 19de* 21de* 23de* 25de*.

¹²⁴ This verse refrains at 20* 22* 24* 26* in connection with each of the 4 great kings.

¹²⁵ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

| | | |
|---|---------------|---|
| <p><i>modamānā abhikkāmuṃ bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam</i></p> | (24) | <p><i>they have come rejoicing in the monks gathered in the forest.</i></p> |
| <p><i>uttarañ ca disaṃ rājā kuvero taṃ pasāsati yakkhānañ ca adhipati mahā,rājā yasassiso¹²⁸ puttā'pi tassa bahavo</i></p> | [258] (25) | <p>And Kuvera¹²⁶ rules as rajah of the northern quarter, lord of the yakshas,¹²⁷ a great king, renowned, numerous are his sons—</p> |
| <p><i>inda,nāmā maha-b,balā¹²⁹ iddhimanto jutimanto¹³⁰ vaṇṇavanto yasassino. modamānā abhikkāmuṃ bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam</i></p> | (26) | <p><i>those with Indra's name, of power great, with wondrous powers, splendidous, beautiful, renowned— they have come rejoicing in the monks gathered in the forest.</i></p> |
| <p><i>purimaṃ disaṃ dhataratṭho dakkhiṇena virūḷhako pacchimena virūpakkho kuvero uttaram disaṃ</i></p> | (27) | <p>Dhataratṭha in the eastern quarter,¹³¹ on the south Virūḷhaka, on the west Virūpakko, Kuvera in the northern quarter:</p> |
| <p><i>cattāro te mahā,rājā samantā caturo disā daddallamānā¹³² aṭṭhamasu vane kāpilavatthave</i></p> | (28) | <p>these 4 great kings from the 4 quarters all around, stand ablazing in the forest outside Kapilavatthu.</p> |
| <p>10 <i>tesaṃ māyāvino dāsā āgu¹³³ vañcanikā saṭhā māyā kuṭeṇḍu viṭeṇḍu¹³⁴ viṭucca viṭuto saha¹³⁵ candano kāmasetṭho ca kinnighaṇḍu nighaṇḍu ca panādo opamañña ca</i></p> | (29) | <p>With them came their slaves, deceitful, crafty, treacherous: Māya, Kuteṇḍu, Viteṇḍu, Vitucca with Viṭuṭa, Candana and Kāma,seṭṭha, Kinnighaṇḍu and Nighaṇḍu, Panada and Opamañña.</p> |

TĀVATĪMSA DEVAS (1)¹³⁶

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>deva,sūto ca māṭali citta,seno ca gandhabbo</i></p> | <p>The divine charioteer Māṭali,¹³⁷ and the gandharva Citta,sena,</p> |
|---|---|

¹²⁶ **Kuvera**, also called Vessa,vaṇa (Skt *vaiśravaṇa*), the guardian king of the northern quarter, is lord of the yakshas: see foll. See Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.7 & DPPN sv.

¹²⁷ **Yakshas** (*yakkha*): see 13a* n.

¹²⁸ These 2 lines, describing the 4 great kings, recur at 19de* 21de* 23de* 25de*.

¹²⁹ This verse refrains at 20* 22* 24* 26* in connection with each of the 4 great kings.

¹³⁰ Lines **bcde** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹³¹ On the 4 great kings (*cātum,mahā,rājika*), see SD 54.3a (3.3.3; 3.4) & Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.6-8.

¹³² Be Ce Ee Se *daddallamānā*; Be:Ka *daddaḷhamānā*.

¹³³ Be Ce *āguṃ*; Ce Ee *āgu*; Ke Se *āgū*. This is the trend throughout. The preferred reading is **āgu**, 3 pl aor (Skt *āguḥ*) of *āgacchati*, “to come”: 30d* 32ac* 39f* 41d* 42d* 44a*45cd* 47d* 48ad* 50bc* 52ef* 58a*. There is also the form **āga** (on analogy of *āha*): 33bd* 56d* 58c* (see §10b n). See Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1994: §160.4.

¹³⁴ Be Ce Se:MC *viṭeṇḍu*; Ee Se:SR *veṭeṇḍu*.

¹³⁵ Be *vitucca viṭuto saha*; Ee *vituc ca viṭucco saha*; Ke Se *vitū ca viṭuto saha*.

¹³⁶ On Tāva,tiṃsa, see Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.9-10.

¹³⁷ **Māṭali**, the divine charioteer (*suta, saṅgāhaka*) of Sakra, lord of Tāvatiṃsa, and his constant companion. See Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.19 & DPPN sv.

| | | |
|---|-----------------|---|
| <p><i>naḷo rājā janesabho</i>¹³⁸ <i>āgu</i>¹³⁹ <i>pañca,sikho c'eva</i> <i>timbarū sūriya,vaccasā</i>¹⁴¹</p> | (30) | <p>Naḷa, Rājā, Janesabha, and even Pañca,sikha¹⁴⁰ came, and Timbaru and Suriya,vaccasā, too¹⁴²—</p> |
| <p><i>ete c'aññe ca rājāno</i> <i>gandhabbā saha rājubhi</i> <i>modamānā abhikkāmuṃ</i> <i>bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanaṃ</i></p> | [13ef*] (31) | <p>these, and other rajahs, too, along with royal gandharvas, <i>have come rejoicing</i> <i>in the monks gathered in the forest.</i></p> |

THE NAGAS

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|---|-------------|--|
| <p>11 <i>ath'āgu nāgasā</i>¹⁴³ <i>nāgā</i> <i>vesālā saha tacchakā</i> <i>kambal'assatarā āgu</i> <i>pāyāgā saha ñātibhi</i></p> | (32) | <p>Now, nagas,¹⁴⁴ too, from Nāgasa,¹⁴⁵ with those from Vesālī and Tacchakā, have come with the Kambalas and the Assataras, and the Pāyāgas,¹⁴⁶ too, with their relatives.</p> |
| <p><i>yāmunā dhataratṭhā ca</i> <i>āga</i>¹⁴⁷ <i>nāgā yasassino.</i> <i>erāvaṇo mahā,nāgo</i> <i>so p'āga samitiṃ vanāṃ</i></p> | [18f*] (33) | <p>From the Yāmunā, from Dhataratṭha, have come nagas¹⁴⁸ of renown. The great naga Erāvaṇa¹⁴⁹— <i>he, too, has come to the forest gathering.</i></p> |

THE SUPARNAS

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|---|--|
| <p><i>ye nāga,rāje sahasā haranti</i> <i>dibbā diḷ pakkhi visuddha,cakkhū</i> [259]</p> | <p>The heavenly twice-born winged ones,¹⁵⁰ clear-sighted, who violently prey on the naga-rajahs,</p> |
|---|--|

¹³⁸ Be Ce Se:MC *janesabho*; Se:SR *janosabho*. Comy says this is the deity Jana,vasabha (DA 2:688,6): see **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18), SD 62.3.

¹³⁹ Be *āgā*; Ce Ee *āgu*; Se *āgū*.

¹⁴⁰ **Pañca,sikha** is a gandharva (*gandhabba*), a celestial musician in Tāvatiṃsa. It is Pañca,sikha who first receives reports of good deeds of humans from the 4 great kings (*cātum,mahā.rājika*). These reports are then relayed on to **Mātali**, the celestial charioteer, who then tells Sakra himself. Pañca,sikha wins over and marries **Suriya,vaccasā**, daughter of the gandharva **Timbaru**. On Pañca,sikha, see SD 54.8 (4.1); also Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.23. On Bhaddā Suriya,vacchasā, see SD 54.8 (1.3.1).

¹⁴¹ Be Ke Se *suriya,vacchasā*; Ce Ee *suriya,vaccasā*.

¹⁴² These two are heavenly minstrels (*gandhabba*): Timbaru is the father of Suriya,vaccasā who is married to Pañca,sikha [30d* n]. See Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, 1915: svv Tumburu; Sūryavarcas.

¹⁴³ Be *ath'āguṃ nāgasā*; Ce *ath'āguṃ nābhasā*; Ee Se *ath'āgū nābhasā*.

¹⁴⁴ A **naga** (*nāga*) is a serpent-spirit [33b*].

¹⁴⁵ Comy: These nagas are from Nagasa lake (*nāgasa,deha,vāsikā*), Vesālī and the city of Tacchakā (DA 2:688,16-22).

¹⁴⁶ The Pāyāgas are mighty nagas who reside at the Pāyāga ford (DA 2:688,22). *Pāyāga* (Skt *prayāg*) means "confluence" and here has been identified with modern Allahabad, at the confluence of the Gaṅga and the Yamunā.

¹⁴⁷ *Āga*, "they went": see n on *āgu* [29b*].

¹⁴⁸ These **nagas** (*nāga*) are serpent-beings, the soldiers of Virūpakkha, the guardian-king of the west [23*]: see SD 54.3a (3.4.2) & See Punnadhammo 2018:3.2.4. Cf *nāga* in the next line.

¹⁴⁹ "The great naga **Erāvaṇa**," *erāvaṇā mahā,nāgā*, where *nāga* means "(noble) elephant" (Abhp 360, 849; D 2:266,5*; M 1:415,2; A 2:116,24; Dh 329; Sn 29; Thī 49): SD 54.22 (7.2.1.3). Erāvaṇa was once the rajah of Magadha's elephant. The rajah gave him to Magha and his friends to help them in their good works, as a result of which they are reborn in Tāvatiṃsa: SD 54.3a (2.2.1.3). Erāvaṇa is reborn there, too, as a deva who assumes fabulous forms as a celestial elephant: SD 54.22 (7.2.1.3). See Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.20 & DPPN sv.

¹⁵⁰ Nagas (*nāga*) and suparnas (*supaṇṇa*, "winged ones") are mortal enemies, the latter often hunting and devouring the former. On suparnas, see Punnadhammo 2018:3.2.5.

- vehāsayā*¹⁵¹ *te vana,majjha,pattā*
citrā supaṇṇā iti tesam nāmaṃ (34) have reached the heart of the forest—
they are called fabulous harpies [**suparnas**].
- abhayaṃ tadā nāga,rājānam āsi*
supaṇṇato khemam akāsi buddho
saṅhāhi vācāhi upavhayantā
nāgā supaṇṇā saraṇam akāmsu
buddham (35) Just like that, the naga-rajahs are safe
from the suparnas¹⁵² by security given by the Buddha:
invoking with gentle speech, the Buddha
made himself a refuge for nagas and suparnas.

THE ASURAS

- 12** *jitā vajira,hatthena*
samuddaṃ asurāsītā
bhātaro vāsavass’ete
iddhimanto yasassino (36) Conquered by Vajira,hattha,¹⁵³
the asuras,¹⁵⁴ denizens of the ocean deep,¹⁵⁵
these brothers of Vāsava,¹⁵⁶
of wondrous powers, renowned,
- kālakañjā mahā,bhimsā*¹⁵⁷
asurā dāna,veghasā
vepacitti sucitti ca
pahārādo namucī saha (37) The Kālakañjas,¹⁵⁸ terribly fearsome,
the Dāna,veghasa¹⁵⁹ asuras:¹⁶⁰
Vepa,citti,¹⁶¹ Sucitti,¹⁶²
and Pahārāda,¹⁶³ along with Namuci,¹⁶⁴

¹⁵¹ Be *Se vehāyasā*; Ce *Ee vehāsayā*.

¹⁵² On suparnas, see (34a*) n.

¹⁵³ **Vajira,hattha**, “the one with lightning in his hand”: the one who has overthrown the asuras, ie, Sakra—here called Indra (*inda*, “lord, leader”)—lord of Tāvatisa (DA 2:689,11). On Sakra overthrowing the asuras, see SD 54.2 (3.2.3.6).

¹⁵⁴ **Asuras** were the older inhabitants of Tāva,timsa but were overthrown by the new devas led by Sakra. Since then, they have been constantly battling one another. On the asuras’ origins, see SD 15.5 (3.7.1); also see Punnadhammo 2018:3.3.23.

¹⁵⁵ On asuras inhabiting the ocean deep, see **Isayo Samudda S** (S 11.10), SD 39.2.

¹⁵⁶ **Vāsava** is another of the many names of Indra or Sakra (D 2:260, 274; S 1:211, 223, 229 f, 234-237; Sn 384). The asuras are said to be his “brothers” (*bhātaro*) because they inhabited the same heaven when Indra arose there. [36b* n]

¹⁵⁷ Be *Ke kālakañcā mahābhismā*; Ce *kālakañchā mahābhismā*; Ee *Comy kālakañjā mahābhimsā*; Se *kālakañjā mahābhismā*. Cf *bhismā = bhimsā*, “terror, fear” (D 2:259, 261).

¹⁵⁸ **Kālakañjā**, also *kālakañcikā*, *kālakañjikā*, the lowest class of asuras. The Buddha warns Sunakkhatta and Korakkhattiya that, on account of their habitual karma, they will be reborn amongst the *kālakañjas* (D 3:7 f; J 1:389). The Bodhisattva is never born amongst them (J 1:44). In comy times, they have evolved to become preta-like—suffering from excessive thirst, and resembling *petas* in shape, sex-life, diet and life-span, even intermarry with them (Kvu 360; SA 2:290).

¹⁵⁹ **Dāna,veghasā**, a class or clan of asuras which comy describes as being archers (*dhan’uggaha,asurā*) (DA 2:689,16). *Vepa,citti*, *Rāhu* and *Pahārāda* [37*] prob belongs to this class.

¹⁶⁰ **Kālakañja** and **Dāna,veghasa** are prob the 2 main tribes of asuras. The asura lords (*asurinda*) *Vepacitti*, *Sucitti* and *Pahārāda*, are prob from the *Dāna,veghasa* tribe since they often lead the asuras in the battle with the devas.

¹⁶¹ **Vepa,citti** (old name, *Sambara*), an asura lord (*asur’inda*) is said to the eldest of them (*asurānam sabba,-jetṭhako*, SA 1:342,9). On his change of name, see **Isayo Samuddaka S** (S 11.10) + SD 39.2 (2). See **Vepacitti S** (S 11.4), SD 54.6; also DPPN: *Vepacitti*.

¹⁶² **Sucitti**, one of the asura lords (*asur’inda*), but not as well known as *Vepa,citti*, *Rāhu* and *Pahārāda*.

¹⁶³ **Pahārāda**, one of the 3 asura lords (*asur’inda*, D 2:259); the other two are *Vepacitti* [37a*] and *Rāhu* [here called *Rāhu,bhadda*, 38d*, and *Veroca*, 38b*]. He first wishes to see the Buddha on the great awakening day, but this wish was only fulfilled 11 years later, when he visits the Buddha at *Verañjā*: **Pahārāda S** (A 8.19), SD 45.18.

¹⁶⁴ **Na,muci** (“who releases not”) is a name for *Māra*. Comy asks *Māra*, a young deity (*deva,putta*) from the *Para,nimmita,vasa.vatti deva*-realm, goes along with a crowd of asuras who dwell in the great ocean? Not will-

*satañ ca bali,puttānaṃ
sabbe veroca,nāmakā
sannayhitvā baliṃ senaṃ¹⁶⁶
rāhu,bhaddam upāgamuṃ
samayo dāni bhaddante
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam* (38) and Bali's hundred sons,
all named after Veroca,¹⁶⁵
having mustered a powerful army,
went up to the good **Rāhu**¹⁶⁷ (and said):
'This is the occasion, sir,
that the monks have gathered in the forest!'

TĀVATĪMSA DEVAS (2)

13 *āpo ca devā pathavī
tejo vāyo tad āgamuṃ
varuṇā vāraṇā¹⁶⁹ devā
somo ca yasasā saha
mettā karuṇā kāyikā
āgu devā yasassino* (39) The gods of water,¹⁶⁸ of earth,
of fire and of wind, too, have come.
Varuṇa¹⁷⁰ and his divine retinue,
along with Soma¹⁷¹ and the Yasa deities¹⁷²—
these renowned devas have come
and those in hosts of love and compassion.

*das'ete dasadhā kāyā¹⁷³
sabbe nānatta,vaṇṇino
iddhimanto jutimanto¹⁷⁴
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmuṃ
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanam* (40) *These ten in tenfold hosts,
all of diverse beauty,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,
beautiful, renowned—
have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.*

ingly (*achandikattā*), being without any choice (*acchandaniḥā abhabbā*); hence, they are “naturally downhearted” in doing so (DA 2:689,19-24). From this context, it is clear that Namuci is not one of the asura (pace DPPN).

¹⁶⁵ **Veroca**, a name for Rāhu, prob identical with Verocana, who with Sakra visit the Buddha: **Verocana Asur'-inda S** (S 11.8), SD 87.13. Bālī's 100 sons are named after him, he being their uncle (DA 2:689,25-27). See SD 54.6 (3.3.1.1).

¹⁶⁶ Be *bali,senaṃ*; Ee Ce Se *baliṃ senaṃ*.

¹⁶⁷ **Rāhu** is one of the asura lords (*asur'inda*), and also called Veroca [38b*]. He is or can assume astronomical size. Thus, when Rāhu steps into the ocean in its deepest part, it reaches only to his knees (DA 2:488,9). He has god-like powers with which, out of jealousy of Candimā (the moon) and Suriya (the sun), he swallows them (a mythification of eclipses). The Buddha intercedes, he frees them and flees to Vepa,citti (S 2.9+10/1:50 f), SD 114.15+16; [37c*]. See DPPN: Rāhu.

¹⁶⁸ These gods of the elements seem to be mentioned as group only here. Varuṇa is sometimes said to be the god of **water**, manifesting himself in some local deity like a river or the ocean (Hopkins 1917:117). The **earth** is personified as feminine: she is Mother Earth, in later literature, called Sthāvarā or Vasundharā [SD 52.1 (16.2).] Interestingly, there seems to be no early Buddhist equivalent of the Vedic Agnī (*P aggi*), god of **fire**. Note that Sahabhū devas are described as “fiery” [44a*]. There is also other mention of any personification of the **wind**, *vāyu*. However, it is common in such mythology to personify aspects of nature and the elements as deities, as here.

¹⁶⁹ Be *varuṇā*; Ce Ee Se *vāruṇā*.

¹⁷⁰ **Varuṇa**, a companion of Sakra, along with Tāvatiṃsa deities, ie, Pajāpati and Isāna. **Te,vijja S** (D 13), SD 1.8, mentions Varuṇa with Indra, Soma, Isāna, Pajāpati, Yama and Mahiddhi as gods invoked by the brahmins (D 1:1244; cf J 5:28, 6:20; Miln 22).

¹⁷¹ **Soma**, often mentioned with Varuṇa, Pajāpati and Yama (D 1:244, 2:259; J 5:28, 6:201, 568, 571): see prec. **Ātānāṭiya S** (D 32) says that he is a yaksha chief (D 3:204), SD 101.1. In later literature, he is identified with the moon.

¹⁷² **Yasasā**, a minor group of deities led by Yasa of the Tāvatiṃsa. (whom Hopkins identify as “graces” 1915: 165) are prob the closest we have to the Greek Muses, the personification of the arts (incl writing), music and learning.

¹⁷³ This verse recurs as *refrain* at 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁷⁴ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as *refrain* at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

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| <p>14 <i>veṅhu, devā sahalī ca</i>¹⁷⁵ <i>asamā ca duve yamā</i> <i>candassūpanisā deva</i> <i>candam āgu purakkhatvā</i> (41)</p> | <p>Vishnu¹⁷⁶ and his devas, and the Sahalis,¹⁷⁷ the Asama devas¹⁷⁸ and the Yama twins, the deva attending to Candā [the moon]¹⁷⁹ have come led by Candā.</p> |
| <p><i>sūriyassāpanisā</i>¹⁸⁰ <i>devā</i> <i>sūriyam āgu purakkhatvā</i> <i>nakkhattāni purakkhatvā</i> <i>āgu manda, valāhakā</i> [260] (42.1)</p> | <p>Devas, serving the sun, have come led by Sūriya.¹⁸¹ Leading the constellations came the gentle Valāhakas.¹⁸²</p> |
| <p><i>vasūnaṃ vāsavo seṭṭho</i> <i>sakko p'āgā purin, dado</i> (42.2)</p> | <p>Vāsava, the best of the Vāsus,¹⁸³ Sakra Purindada,¹⁸⁴ has come, too—</p> |
| <p><i>das'ete dasadhā kāyā</i> [40*] <i>sabbe nānatta, vaṇṇino</i> <i>iddhimanto jutimanto</i>¹⁸⁵ <i>vaṇṇavanto yasassino.</i> <i>modamānā abhikkāmurū</i> <i>bhikkhūnaṃ samitīm vanam</i> (43)</p> | <p><i>these ten in tenfold hosts,</i> <i>all of diverse beauty,</i> <i>with wondrous powers, splendid,</i> <i>beautiful, renowned—</i> <i>have come rejoicing</i> <i>in the monks gathered in the forest.</i></p> |

GROUPS OF DEVAS

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| <p>15 <i>ath'āgu</i>¹⁸⁶ <i>sahabhū devā</i> <i>jalām aggi sikhā-r-iva</i></p> | <p>Now come the Sahabhū devas¹⁸⁷ ablaze like crests of fire;</p> |
|--|--|

¹⁷⁵ Be Se *veṅḍu, devā sahalī ca*; Ce Ee *veṅhū ca devā sahalī ca*.

¹⁷⁶ **Veṅhu** (Skt *viṣṇu*), also called Veṅḍu. He may have later evolved into Viṣṇu (Vishnu) of the Hindus, but they are unrelated. See **Veṅḍu S** (S 2.12/1:52), SD 86.5.

¹⁷⁷ The devaputra **Sahali**, leader of the host, is a follower of Makkhali Gosāla. (**Deva,putta**) **Nānā, titthiyā S** (S 2.30) records his visit (along with others) to the Buddha at Veḷu, vana (S 2:66), SD 86.11.

¹⁷⁸ **Asama**, a devaputra and follower of Pūraṇa Kassapa. Along with Sahali, Niṅka and Ākoṭaka, he visits the Buddha at Veḷu, vana (**Deva,putta**) **Nānā, titthiyā S** (S 2.30/2:65 f), SD 86.11.

¹⁷⁹ Both Candā, also called Candimā [38d* n on Rāhu] and Suriya [42b] have attained streamwinning on this day of the Mahā, samaya following the teaching of **Candimā S** (S 2.9), SD 86.20 and **Suriya S** (S 2.10), SD 86.21 (SA 1:109,13 f) [2.2.1(b)]. See Punnadhammo 2018:440 f.

¹⁸⁰ Be *suriyassāpanisā*; Ce Ee Se:MC*suriyassūpanisā*; Se:SR *sūriyūpanisā*.

¹⁸¹ **Suriya** [38d*] is the sun personified as a deity (like Apollo or Helios in Greek mythology). He is sometimes called Ādicca, a poetic name for the sun: (**Dasaka**) **Cunda S** (SD 10.176) [42d*]. It is interesting that Suriya, the sun-god, is mentioned in the same verse as Sakra; the Greek god Apollo is also the sun-god. See n on Candā [41c*]. On Suriya, see Punnadhammo 2018:440 f.

¹⁸² **Valāhakas** are cloud-deities, incl cold-cloud devas, warm-cloud devas, storm-cloud devas, wind devas and rain devas. Hence, they have control over the weather. See Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.4.

¹⁸³ This line and the next stand on their town as they refer only to **Sakra** who is called "**Vāsava**" because he is "**the best of the Vasus**" (*vasūnaṃ ... seṭṭho*): D 2:260, 274; S 1:221, 223, 229 f, 234-7; Sn 384; DA 2:690; DhA 3:270; J 1:65; called Vasu, devata (DAṬ 2:307). This suggests that the 33 gods are also called Vasu. As a human (Magha), he gave dwellings (*āvasatham adāsi*); hence, his name, Vāsava, "the giver of dwellings" (S 11.12/1:229; DhA 1:264).

¹⁸⁴ Rgveda mentions Indra's title of *purandara* (also *puramda*. SED: pur > puram), "destroyer of cities or strongholds," at least 11 times. As a Buddhist, he is known more amicably as **purindada**, "the one who gave offerings before" (*pure pure dānaṃ adāsi*): **Sakka, nāma S** (S 11.12/1:229,8), SD 54.19; DhA 1:264,9. See SD 54.2 (3.2.3.6).

¹⁸⁵ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁸⁶ Be Ce *ath'āguṃ*; Ee Se *ath'āgu*.

¹⁸⁷ On the fiery nature of these deities: [13a*] n on "water." The names in this verse are those of minor deities.

- arittṭhakā ca rojā ca
umā,¹⁸⁸ puppha, nibhāsino* (44) the Ariṭṭhakas and the Rojas, too,
and Umā, pupphas¹⁸⁹ shining in azure.
- varuṇā saha, dhammā ca
accutā ca anejakā
sūleyya, rucirā āgu¹⁹¹
āgu vāsavanesino* (45) Varuṇā devas¹⁹⁰ and Sahadhammā devas, too,
Accutās and Anejakās,
Sūleyyās¹⁹² and Rucirās are come,¹⁹³
and also the Vasavanesī deities.¹⁹⁴
- das'ete dasadhā kāyā¹⁹⁵
sabbe nānatta, vaṇṇino
iddhimanto jutimanto¹⁹⁶
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmuṃ
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanarṃ* (46) *These hosts of ten by ten,
all of diverse beauty,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,
beautiful, renowned—
have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.*
- 16** *samānā mahā, samanā
mānusā mānus'uttamā
khiḍḍā, padosikā āgu
āgu mano, padosikā* (47) The Samānas and the Mahā, samānas,¹⁹⁷
the Manusas and the Manusuttamas;
those “defiled by play”¹⁹⁸ have come,
and also those “defiled by mind.”¹⁹⁹
- ath'āgū harayo devā
ye ca lohita, vāsino
pāragā mahā, pāragā
āgu devā yasassino* (48) Now, come the Hari devas²⁰⁰
who are dressed in red;
come, too, the Pāragas and Mahā, pāraga,
devas of renown.
- das'ete dasadhā kāyā²⁰¹
sabbe nānatta, vaṇṇino
iddhimanto jutimanto²⁰²* *These hosts of ten by ten,
all of diverse beauty,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,*

¹⁸⁸ Comy reads *ummā-* (DA 2:690,31-33). Comy says that their bodies emit radiance (*sarīr'ābha*) (DA 2:690,-32).

¹⁸⁹ The 4 deities in lines ab, since they are mentioned alongside *Khiḍḍā, padosikās* and *Mano, padosikās*, both from the realm of the *Cātum, mahā.rājikas*, are prob from there, too.

¹⁹⁰ These are followers of *Varuṇā* [39c*] from *Tāvatiṃsa*. The others mentioned in this verse are minor deities of the *Tāvatiṃsa*.

¹⁹¹ This and next: Be Ce *āguṃ* | *āguṃ*; Ee *agu* | *āgu*; Se *āgū* | *āgū*.

¹⁹² The *sūla* is a trident (Skt *trisula*), which these deities are named after. In later Hindu mythology, this is Śiva's sacred insignia.

¹⁹³ It is possible that *Sūleyyās* and *Rucirās* are **apsaras** (*accharā*), celestial nymphs, as are the other deities mentioned in this verse. However, *apsaras* are best known for their feminine beauty and wiles, not as protective deities. See SD 54.3a (2.3.2) & Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.11.

¹⁹⁴ These are prob the *Vasus*, totaling 8, followers of *Indra* (*Sakra*) of *Tāvatiṃsa*. See Hopkins 1915:170 (§122).

¹⁹⁵ This verse recurs as refrain at 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁹⁶ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

¹⁹⁷ The deities mentioned in this verse are prob from the *Cātum, mahā.rājika* (the 4 great kings) realm (certainly those “defiled by play” and “defiled by mind”). See foll n.

¹⁹⁸ “Defiled by play,” *khiḍḍā, padosikā*, deities of *Cātum, mahā.rājika* realm who are inclined to playfulness: SD 54.3a (3.4.4.2).

¹⁹⁹ “Defiled by mind,” *mano, padodikā*, deities of *Cātum, mahā.rājika* realm who are inclined to harbouring negative thoughts: SD 54.3a (3.4.4.3).

²⁰⁰ Comy says that they are all named *Hari* (DA 2:691,9). We have no information on the others in this verse.

²⁰¹ This verse recurs as refrain at 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

²⁰² Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

- vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmuṃ
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanāṃ* (49) *beautiful, renowned—
have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.*
- 17** *sukkā karambhā²⁰³ aruṇā
āgu veghanasā saha
odāta, gayhā pāmokkhā
āgu devā vicakkhaṇā
sadā, mattā hāra, gajā
missakā ca yasassino
thanayaṃ āga pajjunno
yo disā abhivassati* (50) ²⁰⁴The Suktas, the Karambhas, the Aruṇas,
have come with the Veghanasas,
led by the Odāta, gayhas.²⁰⁵
They have come with the Vicakkhaṇa deities,
the Sadā, mattas, the Hāra, gajas,
and the Missakas—renowned.
Pajjuna²⁰⁶ comes thundering,
raining in all the quarters.
- das'ete dasadhā kāyā²⁰⁷
sabbe nānatta, vaṇṇino
iddhimanto jutimanto²⁰⁸
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmuṃ
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanāṃ* (51) *These hosts of ten by ten,
all of diverse beauty,
with wondrous powers, splendidous,
beautiful, renowned—
have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest. [261]*

THE HIGHER SENSE-WORLD DEVAS

- 18** *khemiyā tusitā yāmā
kaṭṭhakā ca yasassino
lambitakā lāma, seṭṭhā
joti, nāmā ca āsavā
nimmāna, ratino āgu
ath'āgu paranimmitā* (52) ²⁰⁹The Khemiyas, the **Tusitas**,²¹⁰ the **Yāmas**,²¹¹
renowned, and the Kaṭṭhakas,
the Lambitakas, the Lāma, seṭṭhas,
those called Joti²¹² and the Āsavas,²¹³
the **Nimmāna, ratīs**²¹⁴ are come,
now come the **Para, nimmitās**.²¹⁵

²⁰³ Be *karambhā*; Ce *karamhā*; Ee Se *karumhā*. Comy: DA 2:691,13. The reading *karambhā* is supported by Skt *śuklā kaḍambā* (*k*)*aruṇa*, Waldschmidt, 1932 = K1.Turf IV:186 n3. For Tib reading, see Skilling 1994:433.

²⁰⁴ The names mentioned in this verse are prob those of minor deities from Tāvātimsa.

²⁰⁵ *Odāta* means “white”; hence, either they are dressed in white or looks beautifully white.

²⁰⁶ **Pajjuna** is the rain-god, but he is subject to Sakra (J 1:330, 4:253), and can be moved by an act of truth (*sacca, kiriyā*) (J 1:331). His daughters are Kokanadā and Cūḷa, kokanadā (S 1:29 f). See Punnadhammo 2018:442.

²⁰⁷ This verse recurs as *refrain* at 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

²⁰⁸ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

²⁰⁹ The deities mentioned here are all from heavens that are “space-bound” beings (*antalikkhe bhūtāni*). On the “earth-bound” [13b*]. See SD 54.3a (3.5.4).

²¹⁰ **Tusita** (the “contented”), cosmologically, is the 4th of the sense-heaven realm, located “above” the Yāma world. This is the heaven where the Bodhisattva spends his penultimate life, and where the future buddha is even now living. The lord of Tusita is Santusita and is prob here represented by the plural *tusitā*, “Santusita and the Tusita devas.” See SD 54.3a (3.6.4) & see Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.26.

²¹¹ **Yāma** is the 1st of the “space-bound” sense-world heavens [20a* n]. See SD 54.3a (3.6) & Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.25.

²¹² The *joti* (“fire”) devas are like a blaze of reed-fire and live on hill-tops (DA 2:691,30 f).

²¹³ The Āsavas are deities “on account of their will-power” (*chanda, vasena*) (DA 2”691,33).

²¹⁴ **Nimmāna, ratī** (deities who delight in creation) form the 5th of the 6 sense-world heavens, comprising deities who have the power of projecting forms in any colour: SD 54.3a (3.6.5) & see Punnadhammo 2018: 3.5.31.

²¹⁵ **Para, nimitta, vasavattī** (deities who lord over others’ creations) form the 6th and highest of the sense-world heavens. They are so powerful that they only need to command the other goods (the Nimmāna, ratī deities) to do all the creations: SD 54.3a (3.6.6) & see Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.32.

- das'ete dasadhā kāyā*²¹⁶
sabbe nānatta,vaṇṇino
*iddhimanto jutimanto*²¹⁷
vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
modamānā abhikkāmurū
bhikkhūnaṃ samitiṃ vanāṃ (53) *These hosts of ten by ten,*
all of diverse beauty,
with wondrous powers, splendid,
beautiful, renowned—
have come rejoicing
in the monks gathered in the forest.
- 19 *saṭṭh'ete deva,nikāyā*
sabbe nānatta,vaṇṇino
*nām'anvayena āgañchurū*²¹⁸
ye c'aññe sadisā saha (54) *These sixty celestial hosts*
all of diverse hues,
have come in groups by name
and others like them, too.
- pavutṭha,jātim akhilaṃ*²¹⁹
ogha,tiṇṇam anāsavaṃ
dakkhem'ogha,taraṃ nāgaṃ
candaṃ'va asitātigaṃ (55) ²²⁰*One who dwells birth-free, free from barrenness,*
who has crossed the floods, influx-free—
let us see the flood-crossed naga,
one like the moon passed its dark fortnight.'
- THE BRAHMAS
- 20 *subrahmā paramatto ca*²²¹
puttā iddhimato saha
sanaṃ,kumāro tisso ca
so p'āga samitiṃ vanāṃ (56) *Subrahma and Paramatta,*²²²
sons of those with wondrous powers,
Sanaṃ,kumara²²³ and Tissa,²²⁴ too,
go before the forest gathering.
- sahassaṃ brahma,lokānaṃ*
mahā,brahmā'bhitiṭṭhati
upapanno jutimanto
bhismā,kāyo yasassiso (57) *A thousand from the Brahma world,*
great brahmas with victorious might,
born with splendour,
an awe-inspiring host of glory.
- das'ettha issarā āgu*
pacceka,vasavattino
*tesaṃ ca majjhato āga*²²⁵
hārito parivārito (58) *The ten lords have come here,*
each an overlord,
and in their midst have come
Hārita with his retinue.

²¹⁶ This verse recurs as refrain at 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

²¹⁷ Lines **cdef** is a common description of the deities, recurring as refrain at 13*-17* 20* 22* 24* 26* 40* 43* 46* 49* 51* 53*.

²¹⁸ Be *āgacchurū*; Ce Ee Se *āgañchurū*.

²¹⁹ Be *pavutṭha,jātim akhilaṃ*; Ce *ise pavutṭha,jātim akhilaṃ*; Ee *pavutṭha,jātim akhilaṃ*.

²²⁰ Comy: This verse is spoken by the deities, a jubilant outcry of the motive of the incoming divine host (DA 2:692,11-13).

²²¹ Be Ce Se *paramatto ca*; Be:Ka *paramattho ca*.

²²² The deities mentioned in this verse are brahmas.

²²³ **Sanaṃ,kumāra**, “the ever-young” brahma, one of the great brahmas of the 1st-dhyana brahma realm. He represents the ideal true brahmin: SD 54.3d (2.2.3) & see Punnadhammo 2018:3.6.10.

²²⁴ This Tissa is clearly the monk reborn as a brahma, as stated in (**Brahmā**) Tissa S (A 7.53/4:75 f), SD 54.5. However, we can also take *tisso* (nom f) to mean “the 3” or simply “three”: hence, alternately, S 56c can be tr as “and Sanaṃ,kumara three,” ie, Subrahma, Paramatta and Sanaṃ,kumara as a triad.

²²⁵ On *āga* (3 pl aor of *āgacchati*), see §10b n.

3 THE ENVOI

[§§21-22]²²⁶

MĀRA AND HIS ARMY

- 21 *te ca sabbe abhikkante*
sa, inde²²⁷ deve sa, brahmake
māra, senā abhikkāmi
passa kaṇhassa mandiyam [262] (59) And to all of them who have come
along with Indra, the devas along with the brahmas,
Māra and his army²²⁸ come:
see the folly of Kaṇha²²⁹ [the dark one]!
- etha gaṇhatha bandhatha*
rāgena baddham atthu vo
samantā parivāretha
mā vo muñcittha koci naṃ (60) ‘Come, seize and bind
you with lust! This must be!
Surround them all around!
Let none escape whoever he be!’
- iti tattha mahā, seno*
kaṇho senaṃ apesayi
pāṇinā talam āhacca
saraṃ katvāna bheravaṃ (61) thus there the dark one
bids his great army,
having struck hard the earth,²³⁰
making a fearsome sound.
- yathā pāvussako megho*
thanayanto savijjuko
tadā so paccudāvatti
saṅkuddho asayaṃvase²³² (62) Just then comes down a heavy rain,²³¹
thundering and lightning.
Then, he retreats,
raging but powerless.
- 22 *tañ ca sabbaṃ abhiññāya* [11*] And directly knowing all things,
vavakkhitvāna²³³ cakkhumā
tato āmantayī satthā [7cd* 11cd*] the seeing one, surveying,
sāvake sāsane rate (63) **the teacher** spoke to them,
the disciples who love the teaching:

[The Blessed One:]

- māra, senā abhikkantā²³⁴*
te vijānātha²³⁵ bhikkhavo [8bcd*] ‘Mara and his army have come.
te ca ātappam akaruṃ *Bhikshus, beware of them,²³⁶*
sutvā buddhassa sāsanaṃ (64) *and with zeal exert yourselves,*
having heard the Buddha’s teaching.
- vīta, rāgehi pakkāmuṃ*
nesaṃ lomā’pi iñjayuṃ
sabbe vijita, saṅgāmā Māra departs, leaving not a hair
stirred in the lust-free.
They have all been victorious in battle,

²²⁶ On the envoi, see (1.2.4).²²⁷ Be Ce Se:SR *sa, inde*; Se:MC *s’inde*.²²⁸ For a description, see SD 52.1 (16.1). For details, see **Māra**, SD 61.8 & see Punnadhammo 2018:3.5.33.²²⁹ In Skt this is *kṛṣṇa*, anglicized as Krishna.²³⁰ This gesture mocks the Bodhisattva’s gesture of calling the earth to witness in the “earth-touching” (*bhūmi, samphassa*; Skt *bhūmi, sparśa*) gesture just before the great awakening: SD 52.1 (16.2).²³¹ It’s interesting that here the purifying waters fall from the heavens—whence the divine assembly—but in the “earth-touching” episode, the waters rise from the earth through Mother Earth to wash away the dark army.²³² Be Se *asayaṃvase*; Ce Ee *asayaṃvasī*.²³³ Be Ce Se:MC *vavakkhitvāna*, “being resolute”; Ee Se:SR *vavakkhitvāna*, “is speaking.”²³⁴ At 8a*, the line welcomes the deities’ arrival.²³⁵ *Te vijānātha*, lit “you must understand!”, rendered as an invitation at 64b*.²³⁶ Cf tr at 8b*.

*bhay'ātītā yasassino
modanti saha bhūtehi
sāvakā te janesutā'ti*

the fear is past, renowned,
they rejoice with the beings,
(64) the world lauds the disciples.'

— evaṃ —

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