

8

Sakka,pañha Sutta

The Discourse on Sakra's Questions | D 21
 or, (Dīgha) Sakka,pañha Sutta The (Dīgha) Discourse on Sakra's Questions
 Theme: The erotic, the spiritual and streamwinning
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2009, 2012, 2019

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1 Summary, structure, significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

1.1.1 Summary. The **Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21), the discourse on Sakra’s questions,¹ recounts Sakra’s² 1st visit to the Buddha and deep faith in the Dharma [§1], the teachings connected with him, and his attaining of streamwinning [§2]. The sub-themes are on the gandharva Pañca,sikha, his music and love interest [§1.6], and the devout woman Gopikā and devaputra Gopaka [§1.11.2-1.12]

Sakra visits the Buddha at the Inda,sāla cave in Vediya mountain, and, with the help of Pañca,sikha, meets him. Sakra asks the Buddha a set of 5 questions, covering a total of 14 topics [1.2.3]. The Sutta closes with Sakra’s showing his gratitude to Pañca,sikha, and attaining of streamwinning along with other devas [§§2.10.4-5].

1.1.2 Genre

1.1.2.1 Exegetically,³ the Sakka,pañha Sutta and similar texts form their own category, known as *vedalla* (“question-and-answer teachings”), one of the 9 limbs of the teaching (*nav’āṅga satthu,sāsana*).⁴ The Dīgha Commentary explains that the *vedalla* category comprises such texts as the Cūḷa,vedalla Sutta, the Mahā,vedalla Sutta, the Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta, the Sakka,pañha Sutta, the Saṅkhāra,bhājanīya Sutta⁵ and the Mahā,puṇṇāma Sutta, “all of which are suttas given in answer to questions asked in terms of joy and praise (of the Buddha,dharma)” (DA 1:24).⁶

In terms of teaching and narrative, they comprise questions and their answers, usually between two monastics, a questioner and a respondent (that is, they are catechetical suttas), such as these:⁷

Sakka,pañha Sutta	D 21/2:263-389	Sakra and the Buddha	SD 54.8
Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta	M 9/1:46-55	Sāriputta questions and answers ⁸	SD 11.14
Mahā Vedalla Sutta	M 43/1:291-297	Mahā Koṭṭhita & Sāriputta	SD 30.2
Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta	M 44/1:299-305	Visākha & Dhammadinnā ⁹	SD 40a.9
Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta	M 109/3:15-20	The Buddha and a monk ¹⁰	SD 17.11
Māha Koṭṭhita Sutta	A 9.13/4:382-385	Mahā Koṭṭhita & Sāriputta	SD 39.11

1.1.2.2 In §1.4.4, the Sutta narrator tells us that the young gandharva **Pañca,sikha** plays on his veena and sings verses “regarding the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and love.” These categories were incorporated into the post-Buddha epic Mahā,bharata (1.2.383), where it is said to comprise treatises on **the 4**

¹ The Sutta title comes from §§47d* + 48*, at the close of the 1st recital (Ch 1 of the Sutta).

² On Sakra (P *sakka*), see SD 54.2 (3.2.3.6).

³ In terms of the study and explanation of texts, esp sacred texts.

⁴ On these 9 factors (*āṅga*), see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), SD 30.2 (2.1); also SD 26.11 (3.2.1.3).

⁵ This Sutta has not been identified: it is a question-answer text on formations (*saṅkhāra*), which may mean whatever “forms” us and the world, such as the 4 elements and consciousness. It is also possible that this Sutta is now lost.

⁶ *Culla,devalla-mahā,vedalla-sammā,diṭṭhi-sakka,pañha-saṅkhāra,bhājanīya,mahā,puṇṇama-sutt’ādayo sabbe pi vedañ ca tuṭṭhiñ ca laddhāladdhā pucchita,suttantā vedallan’ti veditabbo* (DA 1:24,14-17).

⁷ For a longer list of catechetical suttas, esp involving Mahā Koṭṭhita, see SD 28.4 (1.2). See also SD 44.12 (1.7.3.1).

⁸ On the variations in the actors here, see SD 11.14 (2).

⁹ While Visākha is a layman, erstwhile husband of Dhamma,dinnā, she is an arhat nun: see SD 40a.9 (3).

¹⁰ The questioner is said to be an arhat monk who is teacher to 60 other monks (SA 2:306): see SD 17.11 (1.4).

aspects (varga) of life, that is: purpose (*artha,śāstra*), method (*dharmā,śāstra*), love (*kāma,śāstra*) and liberation (*mokṣa,śāstra*), that is, on the useful, the true, the agreeable and the liberated.¹¹

The Buddha shows us the true “**purpose**” of life, mundane and spiritual; the Dharma is the “**method**” for self-awakening, and **arhathood** the goal; “**love**”—as a feeling (lust) and activity (sex)¹²—is what drives beings as a species, as human nature and, specifically, as the psychology behind the nature of Siddhattha’s renunciation [6.4]. The 4th and last category is that of liberation (*vimokkha*). Indeed, this passage on Pañca,sikha [§1.4.4] is the earliest mention of such categories.

Note that these categories are mentioned, not by the Buddha, but by Pañca,sikha, the gandharva devaputra, a divine being whose task is to entertain and please the gods of the “earth-bound” heavens,¹³ that is, those of the 4 great kings and of Tāvātimsa. When the later brahminical writers compiled their patently anti-Buddhist works, such as the Mahābharata and Bhagavadgītā, they see these categories as “spiritual” quests. Both parties agree that liberation is the highest of these categories.

1.1.3 Significance

1.1.3.1 Of all the Dīgha Nikāya sources on Sakra, the most important is **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21), for the following reasons:

- (1) It records the 1st meeting between Sakra and the Buddha. However, he has known about the Buddha and the Dharma for quite some time. [2.1]
- (2) It frankly presents the erotic element in the context of spirituality, which helps us understand better the nature and significance of the Buddha’s great renunciation. [6.1]
- (3) The role of gender—in the story of Gopikā/Gopaka [5.3.1]—is highlighted in terms of spiritual practice and attainment. [5.3.2]
- (4) It tells us about Sakra’s attaining of streamwinning and gives us some practical insight into its nature. [1.2.4]

1.1.3.2 The significance and popularity of **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** is attested by the fact it is mentioned by name in a Saṃyutta sutta, the Milinda,pañha, the Mahāvastu, the Dīgha Commentary, and in non-Pali sources, especially Sanskrit and Chinese translations.

(1) **The Hālidakāni Sutta 2** (S 22.4) records that while the elder Mahā Kaccāna is staying on Mount Papāta, near Kuraraghara, in Avantī, the householder, Hālidakāni, mentions the Sakka,pañha by name, and specifically questions about the *accanta,niṭṭha* teaching [§§2.6.6-9],¹⁴ asking for a detailed explanation of it.¹⁵

(2) **The Milinda,pañha** mentions “the Inda,sāla cave” (Miln 349) and the “Sakka,pañha” (Sakra’s questions) (Miln 350). These were mentioned by Nāgasena in answer to king Milinda’s question: “Bhante Nāgasena, is there any householder living in a house, enjoying sense-pleasures, living as a master in the house crowded with wife and children, used to Kasī sandalwood, using garlands, perfumes and unguents, using

¹¹ Cf Windisch, “Buddha’s Geburt,” 1908:82.

¹² On an overview of the early Buddhist view of sex, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7.

¹³ On the “earth-bound heavens,” see SD 54.3a (3.5.1).

¹⁴ See SD 54.8 (3.5).

¹⁵ S 22.4/3:12 f (SD 70.15).

gold and silver, his turban studded with a variety of jewels, pearls and gold, by whom the peaceful utmost goal, nirvana, has been realized?¹⁶ (Miln 348). In short, are the lay arhats?

Nagasena replies that at the end of the teaching of the Sakka,pañha, “84,000 beings” understood of Dharma. The Sakka,pañha Sutta itself, however, says that 80,000 deities gained the Dharma-eye [§2.10.5], which usually refers to streamwinning, but may include once-returners and non-returners. It is possible that the extra 4,000 in Nāgasena’s figures refer to the other kinds lay saints, especially lay arhats.

(3) The post-Buddha Sanskrit work, **Mahā,vastu**, of the Lokōttara,vāda¹⁷ (a branch of the Mahā,saṅghika) mentions a phrase from **the Śakra,praśna**, “Sakra’s questions,” in connection with the jealousy of the king of Kāśi,kośala over the popularity of the young princes from Sāketa (banished from their kingdom) in his city, where they had taken refuge. The narrator quotes Sakra’s Questions, but gives a Sanskrit rendition of the quote, thus: “Devas, humans, asuras, garudas, gandharvas, yakshas, rakshasas, pisacas, kumbhandhas and all other of the common masses are bound in the fetters of jealousy and avarice.”¹⁸ (Mvst 1:350)

(4) **The Sumaṅgala,vilāsini** (the Dīgha Commentary), as we have noted, cites the Sakka,pañha Sutta by name, classifying it amongst those texts that are categorized as **vedalla**, that is, catechetical texts.¹⁹ [1.1.2.1]

(5) Chinese translations of the Sutra from non-Pali sources (mostly Buddhist Sanskrit) are preserved in the Dīrgha Āgama and the Madhyama Āgama of the Chinese Tripiṭaka.²⁰ Sanskrit versions or fragments²¹ of the Sutra have been identified by various scholars.

1.1.3.3 The fact that the Sutta is mentioned *by name* in other suttas and texts suggests that it is likely those suttas and texts are *later* than the Sutta quoted. That the Sutta is **well-known by name** in the Commentaries suggests that it is unlikely to be a very early sutta. It is likelier to represent teachings and developments from a time when Buddhism had become widespread and popular enough for the Buddha or early Buddhist sutta-compilers to include the story of Sakra in the Pali canon.

We also see late canonical terms such as “Sakya,muni” in the Sutta [§43b*]. *Sakya,muni* is a very rare term in the suttas but common in the Commentaries. The Sutta probably belongs to **the middle period** (from the 10th-30th year of the ministry) or later.²²

1.1.3.4 When using the Sanskrit or the Chinese versions, it should be remembered that they are, as a rule, later than the Pali versions, sometimes varying in their doctrinal background. The earliest **Chinese translation** of a Buddhist scripture was in 148 CE, but most of the translations were done in the 7th century and later. The Chinese translations faced various difficulties (eg, linguistic and cultural difficulties; apo-

¹⁶ *Bhante nāgasena atthi kho koci gihī agāriko kāma,bhogī putta,dāra,sambādha,sayanam ajjhāvasanto kāsika,-candanam paccanubhonto mālā,gandha,vilepanam dhārayanto jāta.rūpa,rajatam sadiyanto maṇi,mutta,kañcana,-vicitta,moli,baddho, yena santam paramattham nibbānam sacchikatan’ti* (M 348,11-16).

¹⁷ *Lokōttara* (lit, “trans-world”) means “supramundane or transcendent.” This school believed the Buddha to be “transcendent,” beyond this world or supernatural, that Sakyamuni was a mere phantom.

¹⁸ *Īrṣyā,mātsarya,samyojana,samprayuktā deva,manuṣyā asurā garuḍā gandharvā yakṣā rākṣasā piśācā kumbhāṇḍā ye vā punar anye santi prthu,kāyāḥ* (Mvst 1:350).

¹⁹ DA 1:24,14-17.

²⁰ 佛說帝釋所問經 *fó shuō dì shì suǒ wèn jīng* T 15/T1.246b3, 帝釋問事緣 *dì shì wèn shì yuán* T 203.73/T4.476a17, 釋問經緣 *dì shì wèn shì yuán* DĀ 14/T1.62b29, 釋問經 *dì wèn jīng* MĀ 134/T1.632c27.

²¹ SHT 1151 R2–5, 1421, 1422, 1415 R2–5, 1687B; Śakrapraśna Sūtra SF 241 (Waldschmidt 1932: 58–11), SF 139 (Sander 1987:155–158).

²² On the 2 periods of the Buddha’s ministry, see SD 1.1 (2.2); SD 40a.1 (1.3).

cryptal texts) that make fascinating scholarly study.²³ Generally, such sources are useful where they help us better understand the Pali suttas, and a good understanding of Pali and its suttas helps us better comprehend these non-Pali sources, too.

1.2 SUTTA STRUCTURE

1.2.1 The 2 parts of the Sutta

The Sakka,pañha Sutta is divided into 2 almost equal sections or “recitals” (*bhāṇavāra*),²⁴ here called “chapters.” **The 2 chapters** are arranged as follows:

Sutta Contents

CHAPTER 1 (*paṭhama bhāṇavāra*)

- §1.1 Sakka longs to meet the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave [1.5.1, map].
- §1.2 Sakka asks Pañca,sikha to present himself to the Buddha with his music and verses.
- §1.3 The devas illuminate VEDIYA mountain, Amba,saṇḍa and their vicinity.
- §1.4 Pañca,sikha approaches the Inda,sāla cave to play his veena for the Buddha
- §1.5 Pañca,sikha’s song.
- §1.6 Pañca,sikha meets the Buddha; he declares his love for Bhaddā Suriya,vacchasā.
- §1.7 Reprise of Pañca,sikha’s song [§1.5]; he misses Bhaddā.
- §§1.8-9 Sakka and the devas meet the Buddha.
- §1.10 About Sakka’s 1st attempt to meet the Buddha; Bhuñjati. Why he fails to do so.
- §1.11.1 An embarrassed Sakka turns to a more amicable topic.
- §§1.11.2-1.12 Gopaka’s story.
- §1.13 The Buddha is convinced of Sakka’s faith and sincerity.

CHAPTER 2 (*dutiya bhāṇavāra*)

- §2.1-2.3.7 Sakka’s 1st question (series): What fetters bind beings with hate, etc? The Buddha answers.
- §2.4 Sakka’s 2nd question: How should a monk practise the Pātimokkha? The Buddha answers.
- §2.5 Sakka’s 3rd question: How does one practise sense-restraint? The Buddha answers.
- §§2.6-2.7.3 Sakka’s 4th question: Do all holy men teach the same thing? The Buddha answers.
- §§2.7.4-2.8.7 Sakka’s joy; its reasons. Attaining the path of streamwinning [§2.7.10]. Rebirth [§2.8.2].²⁵
- §2.9 Sakka’s 11-verse lion-roar.
- §2.10 Sakka’s gratitude to Pañca,sikha; Sakka’s attaining **fruition** of streamwinning²⁶ [§2.10.4].

²³ The Chin collection of early sutras and texts are called **Āgama** (usually based the Sanskrit, but often close to their Pali parallels), that is, Dīrgha Āgama, Madhyama Āgama, Saṃyukta Āgama and Ekōttara Āgama. They are found in the first 2 vols of the 207-vol [Chin Tripitaka](http://www.buddhiststudies.net/oicb.html). For textual and scholarly sources (Online Index of Chinese Buddhism), see eg <http://www.buddhiststudies.net/oicb.html>. On the difficulties faced in the Chin translations of Buddhist texts, see SD 49b (2.6).

²⁴ A *bhāṇa,vāra* is a recital-section on the Pali canon introduced by the early reciters (*bhāṇaka*). These sections not only served to determine textual size or volume, but also act as rests for the reciters. A *bhāṇa.vāra* usu consists of 8,000 syllables, generally comprising verses—ie quatrains of 4 feet with 8 syllables each—even when the text is in prose. Hence, 250 verses of 32 syllables form a *bhāṇavāra* (DANṬ:Be 1:81,9*-12*; Sadd 928,20, 357,27-358.3, 1131 (5.3.3.1); Hinüber 1995b, 1996: §12 n29). A *bhāṇavāra* recited *sarabhañña* (slow plainchant in phrases) would take about half-an-hour. On *sarabhañña*, see Piyasilo, *Buddhist Prayer*, 1990c:46. On *bhāṇavāra*, see Ency Bsm 2:690.

²⁵ On Sakka’s attaining the path of streamwinning, see **Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8,8), SD 54.20.

²⁶ On Sakka’s attaining the fruition of streamwinning, see **Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8,10), SD 54.20.

1.2.2 Contrasting themes

1.2.2.0 From the listing of the chapter-topics above [1.2.1], we can see that **Chapter 1** deals with worldly affairs. We see a number of interesting **contrasts** in the Chapter 1 themes. These contrasts follow a clear rule: first, there is some worldliness or weakness, but this is changed or strengthened by the Dharma into wisdom and awakening.

1.2.2.1 The 1st contrast is that between **sensuality and spirituality**. Chapter 1 centres on **Pañca,sikha** and his love for Bhaddā. His song is powerfully erotic, yet intimately woven with his faith-inspired allusions to the Buddha, the Dharma and the arhats (the 3 jewels). He shows himself to be a gandharva who is passionate in his love for both Bhaddā and the Buddha Dharma.

This same contrast and harmony is also seen in **Sakra**: just as Pañca,sikha is drawn to win Bhaddā, Sakra is determined to meet the Buddha. [6.2.1.2]

1.2.2.2 The 2nd contrast is seen in **Sakra**, too. To his embarrassment, he learns that he failed to meet the Buddha the first time because he was hasty and careless, driving his chariot so near to the meditating Buddha. His embarrassment can be teased out from the caesura, an awkward silence, after the Buddha hints: “The sound of the venerable’s chariot-wheels roused me from that samadhi!” [§1.10.7]. This is a gentle rebuke by the Buddha to Sakra.

The irony, however, is that it is well known that the Buddha can *never* be disturbed while he is in meditation. This unique remark by the Buddha can be explained thus: either he is just beginning his meditation, while his senses are still functional (before attaining dhyana); or he is making this statement to see how well Sakra understands his hastiness (in other words, as a skillful means); or more likely, both are the case. The point is that Sakra is not yet ready to meet the Buddha to learn the Dharma. [2.1.1]

1.2.2.3 The 3rd contrast is found in **the Gopikā/Gopaka story** [§§1.11.2-1.12]. Gopikā is a morally virtuous Sakya woman, deeply faithful in the 3 jewels and devoted to serving 3 monks. Gopika—we are given no reason—aspires to be a man.²⁷ She is reborn as a male deva in Tāvātimsa, but is appalled to see that the 3 monks she had been devoted to and served as supporter, have been reborn as gandharvas, the lowest of heavenly beings, whose task is to serve and service the devas with comfort and pleasure.

The import of the Gopikā/Gopaka story is twofold: being a woman is no obstacle to a better birth or spiritual state, and that being a lay person with right conduct is spiritually more blessed than a monastic who flows with the world. Sex, social status or religious choice is no obstacle to spiritual cultivation when we *do* cultivate spiritually. [5.3.2]

1.2.2.4 The 4th contrast or pair of contrasts, we see in Sakra’s **gratitude and spirituality**. First, we see Sakra desperately turning to his minstrel, Pañca,sikha, to arrange a meeting between the Buddha and him (Sakra), which Pañca,sikha does in a musical and masterly manner. Pañca,sikha’s intercession occurs at almost the very *start* of the Sutta [4.1.2], which *closes* with Sakra showing his gratitude to Pañca,sikha in many ways: Sakra adopts him as a son, makes him king of the gandharvas, and royally grants him the hand of Bhaddā whom he loves [§2.10.2].

²⁷ There is nothing anti-feminist here when we consider the overall lesson of the story. In fact, we also have cases where one continues to be reborn a woman (**Pati,pujikāya Vatthu** (DhA 4.4), SD 54.15) or that of a man becoming a woman, even having children, and then reverting to his manhood (**Soreyya-t,thera Vatthu**, DhA 3.9; SD 31.7 (8.2.1)). These accounts are neither “anti-manhood” nor “pro-feminism.” Such accounts should be understood for the lessons they import, which is why they are told: as we think, so we are or become.

1.2.2.5 There are a number of other contrasts that are not so clearly evident in the Sutta. For example, there is a 5th contrast which is not at once evident, unless we are familiar with the epithet *angī,rasa* [§1.5.2c], translated as “sunshine,” a term of endearment that Pañca,sikha uses for his beloved, Bhaddā. We shall discuss this below [1.3].

Then, there is a 6th contrast, the usage of the word *bhaddā*, “fortunate, auspicious,” which is the name of Pañca,sikha’s beloved, and is also used as a respectful appellative to Sakra: *bhaddan tava*, “Good fortune is yours!” We see here Pañca,sikha, having as it were (in the end), a twofold good fortune, a twin blessing: a loving master and a partner he loves, making him a son (to Sakra) and a husband (to Bhaddā). [1.4.2]

There is also a 7th contrast: that between the disruptive **noise** of Sakra’s chariot-wheels and Pañca,sikha’s soothing harmonious **music**. This we will examine later [5.2.1].

1.2.3 Sakra’s questions

Chapter 2 (the 2nd *bhāṇa,vāra*) of the Sakka,pañha Sutta records a set of 5 questions or question-sets, covering a total of 12 topics. Sakra begins the questioning by asking why beings cannot live without quarrelling. The Buddha replies that it is due to jealousy and avarice (*issā,macchariya*); then, he asks what’s the cause of *jealousy and avarice*, and so on (totalling 8 questions), thus:

1ST QUESTION SERIES [3.1]

(1) jealousy and avarice	<i>issā,macchariya</i>	[§2.1]
(2) loving and unloving [like and dislike]	<i>piyāppiya</i>	[§§2.2.1-3]
(3) desire	<i>chanda</i>	[§§2.2.4-5]
(4) of thoughts	<i>vitakka</i>	[§§2.2.6-7]
(5) proliferation of conception and perception	<i>papañca,saññā,sankhā</i>	[§§2.2.8-9]
(6) happiness	<i>somanassa</i>	[§§2.3.1-3]
(7) sorrow	<i>domanassa</i>	[§2.3.4]
(8) equanimity	<i>upekkhā</i>	[§§2.3.5-7]

2ND QUESTION [3.2]

(9) Pātimokkha-based restraint: wholesome conduct of body, speech and quest	[§2.4]
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3RD QUESTION [3.3]

(10) sense-restraint: what <i>is</i> to be resorted to, what <i>not</i> to be resorted to (<i>sevitabbāsevitabba</i>)	[§2.5]
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4TH QUESTION [3.4]

(11) religious teachers and teachings, and the worldly “elements” (<i>aneka,dhātu</i>)	[§2.6.1-5]
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5TH QUESTION [3.5]

(12) the true ideals (<i>accanta,niṭṭha ...</i>) ²⁸	[§§2.6.6-10]
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This is only an overview of themes by way of an introduction to the Sutta. The significance of these questions and teachings will be discussed later [3].

²⁸ For details on the *accanta,niṭṭha* stock passage or pericope, see SD 54.8 (3).

1.2.4 Sakra's streamwinning

1.2.4.1 Was Sakra twice a streamwinner? The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21) records that Sakra declares himself a **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*) twice in the same sutta account.²⁹ The 1st time is when he is seeking spiritual answers from forest-dwelling recluses and brahmins. When they realize that Sakra is “the lord of the devas” (*devanām inda*), they affectedly want to learn from him instead! He then declares that he is a disciple of the Buddha and “a streamwinner,”³⁰ no longer bound for the lower world, surely going over to self-awakening.”³¹ [§2.7.10]

Then, near the Sutta's ending, there is a 2nd declaration—while joyfully admonishing Pañca,sikha—we are told that “the spotless, stainless Dharma-eye arose in Sakra ... thus: ‘Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease’” (*virajam vita,malam dhamma,cakkhum udapādi: yam kiñci samudaya,-dhammam sabban tam nirodha,dhammam*).³² **The “Dharma-eye”** (*dhamma,cakkhu*)³³ here refers to the attaining of streamwinning. This is the 2nd time that we are told Sakra attains streamwinning [§2.10.4]. [1.2.4.2]

1.2.4.2 Scholars are often at a loss with this apparent **anomaly** of someone declaring himself to be a streamwinner twice in his life. Is this a wrong transmission in the texts? Could it be that on the first occasion, Sakra is deluded in his self-declaration—just as a pious admirer of a certain charismatic teacher would “canonize” the latter as an arhat or having some superpowers, and so on?

Instead of falling into intellectual reductionism or academic rationalism—we should work on our faith and wisdom in the Buddha Dhamma. In such textual difficulties, we should apply this rule of thumb, that is, to start by asking ourself the most obvious question: What do the sutta or suttas (and the Commentaries) say about this? **Search the suttas:** let the suttas speak for themselves.

1.2.4.3 The explanation is really a simple one: Sakra's 1st declaration of streamwinning refers to the attaining of **the streamwinning-path** (*sotāpanna,magga*). This means that he has, as it were, already qualified and enrolled as an undergraduate student. In his 2nd declaration—notice the use of the *yam kiñci samudaya,dhammam* pericope [1.2.4.1]—he has fully graduated as a streamwinner: he has won **the streamwinning-fruit** (*sotāpanna,phala*).³⁴ He is now a full-fledged streamwinner, a true disciple of the Buddha, no more an “outsider” (*bāhira*).³⁵

²⁹ D 21,2.7/2:284,23 + 2.10/2:289,21 (SD 70.6).

³⁰ **Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) tells us that it is on the Buddha's account that Sakra, “having attained streamwinning, gave up his old Sakra-state and gained his young Sakra-state”: **DhA 15.8,8** + SD 54.20 (2.2.2.2).

³¹ *Sotāpanno avinipāta,dhammo niyato sambodhi,parāyano*. A fuller streamwinning pericope is found in (**Anicca Cakkhu S** (S 25.1,6), SD 16.7. See also S 22.109, SD 17.1a(2.3); SD 52.10a (1.2.2.2-1.2.2.3).

³² D 21,2.10/2:289,21 (SD 70.6), qu at **Sakka V** (DhA 15.8,10), SD 54.20. On the Pali formula, see SD 49.8b (7.5).

³³ The “Dharma-eye” (*dhamma,cakkhu*) usu refers to streamwinning, but may refer to any of the 1st 3 stages of sainthood (ie, except arhathood). It should not be confused with “the divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance, “the knowledge of death and rebirth (*cut'upapāta ñāṇa*) and of how beings fare according to their karma (*yathā,-kammūpaga ñāṇa*),” a type of psychic ability gained through the 4th dhyana. On the different kinds of “eyes,” see DA 1:183; SA 2:354, 3:297; ItA 1:99, 167; BA 33; PmA 1:77; NmA 1:158; DhsA 306. See also D 2,104 n on “Dharma-eye” (SD 8.10); SD 27.5a (5.5).

³⁴ This 2nd event—Sakra's fruition of streamwinning—is noted by Comys on **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10): see §2.10.5 n.

³⁵ Those who have not attained at least streamwinning are said to be “outsiders” (*bahira* or *bāhiraka*) to the path: see **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27,25.4) n + SD 40a.5 (1.1.2); **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,5(11)) + nn, SD 1.9; SD 47.1 (1.1.2).

The streamwinning-*path* and the streamwinning-*fruition* are the first 2 kinds of **the 8 noble individuals** (*aṭṭha ariya, puggala*) often mentioned in the suttas. Each of the 4 stages of sainthood has its path (*magga*) (the “undergrad”) and its fruition (the “grad”) aspects—this twin is called a “pair” (*yuga*) of noble individuality.³⁶ It should also be noted that each of **the 8 individuals** is *not* a “moment” of sudden awakening (a commentarial notion) but often lasts for quite a long while. (Clearly, as undergraduates, we do not graduate instantly!)³⁷ [2.2.3.2]

1.3 SYMBOLISMS: THE SUN AND EARTH

1.3.1 Bhaddā Suriya, vacchasā

1.3.1.1 As noted in the study of contrasts in Chapter 2, we see Pañca, sikhā’s application of the epithet, *aṅgī, rasī*, “sunshine” [§1.5.2c], to his beloved, Bhaddā, as the 5th contrast [1.2.2.5]. We cannot be certain whether the gods and humans of the Buddha’s time saw the sun as the centre of the solar system (as we now know it today), they certainly saw it to be the only source of light in the heavens above the earth.

The connotation, then, is clear: Pañca, sikhā sees Bhaddā as the source of his happiness and the centre of his world, that is, his worldly “sunshine” (*aṅgī, rasa*). The Commentary explains that she is so called “because her body emit rays of light” (*aṅge tasmīyo assā’ti*, DA 3:701,21), that is, her figure is radiant: a common vision when we are deeply in love with a person. She is the light of his life, his sunshine. Before we see how her name is related to the Buddha’s [1.3.2], let us examine another epithet of hers, a more common one in the Sutta: Suriya, vacchasā [1.3.1.2].

1.3.1.2 Suriya, vacchasā, “glory of the sun,” is another important solar symbolism in the Sakka, pañha Sutta, and is Bhaddā’s nick-name: she is called Bhaddā Suriya, vacchasā. This name is mentioned in **the Mahā, samaya Sutta** (D 20) together with that of her father, Timbaru, a gandharva chieftain.³⁸

Suriya is, of course, one of a number of synonyms for the sun. As a noun, *sura* means “a god,” that is, the deity that lights up our world (its opposite is *asura*, “anti-god, titan”). As an adjective, *sūra*, it means “brave,” and from this we get *sūriya* (a variant spelling of *suriya*), “the sun.” The sun is, as it were, all alone in our sky; hence, it is brave. When the sun shines, we are free from the fear of darkness: we are brave in the light of day.

1.3.1.3 There are 2 forms of the second element of this epithet, that is, it can be either **-vacchasā** or **-vaccasā**. The Commentarial gloss on *suriya, vacchasā* seems to suggest that it means “accomplishment, endowment or success” (*sampatti*): “She is *suriya, vaccasā* because she has a well-endowed body” (*sarīra, sampattiyā suriya, vaccasā*, DA 3:704,18).

The Burmese text and its Commentary, and the Siamese text read *sūriya, vacchasā*; while the Sinhala and Pali Text Society editions read *suriya, vaccasā*. The Dīgha Commentary explains *suriya, vacchasā* as meaning one “whose body, from toe to crown, is radiant like the sun” (DA 3:701,7-13). Since the word *vaccha* or **vacchasa** literally means a “young calf (still drinking milk from her mother),” *suriya, vacchasā* can mean “a calf who is (radiant) like the sun.” “Calf” here is a diminutive of affection for someone sweet

³⁶ On the 4 “pairs” and 8 individuals—the famous *magga, phala* pair, see **Aṭṭha Puggala S 2** (A 8.60), SD 15.10a(2); SD 10.16 (9).

³⁷ On such “individual” awakenings as *not* sudden but lasts some time, see (**Hatthi, gāmika**) **Ugga S** (A 8.22,10) + SD 45.15 (3.2.2). On the problem of “sudden awakening,” see SD 50.13 (2.4.4).

³⁸ D 20,10/30e*/2:258 (SD 53.4).

and beloved. **Vacca**, which means “excrement, faeces, dung,” is unlikely to be part of such an auspicious name.

Either way—*vacchasā* or *vaccasā*—is clearly cognate with the Sanskrit **varcas** (from √RUC, to shine), meaning “vital power, vigour, energy, activity, (esp) the illuminating power of fire or the sun, ie, brilliance, lustre, light; form, figure, shape; excrement, ordure, faeces” (SED). Hence, we find **sūrya, varcas**, “resplendent like the sun,” in Sanskrit works, such as the post-Buddha Mahābharata,³⁹ where it is the name of a gandharva deva.⁴⁰

1.3.1.4 Although Bhaddā is like **the sun**—the light and the life—in Pañca,sikha’s life, she is only the **object**, purpose or goal of his life: he is in love with her. In other words, Bhaddā is not the ideal woman, much less the ideal of womanhood. Such a woman is “**the woman jewel**” (*itthī, ratana*), that is, the chief queen of the world monarch (*cakka, vatti*), such as that described in **the Bāla, paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129).⁴¹

1.3.2 The Buddha as Aṅgī, rasa

1.3.2.1 Bhaddā, as we have noted, is also given the epithet *aṅgī, rasī* [1.3.2.1]. This is the feminine form of **aṅgī, rasa** (sun-rays), a well-known epithet of the Buddha.⁴² The Commentaries give **3 etymologies** of *aṅgī, rasa*. Buddhaghosa says that “it means emitting rays of various hues from the body,”⁴³ and that it therefore applies to all buddhas.⁴⁴

A related word, **ādicca** (another word for the sun) is also **the gotra name** of the Sakyas (Sn 423); hence, the Buddha is often called *Ādicca, bandhu*, “kinsman of the sun” [§2.9.8d*].

Dhammapāla adds that *Aṅgī, rasa* signifies being endowed with such qualities as moral virtue, and also that, according to some, *Aṅgī, rasa* (probably a patronym), is a personal name given by the Buddha’s father in addition to Siddhattha, that is, his “2 names” (*dve nāmāni*, ThaA 2:226); hence, the Buddha is called *Aṅgī, rasa Kumāra* (Prince Sunbeam).⁴⁵

In the Vedic tradition, the Gautama (P *gotama*) lineage belongs to the *Aṅgī, rasa* clan.⁴⁶ Hence, this is where a kshatriya clan claimed descent from a brahmin gotra (Thomas 1949:22 f).⁴⁷

1.3.3 Sakra’s earth-touching gesture

1.3.3.1 Sakra, after gratefully and generously repaying Pañca,sikha for successfully arranging his visit to the Buddha, does a remarkable deed: “**Having struck the earth with his palm**, thrice uttered this udana [word of uplift]: ‘Homage to him, the Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one!’” [§2.10.3].

The question here is: Was he “sealing his word” to Pañca,sikha? Surely this sequence of his actions is of some significance. However, since Sakra is reputedly a man of his word, such a gesture surely has a deeper significance.

³⁹ The oldest parts of the Mahābharata epic are not much older than 4th cent BCE (just after the Buddha’s time) and reached its final form by the early Gupta period (c 4th cent CE). On gandharva music, see SD 20.12 (2.4.1).

⁴⁰ Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva (ch 1), sect 122, stz 55. Even today, in India, traditional music is called “gāndharva, veda,” “the music of joy [knowledge],” and traditional musicians, “gandharvas.” See

⁴¹ M 129,39/3:174 f (SD 2.22); SD 36.10 (2.3.5).

⁴² See, V 1:25,32*; D 3:196,7*; S 1:196,3* = Tha 1512; S 1:81,156*; A 3:239,25*; Tha 536. Qu at J 1:116,14* = DhA 1:244,5* = AA 1:230,16* = Vism 388,3*; cf Ap 104,19.

⁴³ SA 1:152,11; AA 3:316,2; J 5:145,7.

⁴⁴ DA 3:701,21 f; cf *āditta* or *ādicca*, “son of Āditi (the sun)” (DA 3:963,28).

⁴⁵ AA 2:239,30; ThaA 2:226,26; BA 278,35; ApA 361,31-34.

⁴⁶ Macdonell & Keith, *Vedic Index*, 1912 1:234 f (Gotama).

⁴⁷ See **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30) @ SD 36.9 (4.5): The Buddha’s radiance.

1.3.3.2 Sakra's earth-striking gesture marks his **declaration of faith in the 3 jewels** (as a streamwinner), re-enacting *the Buddha's earth-touching gesture*. This is when the Buddha, after being challenged by Māra to prove his worthiness to sit under the Bodhi-tree, calls the earth to witness all his past good deeds by which he deserves that seat so that he will gain awakening. Sakra knows this, since he had himself witnessed this powerful act of truth by the Bodhisattva.⁴⁸

Hence, Sakra, too, calls the earth—in the Buddha's name—to witness this moment: the conclusion of his 1st meeting with the Buddha and Sakra's aspiration for awakening. In time, when Māra challenges his aspiration for awakening, the earth is always under him supporting him (and us) as our witness in the good that grounds our efforts to reach and walk the path of awakening.⁴⁹

1.4 A FEW INTERESTING WORDS

1.4.1 *Kuto, mukhā* [§§1.11.5, 1.12.4c]

1.4.1.1 In the story of **Gopaka** sees that the 3 monks that he, as the pious laywomen, **Gopikā**, on earth, were devoted to and had supported. Despite living the religious life, they are reborn amongst the lowly gandharvas [§32*]; hence, he rebukes them, thus:

"Where's the face, sirs? You've not strived in the Blessed One's Dharma! (*Kuto, mukhā nāma tumhe mārisā tassa bhagavato dhammaṃ assuttha* [variants: *assutvā* or *āyūhiṭṭho*]). Here am I, having been a woman, deeply faithful ... well-fulfilled in moral virtue. ... But, what a sorry sight to see you, sir, fellows-in-the-Dharma, to be reborn here amongst the lowly gandharvas!" [§§1.11.5-8].

Of special interest is the phrase *kuto, mukhā*, which we will now examine.

1.4.1.2 Clearly here, *mukha* (which usually means "mouth") means "face."⁵⁰ The Sutta Commentary explains: "Therein, *kuto, mukhā* refers to "Facing the Blessed One when he is teaching Dharma, thus: "Where were you facing; were you occupied with other things, looking here and there, or sleeping?"⁵¹ This is a *literal* explanation of what the ex-monks were: they did not pay attention to the Dharma, but conducted themselves in worldly ways, entertaining the rich and powerful for the sake of immediate "gains, honours and praises" (*lābha, sakkāra, siloka*).⁵²

For a monk to be reborn as a gandharva, then, is as bad as falling into one of the subhuman realms as an animal, a preta or a hell-being. The karma of their negligence (*appamāda*) fruited as a lowly birth even in high heaven, but this is just the start of a bad karmic journey: it will only spiral downwards. They will, in due course, fall from the heavens down to the lower realms.⁵³

Doctrinally, Gopaka is expressing the teaching of **moral fear** (*ottappa*): the danger of bad karma falling upon us by way of our own unwholesomeness. The have no *fear* of bad karma; perhaps, they do not

⁴⁸ See SD 52.2 (16.2).

⁴⁹ Other persons famously uttering *namo tassa* incl: brahmin Jāṇussoṇi, **Cūḷa Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 27,6.6/1:177), SD 40a.5; king Pasenadi Kosala, **Piya, jātika S** (M 87,29/2:112, closing); brahmin Brahmāyu, **Brahmāyu S** (M 91,23/-2:140), SD 62.8; brahminee Dhanañjānī, **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,2/2:209), SD 10.9 & **Dhanañjānī S** (S 7.1/1:160), SD 45.5; brahmin Ārāma,daṇḍa, **Ārāma,daṇḍa S** (A 2.37/1:67), SD 84.9.

⁵⁰ J 6:218 (*uṇṇaja* ~); PVA 74, 75, 77; ~*m karoti*, to make a face (i e, grimace), Vism 343; *adho*~, face downward, V 2:78; opp *upari*~, face upward (PED, CPD); *assu*~ with tearful face, Dh 67; PVA 39; *dum*~ (adj) sad or unfriendly looking, J 2:393, 6:343; scurrilous, J 5:78; *bhadra*~ bright-faced, PVA 149; *ruda*~, crying, Pv 1.11,2.

⁵¹ *Tattha kuto, mukhā'ti bhagavati abhimukhe dhammaṃ desente: "Tumhe kuto, mukhā, añña, vihitā ito c'ito ca olokayamānā, udāhu niddāyamānā"* (DA 3:707,12-14). This is the sense given (without further comment) in K Anuruddha's *Dictionary of Pali Idioms*, Hong Kong, 2003: 328.

⁵² See **Bhindi S** (S 17.33), SD 46.24.

⁵³ On devas falling into the hells, see (**Nānā, karaṇa**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

even believe in it. Then, there is the other side of this terrible twin of moral shame and moral fear (*hiri,-ottappa*), which we will now examine: *moral shame*.

1.4.1.3 It is clear from the context of the Gopaka passage [§1.11] that, by asking the gandharvas who were ex-monks, “**Where’s the face?**” as meaning: “How do you think people will see you now? Are you not ashamed of yourselves!” As monks, they were entertaining devotees and the world. After death, they continue to become *divine entertainers*. This is such a lowly outcome despite these erstwhile monks’ chance to live the holy life and reach the noble path.

It is something to be deeply ashamed of. This is the **moral shame** (*hiri*) aspect of the current lowly state of the ex-monk gandharvas. The positive side of this application of moral shame (regarding “the face” of shame) is **moral courage** (*vesārajja*),⁵⁴ exemplified in the Gopikā as a woman in aspiring to higher rebirth. It should be understood that she was living in a patriarchal society, but showed them that she could better them.

1.4.1.4 To reflect the significance of both moral shame and moral fear (*hiri,ottappa*), I have rendered *kuto,mukha* as “**Where’s the face?**” which can mean both:

- (1) literally, “Where was your face? Why did you not attend to the Dharma?” (moral fear), and
- (2) figuratively, “Where is your face?” A remark about “losing face” (moral shame).

Her words moved 2 of the gandharvas to seriously practise (even in Tāvatiṃsa) and, attaining dhyana, they were reborn in the host of Brahma’s ministers (*brahma,purohita*). But the third remained clinging to the heavenly life of sensuality. [§§1.11.9, 1.12.16]

1.4.2 Bhaddan tava [§1.1.5 etc]

1.4.2.1 We have already noted, in passing, a contrast in how the word *bhadda* (“fortunate, auspicious”) is found in the name of Bhaddā, Pañcasikha’s beloved, and that Sakra is sometimes addressed as *bhaddan tava*, “Good fortune is yours!” [1.2.2.5].

The phrase *bhaddan tava* (with euphonic ending) or *bhaddam tava* occurs 4 times in the Sutta [§§1.1.5, 1.2.2, 1.4.2, 1.8.2], each time addressed to Sakra by Pañca,sikha, except for the first occasion when the assembled devas address Sakra with this phrase.

1.4.2.2 The Commentary explains the phrase *evam bhaddan tava* as follows: The devas of the whole universe of the Tāva,tīṃsa say: “Yes, maharajah. We will go to see the Buddha. Difficult is the arising of a buddha. Good fortune is yours!”⁵⁵ (DA 3:699). Although semantically, we can render this phrase as “Good luck to you!” but idiomatically, it sounds (to the modern ear, anyway) rather ominous, that one *needs* good luck (that one is lacking it or may not get it).

Hence, *bhaddan,tava* is better rendered as: “Good fortune is yours”; or, more fully: *evam bhaddan tava*, “So be it, good fortune is yours!” This sounds more positive, especially when Sakra plans to meet the Buddha to learn the Dharma. This is definitely a profoundly wholesome move.

⁵⁴ See *Sārajja S* (A 5.101), SD 28.9a (3.4).

⁵⁵ *Evam bhaddan tavāti kho cakkavāḷā,pariyantā devā tāva,tīṃsāti: Evam hoti mahārāja. Gacchām’aham bhagavantaṃ dassanāya. Dullābho buddh’uppādo. Bhaddan tava ...* (DA 3:699,8-11)

1.4.3 *Paricārikā* and *pāda, paricārikā* [§1.10.2]

1.4.3.1 The Sakka,pañha Sutta says that *Bhuñjati* is “a female attendant of Vessavaṇa, the great king” (*vessavaṇassa mahā,rājassa paricārikā*, D 2:270,15 f). I have rendered *paricārikā* as “a female attendant” rather than “wife,” as done by T W Rhys Davids, in his 1910 translation of the Dīgha Nikāya (D:W 2:305). His translation is echoed by G P Malalasekera in his Dictionary of Pali Proper Names (DPPN) (1937 2:384); M C Walshe follows it in his Dīgha translation (1995:324); and then N Mudiyanse adds this into his “Kuvera” article in the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism (1999:267).

It should, however, be noted that *neither* the suttas *nor* the Commentaries seem to mention that *Bhuñjati* is Vessavaṇa’s “wife.” Let us see how Rhys Davids must have come to his choice of translation [1.4.3.2]; then, we will examine what *paricārikā* really means or can mean in the rest of this section.

1.4.3.2 What are the grounds for translating *paricārikā* as “wife”? The oldest clues we have for rendering *paricārikā* as “wife” from the Commentaries, especially that on D 21, which glosses *paricārikā* with *pādā, paricārikā deva, dhītā*, “a young female deva who is a foot-servant” (*pāda, paricārikā deva, dhītā*) (DA 3:705,31) [4.2.2.4]. This is where the canonical *paricārikā* is equated with the commentarial *pāda, paricārikā*, which is examined the next sections.

The earliest modern clue is found in R C Childers’ A Dictionary of the Pali Language (DPL), under *paricāra*: “an attendant, servant. Fem *paricārikā*, a wife (Abh 237).” “Abh 237” = “**Abhp 237**” refers to the world’s oldest Pali dictionary (or rather, thesaurus), the **Abhidhāna-p, padīpikā** (section 237).⁵⁶ There, we see these entries:

“*dāro chāyā* [f] *kaḷattam*, (ca) *gharaṇī* [f] *bhariyā* [f] *piyā* [f] *pajāpatī* [f] (ca) *dutiyā* [f] (sā) ***pāda-paricārikā***. [A wife].”⁵⁷

Note that *paricārikā* itself is not found in this list. The bracketed entry, “A wife,” is simply an interpolated English key-word like the header or lemma in a thesaurus—that is what, in fact, the **Abhidhāna-p, padīpikā** is. It is a collection of words, some of which may be synonyms, or near-synonyms, or are related in some way. For example, *gharaṇī* means “housewife”; *piyā*, “beloved”; and *dutiyā* (literally, “a second”), “partner.” The words that commonly mean “wife” are only *dāro* and *bhariyā*.

1.4.3.3 In fact, Edgerton’s Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary (BHSD), under *paricārayati, paricāreti*, suggests that these verbs have to do with the assuaging of desire (such as *paricāresum* in the **Mahā Suddhānā Sutta**, D 17).⁵⁸ Hence, besides their sense of being served or amused in various ways, they are suggestive “esp of sexual enjoyment with women.” Hence, a *paricārikā* is probably “a concubine, mistress or paramour,” but more generally, an “entertainer” in almost every sensual sense of the word.

It is possible, of course, that, in the divinely sensual world of the earth-bound heavens of Cātum, mahā-rājika and Tāva, timsa, where marriage (if it exists) is not an institution like that of the humans, and where procreation is non-biological, *paricārikā* would refer to a “partner” or one of the partners of a male deva. Let us examine this further.

1.4.3.4 The commentary on the Sakka,pañha Sutta glosses *paricārikā* with ***pāda, paricārikā deva, dhītā***, “a young female deva who is a foot-servant [lowly attendant]” [1.4.3.2], which the **Abhidhāna-p, padī-**

⁵⁶ Written by “Moggallāna,” c12th cent, Sri Lanka. Ed Subhūti 1900. See Warder 1983b:166 + n330; Hinüber 1996: §231 + n409. On early Indian lexicography, see C Vogel, *A History of Indian Literature* v4, Wiesbaden, 1979: esp 309.

⁵⁷ Romanized version with English: http://grettil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/grettil/2_pali/9_phil/lex/abhidh_u.htm.

⁵⁸ D 17,1.6.4/2:172,5 (SD 36.12).

pikā groups with Pali words related to “wife.”⁵⁹ In other words, *pāda,paricārikā* may mean “wife” but it has other nuances which must be teased out from the context (which is not always so obvious)—hence, we need clarification from other sources or authorities.

M Monier-Williams’ Sanskrit-English Dictionary (SED) defines *paricārikā* (Skt) as “a servant, assistant” (SED 593c). SED also defines the verbal noun *paricāraya* (which appears just before *paricārikā*) as “to co-habit; to attend to, wait on” (quoting the Divyāvadāna). We also find the entry *pāda,paricārikā*, which is defined as “a humble servant” (SED 617e) [1.4.3.4]. All these definitions agree with the Pali forms of these words.

We have just this usage in the commentary on **the Kaṇha Dīpāyana Jātaka** (J 444), describing Visākhā, wife of Maṇḍavya, that is, a “lowly servant, a house-maid” (*veyyāvacca,kārikā pāda,paricārikā*).⁶⁰ In other words, this is only a description of Maṇḍavya’s partner. The phrase itself does not exactly mean “wife.”

1.4.3.5 We will here examine the occurrences of *pāda,paricārikā* (literally, “foot-servant”) in the **Commentaries**, where it is very common, and see how this throws more light on how we can best understand its usage or sense in the textual context.

The Uttarā Upāsikā Vatthu, the story of the laywoman Uttarā Nanda,mātā (DhA 17.3), uses *pāda,paricārika* as meaning “mistress”—this is clear from the context. The story relates how, when the devout Uttarā (a streamwiner) is sequestered in her husband’s house and is unable to see any monks, her father Puṇṇa (also a streamwinner) gives her some money and tells her to engage a courtesan to be the impious husband Sumana’s **mistress** (*sāmikassa paricārikam*, “the husband’s mistress”) so that she is free to offer alms to the monks for the last fortnight of the rains.⁶¹

While *paricārikā* usually simply means “servant” (in a servile or menial sense), here it can only mean “mistress or social escort” because Sumana is already Uttarā’s “husband” (*sāmika*) who is given a courtesan for his distraction so that Uttarā is free to do her religious tasks.

1.4.3.6 The word *opabhoggā* (Se *upabhoggā*), found in **the Pāyāsi Sutta** (D 23),⁶² should be added to the thesaurus list given at Abhp 237 [1.4.3.2]. Its Sutta commentary glosses *upabhoggā* with *pāda,paricārikā* (DA 2:810,21). Cone’s A Dictionary of Pali (DP) defines *opabhogga* (mfn) as “(from *upabhoga*), to be used or enjoyed.” This, again, agrees with *paricārikā* as meaning “a female attendant who serves, comforts or amuses” others (especially her master or partner). [1.4.3.3]

Here again, *pāda,paricārikā* cannot mean “a wife” in human sense. The context clearly refers to “a **female attendant**” or perhaps “a mistress.” Sometimes, this sense applies to a human situation, such as in the case of Uttarā’s husband and his “social escort” [1.4.3.5].

According to **the Aṅguttara Commentary**, the 500 nuns had been *pāda,paricārikā* to Nandaka when he was a king in a past life. Hence, he was reluctant to teach them to avoid any calumny from others that he desired to see them again. The Buddha, knowing Nandaka’s virtue and ability, insisted that he taught these nuns, as a result of which they attained arhathood (AA 1:313,18-314,7). It is likely that here the term *pāda,paricārikā* has the sense of “women of his harem.”

1.4.3.7 In **the Kulāvaka Jātaka** (J 31) (in the commentarial story), the phrase *pāda,paricārikā* is applied to all of Sakra’s **4 “wives,”** that is, to Sudhammā, Cittā, Nandā and Sujātā (or Sujā) (J 1:204,29-205,6). We may use “wife” (singular) or “wives” (plural) in such contexts, noting that this is not a human category

⁵⁹ The Comy term, *pāda,paricārikā*, is glossed at DA 3:705,12, and is the lemma (header) at line 31.

⁶⁰ J 444/4:35,29. The key verse of J 444 recurs in **Kaṇha,dīpāyana Cariya** (C 342* f), comprising only verses (C 11,-11* f/33).

⁶¹ DhA 17.3/3:308,21 at Dh 223 (SD 3.8(4)).

⁶² D 23/2:331,5, (SD 39.4).

but a term related to the celestial life-style of the Cātum, mahā.rājika and Tāva, tiṃsa devas, where there is no institution of marriage and conjugal relationship as we know them [1.4.3.3].

The Magha Vatthu (DhA 2.7) [3.6.3.2] is about Sakra in his previous life as the public-spirited Magha and his 4 wives, partners or mates. The story mentions Magha's 4th wife, Sujā, also his maternal cousin (*mātula, dhītā*), as being his *pada, paricārikā*, a wife (in a polygamic situation), concubine or mate (DhA 1:271,13). Here, again, we are reminded that many words have no fixed meaning, except those what the contexts dictate. Whatever word we use, in such cases, we should be aware *not* merely of their “dictionary” or lexical definitions but also of their contextual senses.⁶³

The commentary on **the Cūḷa Taṇhā, saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 37) further tells us that not only are the sons and daughters of the devas born whole, with their all their limbs (*devānaṃ hi dhītā ca puttā ca aṅge nibbattanti*), but their maids or mates are women who are born asleep (*pāda, paricārikā itthiyo sayane nibbattanti*); and their house-servants also arise within their celestial mansions (*veyyāvacca, karā anto, vimāne nibbattanti*) (MA 2:301,15-18).

Clearly here, we have “congenital” cases of maids and mates of the gods of the earth-bound heavens. They are born that way in accordance to their past karma, renewing some past relationships—like Magha and his 4 mates who are reborn as Sakra and his 4 divine partners. No marriage is involved here: this is neither a case of traditional nor common marriage, but a karmically congenital partnership.

1.4.3.8 We see this “contextual” sense of *pāda, paricārikā* as “wife” widely used in the commentarial stories where we would expect *bhariyā*, the usual word for “wife,” either as one to whom one is married (in either the legal or traditional sense). This usage is found in the commentarial explanations, especially the Jātaka stories and the Dhammapada stories. The Commentary on **the Asāta Manta Jātaka** (J 61), for example, glosses the usual word for “wife,” thus: *bhariyā pajāpatī pāda, paricārikā*, “*bhariyā* means wife, partner [mistress]” (J 61/1:294).

The Māgandiyā Vatthu, the story of queen Māgandiyā (DhA 2.1,6), relates how Māgandiyā, the brahmin Māgandiyā's daughter, asks him to tell the Buddha that she wants to be his *pāda, paricārikā*.⁶⁴ Considering that she has turn down all previous proposals, even from the rich and the famous, we must imagine that marriage is not really on her mind. She is fascinated by the Buddha for her own reasons, and we may conclude that she simply wants to be his “partner or lover,” which is what *pāda, paricārikā* would mean in this case.

In the stories related to **the Rohinī incident**⁶⁵—when the Buddha interceded and prevented the Sakyas and the Koliyas from fight a bloody battle over the diminishing waters of the Rohinī river—we have 2 occurrences of *pāda, paricārikā*. The Majjhima Commentary on **the Nandakōvada Sutta** (M 146, SD 68.12) tells us that in this connection, 500 princes, after listening to the Buddha's teaching, renounce. We are then told that 500 princesses—their erstwhile **wives or partners** (*pāda, paricārikā*)—then decide to renounce, too, in the presence of Mahā Pajāpatī.⁶⁶ (MA 5:95,22-96,4).

⁶³ This “contextuality” is a vital feature of a broader Pali “polysemy,” on which see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2; 2.2); SD 54.3b (2.1.1.4).

⁶⁴ DhA 3:194,4-6; PmA 3:673,3; AA 1:437.

⁶⁵ For sources on the Rohinī incident, see SD 54.4 (2.1).

⁶⁶ *Nandaka-t, thero'pi pabbajitvā arahattaṃ patto, jeṭṭhaka, dāsi, dhītā vayanā āgamma suddhodana, mahā.rājassa agga, mahttesī-ṭ, thāne thitā, itarā'pi tesarā tesarā raja, puttānaṃ, yeva gharāṃ gatā. Tāsarā sāmikā pañca, satā raja, -kumārā udaka, cumbaṭa, kalahe satthu dhamma, desanaṃ sutvā pabbajitā, raja, dhītaro tesarā ukkaṇṭhanatthaṃ sāsanaṃ pesesum. Te ukkaṇṭhite bhagavā kuṇāla, dahanā netvā sotāpatti, phale patiṭṭha petvā mahā, samaya, divase arahatte patiṭṭhāpesi. Tāpi pañca, satā raja, dhītaro 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

The commentary on **the Nandakōvada Sutta** (M 146) further tells us that once the elder Nanda(ka) was born as the eldest of 500 male slaves and Gotamī the head of 500 female slaves. At that time, Gotamī was *pāda,paricārikā* to him, the eldest of the male slaves (*sā jeṭṭhaka,dāsassa pāda,paricārikā ahoṣi*, MA 5:94). In all these cases, the relationship is simply that of intimacy not necessarily involving marriage as we understand it.

1.4.3.9 There are many other references to *pāda,paricārikā* in the Commentaries, especially in the Jātaka Commentary and to some extent, the Dhammapada Commentary, too. However, this survey thus far should be sufficient to show **the polysemy and contextuality** of *pāda,paricārikā* [1.4.3.7] and similar words.⁶⁷ We have noticed from the above survey that *pāda,cārikā* does not mean “wife” in today’s sense. Even the Pali-English Dictionary (PED), started by Rhys Davids, defines *paricārikā* (f) (note the long middle vowel *ā*, which is missed by PED) as “a maid-servant, handmaiden, nurse, (personal) attendant.” It does not mention “wife.” The PED, however, only mentions *pāda,paricārikā* in a cross-reference to “J 1:204,” but does not define it.

From our survey, we should also note that *pāda,paricārikā* is not found in the suttas;⁶⁸ it is a commentarial term that only loosely means “wife” [1.4.3.4], that is, not in the sense we would take it today (in terms of marriage). Depending on the context, it can mean “a lowly servant, menial assistant, house-maid” [1.4.3.4]; “mistress” [1.4.3.5]; “female attendant, mistress, social escort” [1.4.3.6]; “wife” (in the sense of “partner or mate” [1.4.3.7]; and “lover, harem member” [1.4.3.8]. It should be noted that these are not exact categories but a list of usages, often overlapping in their senses. The general idea is that the word implies a relationship of servility, intimacy and sexuality.

1.4.3.10 In the case of **the gandharvas** (P *gandhabba*, masc) or their feminine counterpart, **the apsaras** (P *accharā*),⁶⁹ they are, respectively, *paricārika* (masc) and *paricārikā* (fem), in the sense of being servers, dancers, musicians and entertainers whose task is basically to provide service, comfort and pleasure to the devas.

We only find the form *paricārikā* (not *pāda,paricārika*) in the suttas, where it probably means a personal attendant in a menial or servile sense, perhaps involving *comforting and entertaining* their masters in some intimate sense. It does not have the sense of “wife,” since they are either from a low social class in human society, or the lowly apsaras of the Cātum,mahā.rājika and Tāva,tiṃsa heavens, where there is no marriage like the human institution.⁷⁰

rains-retreat in the Hall of the Pinnacled House in the great wood outside Vesāli (ThīA 3,29-31, 141,6-10). This is in the 5th year of the ministry (BA 3,24).

⁶⁷ **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35/1:227 :: MA 2:268,26); **Dāru-k,khandha S** (S 35.241 :: SA 3:33,17); **Anuruddha S** (AA 4:130); Anuruddha (ThaA 3:72); **Sāmāvatī V** (DhA 1:200); **Aññatara Ukkaṅṭhita Bhikkhu V** (DhA 1:296, 297); **Soreyya Tha V** (DhA 1:327); **Kuṇḍala,kesī Thī V** (DhA 2:223); **Kulāvaka J** (J 31/1:204x3, 205); **Valāhakassa J** (J 196/2:128); **Vīnā Thūna J** (J 232/2:225); **Cūḷa Kālīṅga J** (J 301/3:1); **Ananusociya J** (J 328/3:95); **Sūci J** (J 387/3:282 284); **Sattubhastha J** (J 401/3:342); **Cha-d,danta J** (J 514/5:36); **Lomasa Kassapa J** (J 433/3:517); **Cūḷa Bodhi J** (J 443/4:23x2); **Udaya J** (J 458/4:-113); **Cha-d,danta J** (J 514/5:36x2); **Saṅkha,pāla J** (J 524/5:171); **Kusa J** (J 531/5:289); **Mahā Harṃsa J** (J 534/5:357); **Kuṇāla J** (J 536/5:423, 426, 438); **Bhūri,datta J** (J 543/6:163); **Vidhura Paṇḍita J** (J 545/6:268, 289); **Maha Ummagga J** (J 546/6:364, 422, 472); CA 135x2.

⁶⁸ This is confirmed by a search of the CSCD using the wildcard, “pādaparicārik*,” which yielded no finds.

⁶⁹ On *apsara*, see SD 54.3 (2.3.2).

⁷⁰ Cf explanation of *brahma,pārisahha*: SD 54.18 (2.1.1.1).

1.5 KEY PLACES IN THE SUTTA

1.5.1 Inda,sāla cave

1.5.1.1 The Dīgha Commentary says that **the Inda,sāla cave** lay between two overhanging rocks, with a large sal-tree at the entrance. The villagers, having built for it walls with doors and windows, and ornamented it with polished plaster scroll-work and garlands, presented it to the Buddha.⁷¹

In Faxian's time, it was still inhabited and he describes Nālandā as being one league northeast⁷² of it. Xuanzang, who calls it Indraka,śaila,guhā,⁷³ however, found it deserted.⁷⁴ Both pilgrims noticed marks on the rock. Faxian thinks that they were the answers to Sakra's questions written by the Buddha with his finger, while Zuanzang thinks that both questions and answers were written on the stone.

1.5.1.2 Clearly, these pious pilgrims regarded the Sakra story as historical events rather than as being of mythical significance. Ironically, when we view the Sakra story as a historical event, it is the *action* that is highlighted, even glorified. However, when we understand the story as being **mythical**, its *significance* is deeper in terms of understanding our own mind and effecting our practice of the Dharma.⁷⁵



Map 1.5.1: Location of Inda,sāla cave. [Source: https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/pilgrim/p_map4.htm.]

1.5.1.3 Apparently, to render *inda,sāla* as “Indra’s sal-tree” or the Sanskrit form “Indra rock cave” (*indra(ka),śaila guhā*) is problematic. We have no evidence for such conjectures. The name *inda* is the name of several plants, probably meaning “excellent”; hence, its name.⁷⁶ The cave has been identified as being located about 2 miles to the southwest of the modern village of Giriyeke.⁷⁷

⁷¹ DA 3:697,12-18.

⁷² Faxian must have used a Chinese south-pointing compass; hence, “southwest” is actually our northeast.

⁷³ Beal 1884 2:180 f; Watters 1905 2:173 f.

⁷⁴ Giles 1923:48 f; Legge 1886:80 f.

⁷⁵ Dh 206-208 were not uttered by the Buddha in this cave, but at Bejuva [6.2.3.5]. See SD 52.1 ch 1, esp (1.0.2) A psychology of mythology.

⁷⁶ See D:RD 2:299 n2.

⁷⁷ The cave, 20-30 m deep, is at the base of a sheer cliff halfway up the south face of Giriyeke mountain. The Rajgir-Giriyeke road runs about 7 km ending at Giriyeke, north of the dam. Proceed on foot along the south side eastwards for about 1.5 km. The area is remote and a well-known haunt for robbers. (Dhammika, *Middle Land, Middle Way*, 2008: 103; map, 1999:106.) See also Cunningham 1924:539-542; A Stein, *India Antiqua*, 1901:54.

1.5.2 Vediya(ka) mountain. **Vediya(ka) mountain** was so called because its foot, covered with a forest belt, looked like a jewel railing (*maṇi,vedikā*). It was located on the southeast of Rājagaha, and probably also called Vedisaka (KhpA 151).

On the mountain lived an owl who would accompany the Buddha on almsround halfway to the village, and then return with him. One day, the owl stood with lowered wings, its claws clasped together. The Buddha smiled when he saw it. In reply to Ānanda's question, he said that the owl, after spending 100,000 world-cycles among gods and men, would become a pratyeka-buddha named Somanassa (MA 2:16).

2 Sakra in the Sakka,pañha Sutta

2.1 SAKRA'S MEETING WITH THE BUDDHA

2.1.1 Sakra's initial nervousness. The Sakka,pañha Sutta is significant in documenting **Sakra's 1st meeting with the Buddha** [§§1.9-10]. Before we examine how this meeting came about, it is interesting to note how hesitant, deferent, even fearful, Sakra is of the Buddha. **Sakra's initial nervousness** towards the Buddha can be explained by these reasons:

- (1) Even as a **streamwinner of fruition** [§2.10.4], Sakra lives a divinely sensuous life, as detailed, for example, in **the Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 37).⁷⁸
- (2) **Gopaka's story** [§§1.11.2-1.12.18] and his advice to Sakra [§1.12.17] about the 3 erstwhile monks who are reborn as lowly gandharvas, must have impressed on Sakra that even divinity is impermanent and does not free us from defilements, especially craving and ignorance.⁷⁹
- (3) During Sakra's 1st attempt to meet the Buddha, he is too hasty and fails to observe the protocol of **quiet**: he drives his chariot so near the meditating Buddha so that he hears the sounds of its wheels [§1.10.7]. For this reason, he is unable to meet the Buddha then. [1.2.2.2]

2.1.2 Sakra's fearfulness

2.1.2.1 Sakra is well aware of his blunder in disturbing the Buddha's samadhi and that the Buddha insists on the rule of quiet and decorum in a meditation area. He tells Pañca,sikha: "For someone like me, my dear Pañca,sikha, **difficult to approach are the Tathagatas**, when they are deep in solitude, meditating, rapt in dhyana!" [§1.4]. The opening phrase "For someone like me," hints that Sakra sees himself as having been hasty and unmindful, or he imagines himself to be so. [6.2.1.2]

Sakra's remark here probably refers to his faux pas in driving his chariot too near the meditating Buddha so that its wheels' rumbling can be heard. Indirectly, the Buddha is telling Sakra to be more mindful when someone is meditating, and to restrain his exuberance when approaching monastics. This is clear from **the Bhuñjati episode**. [§1.10]

However, when Sakra has finished relating **Gopaka's story** [§§1.11-1.13] to the Buddha, near the very end of Chapter 1, the Buddha is clearly impressed with him: "For a long time has this Sakra [yaksha] been pure" [§1.13.1]—this may refer to the duration following Sakra's attaining the path of streamwinning, or that he keeps to his vows and does not break any of the 5 precepts, since the time he was the youth Magha doing good works with his 33 friends. [§2.7.10]

⁷⁸ See esp M 37,7 (SD 54.9).

⁷⁹ Except for the narrative sequence of (1) which includes Sakra's meeting the forest recluses and brahmins, and (2) the Gopaka story, we have no information on the duration that separates them.

2.1.2.2 Sakra's nervousness and fear⁸⁰ are significant: this not only shows his deep respect for the Buddha, but also that his position, even as “the lord of the devas” (*devānam-inda*), is below that of the Buddha himself. In fact, he has come to meet the Buddha as a student, to question him about the Dharma and to learn from him. Even then, only when the Buddha gives him leave to approach—with Pañca,sikha's intercession [2.2.2]—is he able to actually question the Buddha on the Dharma.

All this also reflects his **respect** for the Buddha and **love** for the Dharma as a streamwinner of the path [1.2.4].⁸¹ The Commentary, however, adds that the Buddha recalls right back to the time since Sakra was **Magha** doing good works with his 33 friends. It gives a very long account of Sakra's “purity” (*visuddhi*), that is, a life of moral virtue and public service from the time he was the youth Magha.⁸² [§1.13 n]

2.1.3 The noise of Sakra's chariot-wheels. Immediately following the Buddha's gentle rebuke to Sakra regarding the noise of his chariot-wheels there a caesura [§1.11]. Note the abrupt break following **§1.10.7**: there is a moment of awkward silence. Then, the suave Apollo-like Sakra diplomatically turns to divine sweet talk to put himself in good light again. He relates the story of Gopaka [§§1.11.2-21].

Sakra finally proves his determination to come before the Buddha for a Dharma lesson, by declaring to him: “If leave be granted by the Blessed Lord, | we, sir, would question ask” [§47*]. Finally, the Buddha is convinced of Sakra's sincerity and readiness to learn.

2.2 WHY SAKRA IS EAGER TO MEET THE BUDDHA

2.2.1 Sakra's quest

2.2.1.1 Sakra, in his “11 verses,” tells us that “**Long have I wandered | seeking the tathagata [thus come]**” [§55cd*]. Now, if Sakra has not yet found or known the Buddha, then, the term *tathagata* is likely to simply refer to a true saint or teacher who is able to teach him about spiritual liberation, and deserving of his respect.⁸³ Sakra speaks of his disappointing encounters with “recluses and brahmins ... dwelling in secluded forest abodes” [§2.7.6], who were probably the Upanishadic seers.

Sakra's encounters are very similar to those of the young parricide king **Ajāta,sattu**—ironically, both have also overthrown or usurped the powers of their older predecessors. While Sakra and his 33 divine companions have thrown the asuras out of Tāvatiṃsa,⁸⁴ Ajāta,sattu has imprisoned his own father, Bimbi,sāra and usurped the throne. **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) reports Ajāta,sattu's disappointing encounters with the 6 heterodox teachers, before he finally finds an excuse to meet the Buddha he has, out of profound guilt, been avoiding up to then.⁸⁵

2.2.1.2 While **Ajāta,sattu**, in the *Sāmañña,phala Sutta*, meets with the Buddha to remove his guilt feelings over his murder of his own father, **Sakra** meets the Buddha seeking the way to spiritual liberation. Interestingly, while Ajāta,sattu's meeting with the Buddha represents his letting go of the past, Sakra's meeting with the Buddha highlights his letting go of the present, that is, both of the religions of the day and of his own divinity in due course. However, while Ajāta,sattu fails to attain the path due to his parricide (a stumbling block to streamwinning in this life), Sakra happily attains the path and a new rebirth [§2.8.2] with meeting the Buddha.

⁸⁰ As an unawakened deva, one given to sensual pleasures, understandably, Sakra still has greed, hate, delusion and fear. He is known to be fearful, even given to panic and fleeing from the fear (S 11.3/1:219), SD 15.5.

⁸¹ See SD 54.20 (2.3.2.3).

⁸² DA 3:710,22-718,21.

⁸³ See **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,4) SD 21.13 & SA 2:312; also DEB: tathagata (1).

⁸⁴ Sakra's overthrow of the asuras from Tāva,tiṃsa, see SD 15.5 (3.7.1); SD 39.2 (1).

⁸⁵ **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,8/1:49), SD 8.10.

2.2.1.3 While Ajāra, sattu’s meeting with the Buddha is inspired by his saintly doctor, Jīvaka, and his concern for his own son’s happiness, **Sakra’s eagerness to meet the Buddha** can be said to be initiated by Gopaka’s suggestion and Sakra’s vision of his own death. The 2 reasons for Sakra’s meeting the Buddha, then, are as follows:

- (1) Gopaka’s presence and invitation, which reminds Sakra of the Buddha’s supremacy; [2.2.1]
- (2) Sakra’s vision of his own impending death which reminds him of the impermanence of even his own divinity. [2.2.2]

2.2.2 The external motivator

2.2.2.1 We have mentioned that **Gopaka** is “the external motivator” for Sakra to meet the Buddha [5.3.1.5]. Gopaka’s story itself [§§1.11.2-20] is Dharma-inspiring. Near the end of the story of Gopaka, he declares his lion-roar:

By such Dharma presented here, let the disciple have no doubt in it,
the Buddha is a flood-crosser, doubt cut off— let’s honour the conqueror, leader of beings! [§45*]

2.2.2.2 The greatest way to honour the Buddha is to learn from him by questioning him and listening closely to the Dharma. The best way to worship the Buddha is to practice the Dharma for reaching the path.⁸⁶ In fact, Sakra is already a streamwinner. He is moving up the path of his spiritual growth.

2.2.3 The internal motivator

2.2.3.0 We have noted how Gopaka acts as the “external motivator” behind Sakra’s meeting with the Buddha as laid out in the Sakka, pañha Sutta. This *external motivation* makes Sakra think about the troubling realities, especially of impermanence and death, that confront him—this is his vision of the “ontological truths” (dealing with the true meaning of *being* or life):⁸⁷ the 1st and 2nd noble truths: that suffering is real and right before him, and it is rooted in his own ignorance and craving.⁸⁸

The “**internal motivator**” is, of course, Sakra himself: this is his vision of the “teleological truths” (dealing with the true *purpose* of life): the 3rd and 4th noble truths: that this suffering can be ended, and the path to its ending. These internal motivators turn him into a **prophet** of sorts, powerfully manifesting itself in 2 kinds of visions and their 2 kinds of fulfilments, respectively, thus.⁸⁹

- (1) the prophetic **visions**: (1a) the vision of death; (1b) the experience of rebirth; [2.2.3.1+2.2.3.2]
- (2) the prophetic **fulfilments**: (2a) the path of streamwinning, and (2b) its fruition. [2.2.3.3-5]

2.2.3.1 Sakra as his own prophet or seer is shaken into samvega (a sense of urgency) [§2.8.3] by his **vision of death** which is confirmed by his own experience of rebirth even as he listens to the Buddha [§2.8.2]. **The Dīgha Commentary** (in a long explanation of D 22,1), tells us that Sakra observes with terror the signs of the imminent end of his deva-state and reign as lord of the devas.⁹⁰ This terrifying vision at once moves him to see the Buddha.

⁸⁶ This is an allusion to the “supreme worship” (*parama, pūjā*): see **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.3.2) + SD 9 (7.2).

⁸⁷ On the 4 truths in terms of the meaning and purpose of life, see SD 1.1 (4.0).

⁸⁸ This framework of 2 pairs of noble truths reflect the famous early model of “suffering and its ending”—the only true teaching of the Buddha—which he teaches Anurādhā: **Anurādhā S** (S 22.86) SD 21.13.

⁸⁹ On the meaning and purpose of life in terms of the 4 truths, see SD 1.1 (4.0).

⁹⁰ DA 3:749,26-28.

Although the lives of devas are relatively much longer than those of humans (and other non-divine beings), devas, are not only spontaneously born⁹¹ [6.1.2], but are able to know of their impending death (*cuti*) by way of these 4 conditions, that is, the exhaustion of lifespan, of merit, or food (they fail to sustain themselves), and through anger (negative emotion).⁹²

Devas who lack Dharma training and wisdom, and who constantly enjoy sensual pleasures, understandably have great fear of what will deprive them of their pleasures: impermanence.⁹³ This great **fear** of impermanence and their vision of impending death, arouse in these devas a *fearful* mental state. Hence, since such devas die (*cavati*, “fall away”) with fear, it only brings them an unwholesome rebirth in the subhuman planes, even in the hells.⁹⁴

2.2.3.2 Sakra’s prophetic vision empowers him to avoid reacting negatively in any way to his impending death, and to be wholesomely prepared for the last moment of his life. It is likely that this initial effort occurs after listening to Gopaka and his efforts in urging the 3 ex-monk gandharvas to strive for the path right there and then in Tava,timsa, so that samvega arises in Vāsava, that is, Sakra [§13*].

We must imagine, then, that **Gopaka** arose early in Tāva,timsa, well before all the other key events of the Sakka,pañha Sutta. As a result of his Dharma-zeal, Sakra seeks to know the Buddha Dharma even without directly meeting the Buddha. This is not difficult at all, since devas can easily lurk unseen in any Dharma assembly and listen to the Buddha’s or the arhats’ teachings.

With due diligence, they will still be able to attain the path as if they were listening directly from the Buddha himself. Even today, in the Buddha’s absence, but with the availability of the suttas, *his* teaching and *our* practice of moral mindfulness and meditation, we are still able, by our own efforts, to attain at least streamwinning in this life itself—such as taught in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

2.2.3.3 Sakra’s prophetic vision arouses **samvega**, a powerful sense of spiritual urgency, in him to exert diligence in his Dharma practice. Clearly, the reality of impermanence and of death are very real to him, so that the perception of impermanence becomes a natural practice for him. Such a practice fulfills his visions in 2 ways: (1) his attaining of the path of streamwinning and (2) the fruition of streamwinning. We have already noted [1.2.4] how Sakra declares himself a streamwinner to the forest seers [§2.7.10]: this is his attaining of **the path of streamwinning**.

It should be noted that Sakra won the path of streamwinning, which marks the start of his willingness, ability and seeing **the path of awakening** for the first time, *all on his own*. The destruction of the 3 fetters of self-identity view, spiritual doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows⁹⁵ has truly begun in his mind. Since he has not yet met the Buddha then, he must have learnt the Dharma and how to aspire to streamwinning on his own.⁹⁶

2.2.3.4 The climax of the Sakka,pañha Sutta is clearly when Sakra experiences his own death and immediate rebirth, or, in this case, the continuation of his consciousness as Sakra [§2.8.2 f]. Through his urgent preparations, especially in meeting the Buddha and listening to the Dharma, Sakra has been able to keep a wholesome mind that effectively prevents his “fall” (*cuti*), that is, death as a deva. Since he has harboured no negative reactions at all at that crucial moment—he is mindfully listening to the Buddha’s

⁹¹ They arise non-biologically (asexually) but may also procreate if they wish to. See SD 54.3a (3.3.4.1).

⁹² DhA 1:173,15 f; also SD 54.3a (3.3.5.1).

⁹³ See esp **(Anicca) Sīha S** (S 22.78), SD 42.10.

⁹⁴ See **(Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

⁹⁵ On the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

⁹⁶ Note that at the close of every question, Sakra declares, “doubt is crossed over ... ,” which is not only his understanding the answer, but also that he has already attained the streamwinning-path. Also note that these words are repeated at the close of *each* of the 5 questions: see the 5 “streamwinning refrains” [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10].

teaching [§2.8.2 = §49*]—his wholesome mind conduces to a renewal of his deva-state as Sakra, the lord of the devas!

Of this key moment, Sakra declares to the Buddha (and to us), thus:

As I'm still remaining right here, mindful of my deva-state,
having obtained my life once again: know thus, sir. (§49*)

2.2.3.5 This is, in fact, the 1st of 6 reasons for Sakra's immediate joy. Briefly, **Sakra's 6 reasons for being joyful** are as follows:

- (1) he has attained a new lease of deva-life, continuing as Sakra, the lord of the devas; [§2.8.2]
- (2) his next rebirth will continue to be a good and happy one; [§2.8.3]
- (3) his doubts cleared up, he will keep to the true path; [§2.8.4]
- (4) he will be able to end his suffering; [§2.8.5]
- (5) having left behind the human birth, he lives supreme amongst the devas; [§2.8.8]
- (6) when this life ends, he will become a non-returner, reborn in the highest of the pure abodes. [§2.8.7]

At the close of the Sakka,pañha Sutta, he attains **the fruition of streamwinning** along with 80,000 other deities [§2.10.4-5]. With that, his spiritual goal of walking the true path begins—he is sure of awakening.

2.2.4 Sakra's aspirations and inspirations

2.2.4.0 With his spiritual goal fulfilled for the moment, Sakra is very joyful; he roars his **lion-roar** in 9 verses [§2.9]. These verses can be divided into 2 parts:

- Part 1 [§§55*-59*] Sakra's aspirations—his wishes and hopes (5 verses);
Part 2 [§§60*-63*] Sakra's inspirations—their fulfilment (4 verses).

2.2.4.1 (1) SAKRA'S ASPIRATIONS [§§55*-59*]. Sakra, in his long quest for the true teacher [§55*], found those who became his students [§§56*-59*], but like the Bodhisattva leaving his 2 meditation teachers, despite being offered the positions of leader and guru of those ashrams,⁹⁷ moved on with his quest.

It should be recalled that Sakra is one of the many gods who have been following the Bodhisattva's career since his birth up to the renunciation, and then welcome the Buddha into this world, rejoicing in this.⁹⁸ Now, it is Sakra's turn to go on his own spiritual quest, which, happily, is not too difficult, since he has already been following the Buddha's career from his birth, through his renunciation, his awakening, and right up to his passing away.

But our present Sutta story is located while the Buddha is still living and teaching.

2.2.4.2 (2) SAKRA'S INSPIRATIONS [§§60*-63*]. Now that Sakra has found the Buddha as his teacher, not just someone to glorify as one of the numerous "world-teachers" who really know nothing useful or liberating, he is profoundly inspired. Meeting the Buddha and listening to the Dharma, Sakra overcomes his **doubts** about life and death. Hence, he rejoices:

⁹⁷ On the Bodhisattva's encounters with the 2 teachers, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāma,putta, see SD 1.1 (1.3).

⁹⁸ For a detailed study of this, see "The miraculous life of Gotama Buddha," SD 52.1.

But since I've seen the Buddha, doubt has been overcome.
 Today, fear-free am I, having gone up to the self-awakened. (§60*)

Sakra acknowledges the Buddha's awakening [§61*], the Buddha as his only true refuge [§62*] and teacher [§63*]. His spiritual goal is reached: he is now a streamwinner [§2.10.4], a true disciple of the Buddha. However, before this, as the Sutta closes: we again see Sakra's virtue of gratitude to a lowly servant, **Pañca,sikha**, for being resourceful and diligent in arranging Sakra's meeting with the Buddha. [§2.10; 4.1]

3 Sutta teachings

3.0 SAKRA'S READINESS TO LEARN.

3.0.1 We have noted that the Sakka,pañha Sutta is neatly divided into 2 equal parts [1.2.1]. **Chapter 1** can be said to be a loud worldly, even bawdy, overture, with a rich mix of the virtues of "the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhat and love" [1.1.2.2]. The Chapter closes with a grand display of Gopaka's teachings on giving our life's priority to Dharma practice and inspiring others to head for the path in this life itself [§§1.11.2-1.12]. With this, the Buddha is fully convinced of Sakra's sincerity to learn from him [§1.13.1]. The Buddha is ready to teach, Sakra is ready to learn. Here follows a listing of the questions Sakra asks and a summary of their replies (teachings) from the Buddha.

3.0.2 The Sakka,pañha Sutta, we are told, is a "question-and-answer dialogue" or *vedalla* [1.1.2.1] on 12 topics arranged in 5 questions [1.2.3]. This is a celestial talk-show featuring the Buddha, "the knower of worlds" (*loka,vidū*), and Sakra, the lord of the devas (*devānam inda*), occurring in a cave before a huge radiant audience of devas from Tāvātimsa. This textual genre of *vedalla* is found only in **Chapter 2**, which records the teachings given by the Buddha to Sakra, and also where we are given a good idea of the extent of Sakra's command of the Dharma as a streamwinner.

3.1 THE 1ST QUESTION (SERIES) [§§2.1-2.3.7]. Sakra's 1st question has 6 sequential parts, beginning with this:

3.1.1 (1) How is it that despite our desire for non-violence, we are still inclined towards both mental and physical violence? The Buddha answers that this arises from our negative emotions of **jealousy and avarice** (*issā,macchariya*). Jealousy is basically our lack of appreciation of the success and goodness of others; while avarice is extreme desire for gain and wealth, lusting beyond our needs, and not knowing when to stop [§2.1.2]. Their respective opposites are appreciative joy or gladness (*muditā*) and charity (*cāga*).

3.1.2 (2) "How do jealousy and avarice arise?"—Through **loving and unloving** (*piyāppiya*), that is, liking and disliking, which are mundane manifestations of craving: when we like something, there is always its opposite, something we do not like (they are relative to and conditioned by one another). [§2.2.3]

3.1.3 (3) "How do loving and unloving arise?" Through **desire** (*chanda*), that is, a tendency to *measure* things, and to *measure* our "self" (what we "have" or what we "are"; what we *had* or *will* have, etc) against others.⁹⁹ We invariably imagine ourselves as having some kind of "lack" (*dukkha*), and so desire to fill it. Since this lack is rooted in ignorance, it has no bottom and can never be filled or fulfilled. We simply keep wanting *more*, and keep having *other* lacks and wants. This is craving (*taṇhā*), a snake devouring itself and biting harder when it hurts! [§2.2.5]

⁹⁹ For a list of such notions of "lack," see **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (S 56.11,5/5:421), SD 1.1.

3.1.4 (4) “How does desire arise?” Through **thinking** (*vitakka*), that is, a dichotomous way of seeing things (*vi-takka*), of subject and object, “I” and “thou,” “pleasant” and “unpleasant,” and so on. It is a “broken” way of thinking, of alienating things *apart*, instead of seeing them as *one* and *part* of what we are. Instead, we tend to see things as being *apart* from us, as being “out there”; hence, they are to be seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched. It is the thinking that projects these sense-objects, creating them from our own memories, biases and ignorance. As we think, so we are; as we are, so we create the world that we live in.

3.1.5 (5) “How does thinking arise?” It arises through **proliferation of conception and perception** (*papañca, saññā, sañkhā*).¹⁰⁰ This refers to the 2 negative ways of thinking: by conceiving (*sañkhā*) and by perceiving (*sañña*). “**Conceiving**” means our mind creating or imagining what is not really there, but what we *love* or do *not love*—remember (2) above? This is what the mind loves, hates, ignores or fears.¹⁰¹

“**Perceiving**” works with our past memories, what we remember, how we remember it. While conceiving fabricates our present world, perceiving projects our past *fancying* it as the present. While conception is the mind playing with itself, perception is the mind playing with our mind-objects, what the mind makes of the sensings. Together, they keep us living in the past or projecting into the future, leaving us nothing of the present. [§2.2.7]

3.1.6 (6) “How do we end proliferation of conception and perception?” Here, Sakra’s questioning takes a new tack. Instead of looking for the *cause* of the problem, he asks about its *ending*, which is **the “meditation on feeling”** (*vedanā kammaṭṭhāna*) [§§2.3.2-6]. This is the “contemplation on feeling” (*vedanā’nupassanā*), a satipatthana or mindfulness practice,¹⁰² but a broader underlying understanding and undertaking based on the teachings of **the Sevittabbāsevitabba Sutta** (M 114), especially the dichotomy of the wholesome that is to be *resorted to* and the unwholesome that is *not* to be resorted to.¹⁰³ [§§232-6]

First, there is **happiness** (*somanassa*), that is, mental joy: unwholesome joy arises from what is negative, immoral, suffering or unhelpful in our mental or spiritual health, especially our general happiness—it brings on more unwholesomeness. Wholesome joy, on the other hand, is to be resorted. Simply, wholesome joy makes and keeps us happy, and helps in our meditation—it arouses and attracts more wholesomeness. [§2.3.3]

Second, there is **sorrow** (*domanassa*), that is, mental pain: wholesome sorrow is to be *resorted to*; unwholesome sorrow is to be avoided. Unwholesome sorrow is brooding over what is negative, immoral, suffering or unhelpful. This is often what we are likely to do. Sorrowing over a death, an unavoidable loss or some natural change of state (our looks, health, friendship, etc) or events (the weather, a traffic jam, etc)—this brings on more wholesomeness.

Wholesome sorrow is our response to what is positive, moral, good and helpful, such as our feeling unhappy having to keep sense-restraint or avoiding thoughts of lust or hate—it brings on more wholesomeness. [§2.3.4]

Third, there is **equanimity** (*upekkhā*)—the equanimity where unwholesome states increase should *not* be resorted to. The equanimity where unwholesome states decrease should be *resorted to*. The Sutta then says something *not* found in M 114: the equanimity that has *no* “thinking and pondering” (*vitakka, vicāra*) is “more refined” (*pañīta, tara*) than the one *with* them [§2.3.5].

¹⁰⁰ Simply, this is “mental proliferation” (*papañca*): see SD 6.14 (2).

¹⁰¹ These are the 4 biases (*agati*) or motives: greed, hate, delusion and fear. See **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,4+5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

¹⁰² On *vedanā’nupassanā*, see SD 30.3 (2.6.2).

¹⁰³ M 114,3-21 (SD 39.8).

On a daily worldly level, this is the joyful peace we feel when we let all our thoughts go and get in full touch with our true self. On a deeper meditative level, however, it refers to the 2nd dhyana, where *vitakka*, *vicāra* as “initial application and sustained application” have been transcended.

Note that **the 1st question** is the longest, comprising a set or sequence of 6 related questions.

3.2 THE 2ND QUESTION [§2.4]

3.2.0 The 2nd question is: “**How is a monk¹⁰⁴ restrained in accordance with the monastic code**”? The answer is instructively surprising: the dichotomy of “to be resorted to” (the wholesome) and “not to be resorted to” (the unwholesome) is applied to the 3 doors of karma, but here it comprises bodily conduct, verbal conduct and **quest** [seeking].¹⁰⁵ [3.2.3]

3.2.1 Restraint in bodily conduct is rooted in the precept against killing and so on, that is, the avoidance of the 1st three of the 10 unwholesome karmic courses (*akusala kamma, patha*):¹⁰⁶ this is “natural morality” (*pakati, sīla*). The 1st 3 unwholesome karmic courses are those of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct—this is the same as breaking *the first 3* of the 5 precepts.

Then, there are the monastic rules that have been promulgated (*paññatti, sīla*), especially those of the monastic code (Pātimokkha).¹⁰⁷ Since a monastic has taken the vows for ordination before an assembly, he is legally and morally obligated to keep to the Vinaya. [§2.4.4]

3.2.2 Restraint in verbal conduct refers to such *speech-based precepts* as the avoidance of lying and so on, both in terms of natural morality (the 5 precepts) and the promulgated (the Vinaya rules). Basically, this is keeping to right speech, that is, *refraining from lying, from slander, from harsh speech and from frivolous chatter*.¹⁰⁸ [§2.4.5]

3.2.3 “Restraint in quest” is seeking one’s life-supports in keeping with the monastic code, and includes *right livelihood* for monastics. This entails wholesome conduct in terms of body and speech when receiving or acquiring the life-supports (food, clothing, shelter and medical support). This is right livelihood, the principles of which are found in the 8 precepts of right livelihood (*ājīv’atṭhamaka sīla*).¹⁰⁹ [§2.4.6]

3.2.4 The answer to this question on “restraint in quest” [3.2.3] in **the Sakka Pañha Sutta** (D 21) has a partial parallel in **the Sevittabbâsevitabba Sutta** (M 114), where the first 2 karmic doors—bodily conduct and verbal conduct—agree with the first 2 of its triad of topics, but the third given in M 114 is that of “mental conduct.”¹¹⁰ In the Sakka,pañha Sutta, too, the Buddha explains to Sakka that what we seek in life is of 2 *kinds* (to be resorted to; *not* to be resorted to): we should only resort to the wholesome.

¹⁰⁴ In this case, “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) specifically refers to a monastic (male or female). In other case, where the teachings can also apply to the laity, when “monk” is used it applies to any meditator or practitioner, depending on the context. On the “monkness” of a meditator, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) + n, SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5); SD 16.7 (1.1.1.2). On “monk/s” as addressing all present, see SD 4.9 (5.3); SD 13.1 (3.1.1).

¹⁰⁵ See DA 3:733.

¹⁰⁶ On the 10 karmic courses (or courses of conduct), see **Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 136,8), SD 4.16.

¹⁰⁷ On natural morality and promulgated morality (or conventional, *sammuti sīla*), see SD 30.8 (8.4.2.2); SD 37.8 (2); SD 40a.1 (13.2).

¹⁰⁸ On right speech, see SD 10.16 (3.4).

¹⁰⁹ On the 8 precepts of right livelihood, see SD 37.8 (1.6.2.2).

¹¹⁰ M 114,3-21 (SD 39.8).

3.3 THE 3RD QUESTION [§2.5] deals with sense-restraint (*indriya,saṁvara*). Sakra asks the Buddha: “How does a monk practice **sense-restraint**?” The Buddha gives the well-known formula on the 12 elements (the sense-objects cognizable by their respective sense-faculties: “a form cognizable by the eye,” etc) are of 2 kinds: to *be* resorted to; *not* to be resorted to. [§2.5.3]

Sakra is obviously familiar with this teaching, even as a path-streamwinner, and is simply delighted. He tells the Buddha he understands this brief teaching in detail, and goes on to elaborate on it: when unwholesome states increase that sense-object should *not* be resorted to; only when it is wholesome, should it be *resorted* to. [§2.5.4]

The 3rd question is unique in the sense that Sakra elaborates on the brief teaching given by the Buddha without being asked. It shows that Sakra has some practical understanding of the basic teachings.

3.4 THE 4TH QUESTION [§2.6.1-5], unlike the previous ones, deals with a broader situation: “**Do all religious teachers teach the same thing?**” or as we may ask today: “Do all the religions teach good?” The Buddha instructively replies “No.” They do *not* teach the same thing, nor have the same morality, nor share the same belief, nor seek the same goal.

When Sakra asks for the reason for this, the Buddha replies that it is the “numerous elements, various elements” (*aneka,dhatu nānā,dhātu*)—the various teachers, indeed every individual, have their own mental dispositions (*ajjhāsaya*) (DA 3:737,18). Religious teachers, more so than any ordinary person, are more likely to hold fast to certain views from their different cultural and psychological experiences. Hence, they each tend to teach different things, have different morality, hold different beliefs and seek different goals.

More notoriously, even within the same religion, over time, its teachings, moralities, beliefs and goals often change, depending on the political, cultural, social and psychological challenges or influences they each face. Furthermore, each believer within a religion, as a rule, have varying levels of understanding, adherence, or acceptance of their faith.

Hence, each religion, each teacher, each believer, tends to think, “Only *this* is true! All else is empty [foolish]!” [§2.6.5]

3.5 THE 5TH QUESTION [§§2.6.6-10]—the *accanta,niṭṭha* question—that Sakra asks the Buddha concerns the spiritual attainment or qualification of the holy men and teachers. He asks: “Sir, are all of the recluses and brahmins who **have reached the utter end, reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal?**” The highlighted phrases are important: ***accanta,niṭṭhā accanta,yogakkhemī accanta,brahma.cārī accanta,pariyosāna***—this is **the *accanta,niṭṭhā* pericope**.¹¹¹

The Buddha answers that *not* all holy men or teachers have attained their highest goal or supreme good—in other words, they are not spiritually liberated. Only those **freed by the destruction of craving** (*taṇhā,saṅkhaya.vimuttā*) can be said to “*have reached the utter end, reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal.*”

Although the answer is given briefly by the Buddha, Sakra does not question him further about it, probably because he has already had a long conversation with the Buddha, and has asked enough questions, and heard their answers, so that “**doubt is crossed over, uncertainty has been removed in me**” [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10]. Such a statement suggests that Sakra is already a streamwinner. [1.2.4]

3.6 (SAṂYUTTA) SAKKA,PAÑHA SUTTA (S 35.118)

3.6.1 Attaining nirvana in this life

3.6.1.1 We know from the **Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya** (M 37) that Sakra visits the Buddha again after his 1st visit recorded in the **Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21) to ask the Buddha to elaborate on the *accanta,niṭṭha*

¹¹¹ On the *accanta,niṭṭha* pericope, see SD 54.8 (3).

pericope, the brief answer of which has been given in the 5th and last question he asks in D 21.¹¹² Sakra must have realized that this last question has only been given in brief by the Buddha. Hence, he returns to the Buddha to have a better understanding of this important accanta,nit̥ṭha question. [3.5]

The Saṃyutta records Sakra asking the Buddha another question—“**Why do some beings attain nirvana in this very life, while others do not?**” While the accanta,nit̥ṭha question broadly asks: “Have all the holy men and teachers reached the highest goal?,” the **S 35.118** question pertains only to nirvana. It is likely that Sakra asks the Buddha this question after the visit recorded in M 37. [4.1.1.2]

3.6.1.2 The (Saṃyutta) Sakka,pañha Sutta (S 35.118) records only one question by Sakra and its answer by the Buddha. “Why do some beings attain nirvana in this very life, while others do not?” The Buddha explains that for those who are attached to seeing their sense-experiences as being desirable, their consciousness depends on them and they cling to them. When their consciousness continues to be fed and fueled in this manner, they will remain in samsara and not attain nirvana.

Only those who see and understand how their sense-experiences are desirable, undesirable or neither, are not caught up with them or become dependent on them; hence, they do not cling to them. Then, they do not feed or fuel their consciousness. They will be able to attain nirvana in this life itself.

3.6.1.3 Now, since there is **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21)—more fully, we call it the (Dīgha) Sakka,-pañha—this second Sakka,pañha Sutta (S 35.118), which is found in the Saṃyutta should be called **the (Saṃyutta) Sakka,pañha Sutta** to avoid confusing them. It should also be noted that the very same teachings of S 35.118 recurs in **the Pañca,sikha Sutta** (S 35.119). [3.6.2]

3.6.2 Pañca,sikha Sutta (S 35.119). As already mentioned [3.6.1.3], this Sutta contains the same teachings as those of the (Saṃyutta) Sakka,pañha Sutta (S 35.118) [3.6.1.2],¹¹³ which also immediately precedes it in the Saḷ-āyatana Saṃyutta. The existence of S 35.119 can be explained in either of 2 ways:

- (1) A sutta is given Pañca,sikha’s name due to his prominence (such as being Sakra’s intercessor in meeting the Buddha) and his own popularity as the Buddha’s attendant who may ask him any Dhamma question at any time [4.1.1.1]. Both Pañca,sikha and Sakra may have discussed the Sutta’s question but each of them go on their own to question the Buddha.
- (2) It may well be that Pañca,sikha is the actual questioner. After all, he is one of the Buddha’s personal attendant and a favourite of his [4.1.1.1]. Somehow the teaching is also recorded as being asked by Sakra himself.

3.6.3 Other questions by Sakra

3.6.3.1 The Dhammapada Commentary mentions another set of questions asked by the devas of Tāva,-timsa in **the Sakka,pañha Vatthu** (DhA 24.10), that is:

<i>katara,dānaṃ nu kho dānesu</i>	Which gift is the best of gifts?
<i>katara,raso rasesu</i>	Which taste is the best of tastes?
<i>katara,ratī ratīsu jeṭṭhakā</i>	Which delight is the best of delights?
<i>taṇha-k,khayo ca kasmā jeṭṭhako’ti vuccati</i>	And why is destruction of craving called the best?
	(DhA 24.10/4:73)

¹¹² M 37/1:251-256 + SD 54.9 (2.2).

¹¹³ S 35.119/4:103 (SD 74.1(3)).

Since no one is able to answer any of these questions, Sakra declares that only the Buddha can, and he does so, thus:

sabba,dānaṃ dhamma,dānaṃ jināti
sabbaṃ rasaṃ dhamma,raso jināti
sabbaṃ ratim dhamma,ratī jināti
taṅha-k,khayo sabba,dukkhaṃ jināti

The gift of the Dharma excels all giving;
 the taste of the Dharma excels all tastes;
 the joy of the Dharma excels all joys;
 the destruction of craving conquers all suffering.

(Dh 354), SD 22.10b(3.7)

3.6.3.2 In the **Magha Vatthu**, the story of Magha, also called the Mahāli,pañha Vatthu, the story of the Mahāli's question (DhA 2.7), when the Licchavī prince named Mahāli of Vesālī hears the Buddha recount the Sakka,pañha Sutta, he wonders if the Buddha has actually seen Sakra and knows him. He goes to the Buddha with his questions.

The Buddha, in his answers, explains the various names of Sakra, the story of his past (how Magha became Sakra), the wonders of Tāvatisa itself, and how Sakra found his 4 wives. [1.4.3.7]

(DhA 2.7/2:263-281 on Dh 30), SD 54.22

4 Key protagonists in the Sutta (other than Sakra)

4.1 PAÑCA,SIKHA

4.1.1 His background

4.1.1.1 Pañca,sikha is a gandharva [5.4], a heavenly minstrel, living in Tāva,timsa, and closely associated with Sakra, the lord of the devas. His favourite musical instrument is the veena of yellow bilva wood (*beḷuva,paṇḍu,vīṇā*) [§1.2.3], given to him by Sakra. He sometimes serves as the Buddha's attendant and is his favourite (*upaṭṭhāko vallabho*), so that, whenever he wishes, he may question the Buddha and listen to Dharma (DA 3:699). Hence, when Sakra wishes to meet the Buddha (for the first time), in the Inda,-sāla cave, he sends Pañca,sikha ahead to ask for an audience [§1.4].

Pañcasikha approaches the Buddha, singing praises of "the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and love," accompanied on his veena. His song is a love poem [5.1] composed for his beloved, Bhaddā Suriya,vacchāsā [§1.5.1 = 1*], daughter of the gandharva king, Timbaru. The Buddha praises his music and song, and questions him about the verses. [§1.6.1]

He tells the Buddha that while the latter was still staying under the goat-herd banyan (*aja,pāla nigrodha*) just before the great awakening, he (Pañca,sikha) had met Bhaddā going with her father to dance before Sakra. Pañca,sikha thereupon fell in love with her but she favoured Sikhaṇḍi, son of Mātali, Sakra's charioteer. [§1.6.3]

Pañcasikha then composed a song which he sang to her. She was pleased with the song's references to the Buddha of whom she had heard when she danced to the devas in the Sudhamma hall.¹¹⁴² Sakra, out of gratitude to Pañca,sikha for arranging his first visit to the Buddha [1.2.2.4], adopts him as son, makes him king of the gandharvas, and gives Bhaddā's hand in marriage to him. [§2.10]

4.1.1.2 The Pañca,sikha Sutta (S 35.119) is the only sutta in his name. It records Pañca,sikha as asking the Buddha: "Why some beings attain nirvana in this very life, while some do not?"¹¹⁵ [3.6.2]. Although there seems to be no other suttas to Pañca,sikha's name, we should note that he is often present with

¹¹⁴ It is on this occasion that Sakra utters his eightfold eulogy of truth regarding the Buddha as recorded in **Mahā-govinda S** (D 19,4-12), SD 63.4. (DA 3:704,25)

¹¹⁵ S 35.119/4:103 (SD 74.1(3)).

Sakra and others when the Buddha is teaching. Moreover, as the Buddha’s favourite attendant, he may ask the Buddha about Dharma almost any time he wishes. Although unrecorded, these would be teachings that he remembers and which he may transmit to others, even when the Buddha has passed away.

4.1.1.3 We know that Pañca,sikha is **an accomplished divine minstrel and poet**, and, for various reasons (surely his looks and personality), he is very popular with the gods, too. We must imagine him to be like a popular singer or actor whose fans would want to mirror or resemble. So, too, the gods love Pañca,sikha and wish to resemble him (DA 2:640). Both **the Jana,vasabha Sutta** (D 18) and **the Mahā,govinda Sutta** (D 19) tell us that even Brahmā Sanañ,kumāra, when he appears before the Tāva,tiṃsa assembly, assumes the form of the “boyish figure” (*kumara,vaṇṇī*) of Pañca,sikha.¹¹⁶

4.1.1.4 The Mahā,govinda Sutta (D 19) opens with Pañca,sikha appearing to the Buddha in his exceedingly beautiful radiance, reporting to him the happenings in the Tāva,tiṃsa host, when Sakra sang the Buddha’s praises with his eightfold eulogy of truth (*aṭṭha yathā,bhucca vaṇṇa*).¹¹⁷

On the 8th day of every fortnight (*aṭṭhamiyam pakkhassa*), the 4 great kings (*cātum,mahā.rājika*) and their ministers submit their **reports**—written on “vermilion-coloured golden foil” (*suvaṇṇa,pattam ca jāti,hiṅgulakañ ca*)—regarding deeds of merit done by humans to Pañca,sikha, the first to receive such reports. He would then pass them on to Mātali (Sakra’s charioteer and confidant), who, in turn, presents them to Sakra himself (DA 2:650,7-35).

During the “**descent of the gods**” (*dev’orohaṇa*), in the 7th year of the ministry,¹¹⁸ when the Buddha descended from Tāva,tiṃsa, at the end of his rains-retreat there, Pañca,sikha was present to honour the Teacher in song and music.¹¹⁹

4.1.1.5 The little that we know about the name Pañca,sikha comes from the Commentaries. Buddha-ghosa says his name comes from his 5 top-knots which are 5 curls (*pañca,sikho’ti pañca,cūlo, pañca,kunḍaliko*, DA 2:647,4-5). He was born once as a human being, and, as a boy, wore his hair in 5 knots. He became chief of those who tended the calves.

Like Magha and his 33 companions,¹²⁰ Pañca,sikha, with other boys, engaged in works of public service, such as repairing roads, digging wells, building rest-houses, and so on. However, Pañca,sikha died young and was reborn in the Cātum,mahā.rājika realm with a life-span of 90,000 years. His celestial body was 3 gavutas (three-quarters of a yojana) in height. He wore on his person a hundred cartloads of ornaments and rubbed nine pots of perfume on his body. He wore red robes, and on his head a chaplet of red gold, around which his hair was arranged in 5 locks (*kunḍalikehi*), which fell back just like those of a young boy (*pañca,cūlika,dāraka,parihāren’eva*).¹²¹ (DA 2:647,4-19)

4.1.1.6 True to the Buddha’s explanation on rebirth, Pañca,sikha is evidently not merely the *name* of one individual but is a role (like the Buddha and Sakra). Thus, in **the Bilāra,kosiya Jātaka** (J 450), Ānanda is born as Pañca,sikha who helps Sakra and others to make Bilāra,kosiya a generous man (J 450/4:69). Similarly, in **the Sudha,bhojana Jātaka** (J 535), Anuruddha becomes Pañca,sikha (J 535/5:412).

¹¹⁶ D 18,18/2:211,1-3 (SD 62.3); D 19,28/2:230,11-14 (SD 63.4).

¹¹⁷ D 19,4/2:222,7 (SD 63.4). For a Skt version—Mahāgovindīya Sūtra—see Mvst 3:197-223 (Mvst:J 3:193-217).

¹¹⁸ AA 1:101, 126, 174; DhA 14.2e/3:216-223; BA 146 (of Maṅgala Buddha), 298; ApA 118; DhA 31, 35 ; Vism 392. See SD 26.1 (6.3).

¹¹⁹ DA 1:145; AA 1:126 f; DhA 14.2f/3:224-230 (DhA:B 3:52-56); SnA 2:570; BA 298; Vism 392.

¹²⁰ See SD 39.1 (2.2), **How Magha became Sakra**.

¹²¹ For other symbolisms of the “5 knots,” see DPPN, sv Pañcasikha, n6.

4.1.2 Pañca,sikha's role in expediting Sakra's meeting the Buddha

4.1.2.1 We have already noted Sakra's difficulties in meeting the Buddha [2.1.2]. As the highest of the earth-bound devas, he has to carry himself with dignity and keep to protocol, so that he does not show disrespect to the Buddha again, even if it was unintentionally the first time. However, for important reasons [2.2], he has to meet the Buddha.

4.1.2.2 He turns to **Pañca,sikha** for intercession for the following reasons:

- (1) Pañca,sikha is his devoted servant and accomplished minstrel;
- (2) he often serves as the Buddha's favourite attendant; [4.1.1.2]
- (3) he is not only divinely beautiful but also charming in personality; [4.1.1.3]
- (4) being close to the Buddha, he may question the Buddha on Dharma at almost any time.

What is surprising is the kind of song that Pañca,sikha sings to the Buddha—it is a **love song**! What is even more surprising is that the Buddha approves of his musical and poetic talents [§1.6.1]. Pañca,sikha knows very well that the Buddha is kindly disposed to him; hence, he is bold enough to approach him for Dharma.

In the case of Sakra, it is not only because of the noise of his chariot-wheels, but, more importantly, he is not ready for Dharma instructions, since he is clearly *not* mentally focused at that time. It is likely that he is then preoccupied with battling the asuras.

4.2 BHUÑJATI

4.2.1 The Bhuñjati episode appears in **§1.10**, where the Pali gives these variants of her name: Bhūjati (Burmese); Bhuñjati (Sinhalese); Bhuñjati (PTS) and Bhujagi (Siamese). The Sutta tells us that she is “**the female attendant** of Vessavaṇa, the great king” (*vessavaṇassa mahārajassa paricārikā*, D 2:271,15 f). The Commentary confirms that she was “a young female deva, a foot-servant” (*pāda,paricārikā deva,dhitā*, DA 3:705,30), perhaps a “celestial female attendant.” There is no mention that she serves Vessavaṇa in any other way. The word *pāda,paricārikā*, however, is problematic [1.4.3].

4.2.2 The only role that Bhuñjati plays in the Sakka,pañha Sutta is that of a **pious attendant** of the Buddha at the time when Sakra first tries to meet the Buddha [§1.10]. She passes the message from Sakra to the Buddha of his wish to meet the Buddha, but that's all we are told. In short, Sakra fails to meet the Buddha this first time, the explanation of which is given elsewhere [2.1].

4.2.3 The Commentary adds that Bhuñjati had reached the fruition of once-returning. She thus found no delight in divine pleasures (DA 3:705,30-34). There seems to be no further information about her in the suttas or Commentaries.

4.3 PAJĀPATI

4.3.1 Gopaka's verses mention “**devas, along with Indra [Indra of the devas], with Pajāpati, all seated in the Sudhamma hall**” [§40*]. The Commentary says that **Pajā,pati** (anglicized as Prajapati) “sits with” (*upa-viṭṭha*) Sakra (DA 3:709,17-19), which means that Prajapati is his deputy (taking the 2nd seat in the deva council). The 3rd seat is taken by Varuṇa, and the 4th by Īsāna. In fact, Sakka, Pajāpati, Varuṇa and Īsāna are often mentioned together, such as in **the Dhaj'agga Sutta** (S 11.3).¹²² [4.3.4]

¹²² S 11.3,6-9/1:219 + SD 15.5 (3); also D 1:244, 2:274; J 5:28 (with Soma, too).

4.3.2 Pajā,pati is said to look just like Sakra and has the same life-span (SA 1:341,18 f). He is important enough to be mentioned “with the deva Indra, Brahmā and Pajāpati” (*sa,indaka,deva sa,brahmakā sa,pajāpatikā*), as in **the Khajjanīya Sutta** (S 22.79).¹²³ His name, Pajā,pati, means “the lord of the generations or creatures,” and is another of the most important Vedic gods converted by the Buddha into the Buddhist pantheon. [4.3.3]

4.3.3 According to the Sanskrit-English Dictionary (SED), **Prajāpati** (Sanskrit) was originally “lord of creatures, creator, ... a supreme god above or among the Vedic deities” (p658). **Varuṇa** (a cognate of Uranus, one of the old Greek gods) is one of the oldest Vedic gods, also “often regarded as the supreme deity” (SED p921). **Īśāna** is “one of the older names of Śiva-Rudra.” (p171). Understandably, as the highest of the ancient Vedic gods, they were wise enough to understand the Buddha’s teaching so that they were easily assimilated into early Buddhist mythology.

4.3.4 Sakra is mentioned alongside Pajā,pati, Varuṇa and Īśāna as if they are equals, despite their seating arrangements. It is likely that these 4 gods form a **quadrumvirate**, a governance by 4 rulers or leaders sharing power. However, due to Sakra’s abilities, achievements, attainments and spirituality, he is naturally regarded as *primus inter pares*, the first amongst equals—as “lord of the devas” (*devānam inda*).

This kind of power-sharing and governance is similar to that of the republican system of the Sakyas (or the Licchavis), where the ruling council comprises a number of “kshatriya-rajahs,” of which Suddhodana was the first amongst equals. This is also the case with the early Buddhist monastic community or sangha.

5 Sutta highlights

5.1 PAÑCA,SIKHA’S SONG

5.1.1 Pañca,sikha’s song has 14 slokas (P *siloka*; Skt *śloka*)¹²⁴—quatrains with 8 syllables each—like the verses of the Maṅgala Sutta (Sn 2.4)¹²⁵ or the Dhammapada. Hence, they can easily be sung. It is the best known love-song in the Pali canon, with erotic and sensuous images harmonized with spiritual allusions to the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and, above all, love—that is, Pañca,sikha’s passionate love for Bhaddā Suriya,vacchasā. [1.3.1]

5.1.2 Pañca,sikha song—it is also a poem—comprises 2 parts. The first 8 verses [§§1*-8*] expresses how Pañca,sikha feels about Bhaddā and her beauty. The last 6 verses [§§9*-14*] is an act of truth invoking both his own merits (good karma) and a clear request for Sakra’s boon—the whole song is, of course, dedicated to Bhaddā [§13*]. Hence, we see Pañca,sikha addressing all those people he needs to win over and the powers he must invoke to win Bhaddā, that is,

- **Timbaru**, Bhaddā’s father, who is mentioned at the very start and the very end of the song;
- **the Buddha**, in whom he has the deepest faith, contrasted with Bhaddā, who has his deepest love;
- **the Dharma**, which makes their love purposeful, just as it drives Sakra to meet the Buddha;
- **the arhats**, that his respect and devotion to them, the merits of which will now fruit into the right conditions for winning his love; and
- **Bhaddā** herself, that she will truly appreciate the power and sincerity of his love for her.

¹²³ S 22.79/3:90 (SD 17.9); the stanza with these names recur in **Sandha S** (A 11.10/5;324-326), where it seems to fit better (SD 82.5).

¹²⁴ Also “epic couplets,” since *śloka* is the standard metre for India’s 2 great epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa. On the *śloka*, see Rowell 1992:135-139

¹²⁵ Sn 2.4 (SD 101.5).

5.1.3 To win his love, Pañca,sikha invokes “all” the powers that constitute the world—all the 4 primary elements—to show and prove his love for Bhaddā is “everything” to him.

The earth element is found in medicine [§2a] to heal his love-sickness; food “for the hungry” (he needs the sustenance of her love) [§3b*] and “this mandala of the earth” [§10b*], which represents all his *good karma* (at the close of the Sutta, Sakra, too, strikes *the earth* to rejoice in his good karma of meeting the Buddha and learning from him—a spiritual consummation).

The water element floods most of the 1st half of the poem, manifesting itself first in “the drink to one who thirsts” [§2b*], one that only Bhaddā can slake. Then, there is “the water” that he needs to quench “the burning” [§3d*], his passionate love for her. He is intoxicated like an elephant in the rut, “scorched by summer heat” and needs to be cooled in “the lotus lake” that is Bhaddā [§4ab*]. The “sal tree just in full flower” that is Timbaru, Bhaddā’s father, is an earth imagery of life and fecundity [§14a*]. There’s no way out of this, only into Bhaddā’s heart and love: he is like “a fish hooked on its bait” [§6d*].

The fire element is the most powerful and pervasive of imageries in the poem, even though it is found only twice. Bhaddā is Suriya,vacchasā, “the glorious sun” [§1a*], his “sunshine” [§2c*], in his universe. We have already mentioned the “summer heat”: he is a rutting elephant burning with this inner fire [4ab*].

The wind element is “the breeze” to Pañca,sikha “who sweats” [§2a*]. He is a breezy lotus lake “adrift with filament and pollen” [§4c*]—all images of fertility. We, the unloving, only notice a lotus, but one in love sees the beauty of what makes it a lotus. The wind element is silently but vitally present throughout his poem as *the breath* with which he sings his love so that all who matters to him will hear his pain and plea. For, **love** is but pain that seeks its opposite, melding with which it loses itself into a larger reality of boundless joy.

5.1.4 The key person that Pañca,sikha must address in his love song is, of course, **Bhaddā** herself. She is a woman—a young woman, especially one yet to have a mate—would naturally love her own body, and expect others to adore it openly. This is just what Pañca,sikha does in his song: he celebrates her body and its beauty. Above all, these are merely external signs that celebrate a more enduring inner vision of Pañca,sikha’s love for Bhaddā.

First, he sings of “**your breast and belly**” [§4d*]: life arises in her belly and is, then, nourished by her breasts. Nature hardwires us to see these bases for life in their beauty, but the truth is that, without them, we—as a species, even the earth-bound gods [1.1.2.2]—will be no more. Like us, these gods of Tāva,timsa and of Cātum,mahā,rājika, do enjoy **sex**, and, on account of their more refined physicality and divine powers, enjoy it more fully. Hence, they are more fully satiated and truly happy than we can with our grossly physical frames and human limitations.

Then, he praises “**the form of your thighs**” [§5d*], “**fair of thigh**” [§7a*], “**fair-limbed one**” [§10c], which he sees as being beautiful in a sensuous way, but the truth is that they are signs of womanly strength not only to be able to bear the weight of gestating life inside her, but to nurse the growing child she bears. A woman’s hair is her crown of beauty, just as the lion his mane—a token of sexuality. “The desire for your curly hair,” sings Pañca,sikha, “swells up in many ways.” [§8bc*]

Finally, but not exhaustively, he sings of Bhaddā’s “**soft-sweet eye**” [§7b*]. For, what can we see if not for our eyes that lose themselves in the beloved’s eyes. This is how true love completely **embraces** us—to lose our sense of self and other, to ascend into selflessness and a nameless bliss.

5.1.5 Although love reveals the beautiful parts of the beloved, we, the lover, always love the whole, the all, of the beloved: “**To you my heart is bound**” [§6a*]. This is what is highlighted throughout the 2nd half of the song: the selflessness of true love. The lover sees the beloved as he sees himself, even more. True love throws us into an epiphany. When that love is fulfilled and total, we may, for an explosive moment, but unforgettably longer, envision the gift of rapture that we receive to be “**like rightful gifts to the arhats.**” [§8d*].

Love’s ecstasy is the highest the body can feel, the closest it comes to touching the **dhyana** (*jhāna*) of the “**Sakya son ... adept and mindful**” [§11ba]. “**To become one with you**” [§12d*] gives the lover what it’s almost like to “**having won supreme self-awakening**” [§12b*]. Such true love is spiritual in that it disarms unloving, liberates us with selflessness, empowers us with ruth, uplifts us with joy, rewarding us with the equanimity of a life fulfilled—like that of an arhat!

We can only imagine how **the young Siddhattha**, flooded with the pleasures of the 3 palaces, celebrate *life, health and youth*—and a wedded life and its fruit, a son. But Siddhattha does not stop there: for, then, he would be like any royal prince with royal pleasures, forgotten with his death, as if he had never lived. These experiences free him from the quests for them—in which most of us are still caught. When the quest is unfulfilled, even partly fulfilled, we are easily deluded by forbidden fruits that seem to taste sweeter than real ones.

Having tasted that *all* the body and life have to give, he sees something beyond body and life. For, body and life limit the spirit: it is capable of sensing beyond any and all of our bodily senses, even our mind, of rising beyond even space and time. That timelessness frees us from death, to win the death-free, **nirvana**.

5.2 MUSIC AND THE BUDDHA

5.2.1 The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21) tells us that when Pañca,sikha sees himself as standing “neither too far nor too near” [§1.4.3] from the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave so that he is able to “let his veena of yellow bilva be heard, and he recited these verses [5.1] regarding the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and love.” [§1.4.4]. At the end of the performance, the Buddha responds warmly with a positive feedback:

*Saṃsandati kho te pañca,sikha tanti-s,saro
gīta-s,sarena, gīta-s,saro ca tanti-s,sarena.*

“The sound of your strings, Pañca,sikha, blended [harmonized] well with your singing, and your singing blended well with the sound of your strings.

*Na ca pana te pañca,sikha tanti-s,saro
gīta-s,saraṃ ativattati, gīta-s,saro ca
tanti-s,saraṃ.*

Moreover, Pañca,sikha, neither did your veena out-pace your song, nor your singing out-pace your veena.” [§1.6.1]

In short, unlike Sakra’s noisy chariot-wheels that inopportunately roused the Buddha from his meditation [§1.10.7], Pañca,sikha’s music and song inspire the Buddha to praise him! Clearly here, we have another interesting contrast [1.2.2]: that between disruptive mindless noise and soothing harmonious music. How, we must ask: Why does the Buddha respond so positively to Pañca,sikha’s music and verses?

5.2.2 What exactly did Pañca,sikha do?

5.2.2.0 We should not jump into any conclusion or use this lesson to bolster our bias that the Buddha appreciates music, or that music is some kind of religious language. Nor should we wonder if the Buddha had broken a precept listening to music, or that he was still worldly since he “liked” music (hence, he was not really enlightened yet)—let us examine and evaluate what really happened here and its significance.

5.2.2.1 Firstly, *how* does Pañca,sikha **perform** his presentation to the Buddha? Note that the related passages on Pañca,sikha’s performance [§§1.4.4, 1.6.4] uses neither *gāyati*, “he sings” nor *vādeti*, “he plays (a musical instrument).” These passages describe Pañca,sikha’s presentation as follows:

- he “let his veena of yellow bilva be heard” (*beḷuva,paṇḍu,vīṇaṃ assāvesi*);¹²⁶
- and “he recited these verses” (*imā ca gātha abhāsi*).

According to the Sakka,pañha Sutta, before performing for the Buddha, Pañca,sikha has already sung his love song accompanied on his veena for Bhaddā at her family abode [§1.6.4]. We may assume that he sings it beautifully enough to inspire Bhaddā to agree to meet him (for the first time) [§1.7.15]. However, we are not told that he does this in the same manner to the Buddha—which is highly unlikely—since Pañca,sikha has been the Buddha’s attendant and should know the Vinaya rules (which also applies to the Buddha). Moreover, the Buddha, as one well awakened, is able to keep his mind calm and clear during such a presentation, whatever it may have been.

When the Buddha praises Pañca,sikha that his voice and music “blended well” [5.2.1] he must be referring to Pañca,sikha’s recitation of the verse accompanied by the 7-stringed veena, a kind of arched harp [1.4.4 n]—it is a **poetic recitation** rather than a musical performance. Even if we assume that Pañca,sikha, in some manner, sings his love song accompanied by veena music, the Buddha had neither requested for such a performance nor would be regarded as “going for a performance.” Pañca,sikha has come to him on a petition on behalf of Sakra. For the Buddha, then, in Pañca,sikha’s mind, the presentation is a **poetic petition**. [5.2.2.3]

5.2.2.2 Secondly, let us examine **the theme** of Pañca,sikha’s song, which is *love*. It is a love song, full of erotic images, but the themes are “the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and love” [§§1.4.4, 1.6.2]. It is a love song with erotic images but *not* a bawdy song. It is a testimony of a sensual divine being who is both devoted to “the Buddha, the Dharma and the arhats” *and* also in “love” [1.4.4].

As a young gandharva, an accomplished musician and poet, in love with an apsara (the females counterpart of a gandharva) [4.2.2], both denizens of Tāvātimsa, the most pleasurable of heavens, it is clearly understandable that Pañca,sikha’s song is quite *erotic*. Yet, having studied the lyrics, we can only be happily moved by them—the way Pañca,sikha weaves the thread of his *erotic* attraction to Bhaddā with the spiritual threads of the 3 jewels, giving us a powerful musical tapestry of love and faith.

It is a case of a natural response of one moved by the devotion to another. Love, after all, must be fully and freely expressed if it is to be reciprocated, or at least appreciated.

5.2.2.3 Thirdly, how does the Buddha really **respond**? The Buddha’s positive response only reflects his wholesome appreciation of the beauty of music and poetry. After all, as a young prince in his 3 palaces, the Bodhisattva had himself enjoyed such music, poetry and sundry luxuries—naturally, he would have smiled at Pañca,sikha’s divine prowess in music and poetry.

Moreover, it is a patent love song—Pañca,sikha is in love, and the song is his gift to earn that love—it would have been most unsporting or uncompassionate of the Buddha not to give Pañca,sikha a vote of confidence. Imagine, if the Buddha had rejected or criticized the song—it would simply mean that Pañca,sikha’s effort to win Bhaddā would surely be doomed since she, too, has deep respect for the Buddha, even if it is only by reputation [§1.7.15].

5.2.3 The Pali canon uses the compound ***gīta,vādita*** (“that which is sung and played,” to refer to “music and song”).¹²⁷ Without getting into the technicalities of the Vinaya,¹²⁸ this is sufficient here for us to under-

¹²⁶ For their grammatical analyses, see the Sutta [§1.4.4] nn.

¹²⁷ ***Gīta***: (1) (past part) that which is sung, recited, solemnly proclaimed, enunciated (D 1:104); (2) (neut) singing, a song, usu as *nacca,gīta,vādita*, “dancing, singing and music” (D 3:183; Vv 32.4). ***Vādita***, “(instrumental) music” (D 1:6, 3:183; A 1:212, 2:209), is past part of *vādeti* (caus of *vadati*, “to speak”), “to make a sound, play (a musical instrument).”

¹²⁸ For the related Vinaya rulings, see Cv 5.3.2 (V 2:108,5-25); for nuns, see Bhī Pāc 10 (V 4:267,29 f).

stand, even in a rudimentary but practical way, regarding the precept in this connection. The 7th uposatha or “observance” precept entails that the laity voluntarily undertakes, either on a precept day (usually the new-moon and the full-moon days), or during retreats, or as a personal undertaking, but naturally applies to all monastics at all times.

This 7th precept is that of “**abstaining from dancing, singing, music, watching unseemly shows**, and from wearing and adorning themselves with garlands, scents and cosmetics.”¹²⁹ Note that the idea of this precept is simplicity and non-distraction for the purpose of keeping fully to the moral precepts as a basis for mental cultivation or a reflection on the Dharma (such as studying a suitable sutta).

The spirit of the precept is that of keeping our minds clear and focused for personal practice, especially that of mental cultivation. It does *not* imply that dancing, singing, and music are unwholesome acts in themselves. Hence, even when music and singing are actually heard by us, even when we are emotionally uplifted by it, while undertaking these precepts, we have not morally lapsed (certainly not broken the 7th precept)—providing, of course, that we keep ourself mindful and restrained and, perhaps, reflecting on the impermanence of sound.¹³⁰

5.2.4 Music and morality

5.2.4.1 Clearly, from all this, we must deduce that **the Buddha**, when he was still a Bodhisattva, living his pre-renunciation earthly life in palatial luxury, was only familiar with good music, singing and related diversions. And now, hearing it from Pañca,sikha, he listens free of any negative emotions, hearing only beautiful sounds, with their rise and fall, the changes in tone and melody, the harmony of sounds long and short, loud and soft and in between—of the silence and space in between the notes that make sweet music. Indeed, the Buddha’s ear is able to discern music in all its spiritual significance, when we, the un-awakened, may merely “appreciate” it in our technical and worldly ways.

Furthermore, Pañca,sikha, through his music, connects Sakra to the Buddha, pleasantly and politely, as it were, Sakra’s calling-card to the host for an important visit, for heaven to have an audience with earth. Through Pañca,sikha’s music, Sakra is able to see the Buddha, and all of these, in the end, to enable Pañca,sikha to win his beloved, Bhaddā, too. All’s well that starts well and ends well.

5.2.4.2 Hence, this episode of Pañca,sikha’s musical recitation of a love poem should not be used as any excuse for monastics playing music or listening to it, or attending any such shows, especially when they are unawakened. They are morally bound to the Vinaya they have voluntarily vowed to keep. Furthermore, Pañca,sikha’s presentation is an exceptional event in the Buddha’s compassion in the spirit of the Dharma, which should not be misconstrued as a licence for worldliness or laxity in monastic or moral training.

Finally, the question arises: Is the Buddha going against monastic decorum or the rules he has himself introduced for monastics—that they should neither listen, watch nor perform such musical display? A simple answer is found in this verse of **Mahā Kassapa**:

*Na pañc’āṅgikena turiyena
rati me hoti tādīsī*

Not with the fivefold music,
such is not pleasure for me,

¹²⁹ The basic formula for **the 7th** of the 8 precepts is: *Nacca,gīta,vādita,visūka.dassana,mālā,gandha,vilepana,dhāraṇa,maṇḍana,vibhūsana-ṭ,ṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhā,padam samādiyāmi*, “I undertake the training-rule to abstain from” See **(Tad-ah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70,9-16) + SD 4.18 (2).

¹³⁰ What would be wrong and immoral here is that, having undertaken the precept, we either consciously or un-mindfully, make an effort to listen to music or song (etc), as we have done under “normal” circumstances, instead of directing our efforts towards mindful practice.

yathā ek’agga,cittena as there is for one with a single mind
sammā dhammaṃ vipassato (Tha 1071) rightly with insight into the nature of things [the Dharma].

Fig 5.2.5a. Samudragupta gold dinar, c335-375 CE.
 Weight: 7.85 gm. Diameter: 20 mm.
 The king, seated on a couch, is playing a 7-string veena.
 Encircling Brāhmī legend. Lakshmī (left) is seated on a stool,
 holding a cornucopia and diadem. Brāhmī legend (right):
Samudraguptaḥ



Fig 5.2.5b. Woman playing a 7-string veena. (Note that she has 5 hair-crests.) Kashmir. Gonanda period. 6th century.

5.2.5 The veena (*vīṇā*). The *veena* (ts, *vīṇā*; Hindi, “bin”) is any of several chordophone musical instruments—that is, the arched harp, the stick zither or the lute—and is one of the oldest Indian musical instruments. Pañca,sikha’s veena is probably a *sapta,tantrī vīṇā*, “a 7-stringed veena,” a kind of [arched harp](#) or harp-veena, not to be confused with the modern Indian veena which is a type of lute.

We can see this in the sculptures in the Buddhist caves at Pitalkhora (in the Satamala range of the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, India).¹³¹ It was played with the strings being kept parallel to the player’s body of the player, with both hands plucking the strings, as shown on [Samudragupta’s gold coins](#)¹³² [Fig 5.2.5a]. A clearer image of the 7-string veena can be seen from Fig. 5.2.5b.

5.3 GOPIKĀ AND GOPAKA

5.3.1 Gopikā, Gopaka and his verses

5.3.1.1 The story of Gopaka (*gopaka,vatthu*), along with his verses, are related by Sakra to the Buddha. Sakra relates this story about [the karmic progress](#) of **Gopikā**, a faithful and morally virtuous Sakya woman, and the karmic downgrade of the 3 monks she has faithfully served with devotion. Gopikā aspires to gain manhood and is reborn as a male deva, called **Gopaka**, in Tāva,tīmsa. The 3 monks, on the other hand, are reborn as gandharvas (the lowest of the heavenly beings) in the same heaven, indulging in sensual pleasures and bodily serving to satisfy and please the devas. [§§1.11.2-5, 1.12.1-2]

5.3.1.2 Gopaka is dismayed when he discovers that the 3 monks are now sensuous gandharvas. He famously rebukes them: “**Where’s the face?**” or “Where’s your face?” [1.4.1]. Gopikā, by her own choice, [aspires](#) to become a male god in Tāva,tīmsa.¹³³ The 3 monks, on the other hand, despite living the “holy

¹³¹ Swami Prajñānanda, *Journal of the Music Academy, Madras*, 32, 1961:122.

¹³² On [the veena](#), see **Vīṇā S** (S 35.205), SD 28.2; **Soṇa Koḷivīsa S** (A 6.55), SD 20.12. See also Coomaraswamy 1930.

¹³³ Perhaps, she is a woman who has a man’s mind, as we may imagine today. It’s interesting here that we may describe her new state as being that of *manhood*, *masculinity* or *maleness*. It seems that the last, *maleness*, best applies here, because she is neither human nor physical (in the way we are). He is an “earth-bound” deva [§10b n] with a kind of ethereal (non-physical) and radiant body. However, their form is neither as refined as the *form-dhyana* brahmas (composed of pure [light](#)) nor as the *formless-dhyana* beings (composed of pure [energy](#)).

life” under the Buddha, not only fail to attain the path, but have “downgraded” themselves to being reborn as gandharvas, that is, divine service and pleasure providers!

Apparently, when these gandharvas were monks, they had been doing good works (such as social services and entertaining the laity) but they were seriously lax in their monastic discipline and lacking in moral virtue. Warnings that such negative conduct—doing good works but lacking in moral virtue—lead to our being reborn as well-cared for animals or pets are given in **the (Dasaka) Jāṇussoṇi Sutta** (A 10.177). Being immoral leads us to become animals but the good we have done results in our being well loved, *well cared pets*—or as pleasure-loving and pleasure-giving gandharvas!¹³⁴ [§§1.11.5-9, 1.12.3-9b]

5.3.1.3 In **verse 32** [§1.12.4], Gopaka says:

I supported them with food and drinks,	washing their feet in my own house.
Where’s the face, these good sirs	who grasped not the Buddha’s Dharma?

The implication is that there is a social contract: the monastics are supported by the laity because the monastics keep to the Vinaya, practise Dharma, reach the path and attain liberation. When they fail to do so, it is *dishonesty*, to say the least, and also bad karma. The rebirth of the 3 monks as gandharvas resulted from their doing some good works but not cultivating moral virtue (breaking Vinaya rules) [4.3.1.2].

This view is morally right, even if it is Sakra’s notion (but still, he is a streamwinner). Yet, **the Dāna Maha-p,phala Sutta** (A 7.49,9) tells us that the best giving is made with resolve: “This is an adornment for the mind, the benefit of a support for the mind.” It goes on to say that such a giver is reborn amongst Brahma’s retinue (*brahma, pārisajja*). When his karma is exhausted there, he goes on to gain non-returning.¹³⁵ In other words, for Gopaka’s part, he still needs to be diligent to reach the path and move on.

5.3.1.4 Anyway, Gopaka’s rebuke to the 3 monks has its **spiritual benefits**: “Come let us strive, let us exert ourselves! | Let us be not servants of others!” Two of them made an effort to practise the Dharma [§38*]. **Verses 39 and 44** hint that the two became non-returners of the path—the “path” (*maggā*) here means that the process of the destruction of the related fetters have started, and with “fruition” (*phala*), they are utterly destroyed so that they become full-fledged non-returners.¹³⁶ Only one of the ex-monk gandharvas remains fettered to the pleasures of Tāva,tiṃsa.

5.3.1.5 Gopaka not only exhorts the 3 monks; he also roars his **lion-roar**:

By such Dharma presented here,	let the disciple have no doubt in it,
the Buddha is a flood-crosser, doubt cut off—	let’s honour the conqueror, leader of beings! [§45*]

The story of Gopikā/Gopaka, then, is a story of faith in the Buddha and his Dharma, and in *her self-effort* shows that even a woman, on her own free will, can aspire to be as good as a man! For that, she has wise faith in the Buddha and her faith moves two other ex-monk gandharvas to free themselves from their current low karmic state for a higher spiritual state, that of the non-returning path [5.3.1.4].

All of Tāva,tiṃsa knows this [§§40 + 41]. Hence, Gopaka is the external motivator for Sakra to meet the Buddha [§47], an important point we have examined elsewhere [2.1.2.1]

¹³⁴ See A 10.177/5:269-273 (SD 2.6a).

¹³⁵ A 7.49,10.2/4:59-63 (SD 2.3).

¹³⁶ The same process of fetter-destruction occurs for the other 3 paths: those of the streamwinner, the once-returner and the arhat. On the 10 fetters and the path, see SD 10.16 (1.6.6+1.7).

5.3.2 Anti-feminism?

5.3.2.1 We have already noted [1.2.2.3] that, according to Sakra, Gopikā was a morally virtuous Sakya woman, deeply faithful to the 3 jewels and devoted to serving the monks. However, she, “**having abandoned the idea of womanhood, cultivated that of manhood**” [1.11.2]. Without reading too much into this, we should understand this story, not as a woman “rejecting” womanhood, but perhaps, psychologically, as a woman who thinks as a man, a case of “gender-crossed” or “gender-switched” personality— which is not uncommon even today.

Even at this stage, we may conclude that the point of the Gopikā/Gopaka story is that **gender is not in the body but in the mind**: we are likely to become what we think. Such a view of gender and sexuality is in itself a powerful statement, especially coming from a Buddha-centred sutta. This story has more to do with psychology and spirituality than with the politics of sexuality and feminism. The point is that we naturally have the choice and should be respected for this free choice of our gender, and to wholesomely do so.

Gender, then, is neither a fetter nor a hindrance, to spiritual cultivation and liberation. Indeed, in **the Gopaka story**, the earthly devout *woman* Gopikā serves the 3 monks, but they were not spiritually developed *men*. They must have a weakness for entertaining worldly ways, such as socializing and enjoying social and other pleasures. The deserts of their deeds bring them rebirth as lowly entertainers and social escorts in high heaven, the Tāvā,tiṃsa, where their erstwhile female devotee arise at the same time, but as a high deva. The point of the story is clear enough: it is not our gender that defines us, but rather our mind and deeds, our karma.¹³⁷

5.3.2.2 Gopaka’s story is about how a good woman chooses to think and live as man. She does so in a wholesome spiritual way and enjoys the fruit of her aspiration. On the other hand, we have **the story of the elder Soreyya** (DhA 3.9), who was a seth’s son,¹³⁸ living in a city of the same name who, upon seeing the elder Mahā Kaccāyana’s golden complexion, thinks lustfully, “O how great it would be for my wife to have the golden hue of his body!”

At once, it is said, Soreyya turns into a woman! Out of shame, *she* runs away, following a caravan to faraway Takka,silā. Caravan travellers, seeing her, proposes that she marries a Sāvattihī seth’s son who is unmarried. She does so and bears him two sons.

One day, a close friend of hers, another seth’s son, on a visit to Takka,silā, meets her. Upon hearing her story, he chides her for having had such a lustful thought towards an arhat, and advises her to seek Mahā Kaccāyana’s forgiveness. She accordingly returns to Soreyya, and meeting Mahā Kaccāyana, seeks his forgiveness, and at once reverts into a man. Having learned his lesson, and deeply moved by religious feeling, he renounces the world, and in due course becomes an arhat himself.¹³⁹

Later, when asked whether it was as a father or as a mother that Soreyya felt most love for the children, he answers that it is as a mother that he does so! (DhA 3.9).¹⁴⁰ This story affirms that, as a rule, women are better disposed than men towards raising children. Further, the fact that this experience is also found in a man (Soreyya), suggests that even a man should cultivate sufficient “motherliness” (or animus) in himself to be an emotionally balanced and wholesome individual.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ On the early Buddhist view of gender, see SD 31.7 (1.1.2; 1.2).

¹³⁸ A seth (*setthī*) was a financial entrepreneur who funded large businesses.

¹³⁹ **Soreyya-t,thera Vatthu**, DhA 3.9

¹⁴⁰ DhA 3.9. Further on “sex-change” in early Buddhism, see also SD 31.7 (8).

¹⁴¹ In Jungian psychology, women, too, are said to need to strengthen their animus (manliness or masculinity) and men their anima (womanliness or femininity) into a healthy emotionally balance to become true individuals. For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anima_and_animus. In practical Buddhist psychology, it is sufficient to understand the anima/animus idea as the cultivation and working of lovingkindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) in us.

5.3.2.3 Another notable theme in the Gopikā/Gopaka story is that in early Buddhism, monastics are expected to attain awakening, that is, nirvana, if not at least *streamwinning*, in this life itself. Such an attitude of disdain towards monastics who fail to attain the path in this life, and to aspire for heavenly rebirth is recorded in a number of suttas.

The Deva,loka Sutta (A 3.18), for example, records the Buddha as stating that monks would feel ashamed when others were to think that they are living the holy life for the sake of some heavenly rebirth.¹⁴² **The Methuna Sutta** (A 7.47) criticizes such an aspiration as being “a break, and a tear, and a mot-tle, and a blotch of the holy life.”¹⁴³

Discourses like **the (Majjhima) Ceto,khila Sutta** (M 16) and **the (Dasaka) Ceto,khila Sutta** (A 10.14) regard the aspiration for heavenly rebirth as a “mental bondage.”¹⁴⁴ **The Dāru-k,khandha Sutta 1** (S 35.-200) states that when we live the holy life aspiring for rebirth as a deva or one amongst them it is just like being “seized by non-humans.”¹⁴⁵

5.4 ON THE TERM GANDHABBA

5.4.1 A celestial being

5.4.1.1 Gandharvas (P *gandhabba*)¹⁴⁶ are a class of heavenly beings who inhabit the Cātum,mahā.rājika heaven of the 4 great kings, guardian of the celestial quarters, and the Tāva,timsa heaven of the 33 gods, led by Sakra. They are regarded as the lowest of the devas (D 2:212), generally classed together with the asuras (titans) and the nagas (serpent-beings).¹⁴⁷ Beings are born as gandharvas as the karmic result of having practised the lowest or minimal form of moral virtue (*sīla*) [§1.11.4].¹⁴⁸ It is a disgrace for a monk to be reborn as a gandharva [§35*].¹⁴⁹

5.4.1.2 The gandharvas are heavenly musicians and servants who serve to provide the comfort and pleasure of devas. They also serve as the guards or minions of Dhata,raṭṭha, the great guardian-king of the eastern quarter (D 2:257). The most famous of the gandharvas is **Pañca,sikha** [4.1], who is close to both Sakra and the Buddha, of whom he is sometimes an attendant and favourite on account of his genial personality. Then, there are his love Bhaddā Suriya,vacchasā [1.3.1] and her father, Timbaru,¹⁵⁰ a gandharva lord. Other gandharva lords include Sakra’s charioteer, Mātali, Panāda, Opamañña, Citta,sena, Naḷa and Janesabha (probably identical with Jana,vasabha of D 18). (D 2:258).

5.4.1.3 Gandharvas are all male; their female counterparts are the apsaras (P *accharā*) or celestial nymphs. They have limited psychic powers, but are sometimes described as going through the skies (A 2:39). **The Āṭānāṭiya Sutta** (D 32) mentions gandharvas as being among those likely to trouble monastics during their solitary meditations. Once, the Buddha explains that some of those who are reborn into the gandharva host (*gandhabba,kāyikā devā*) do so because they wish to be so, wrongly thinking that the gandharva are “long-lived, beautiful and abound in happiness” (S 31.2/3:250).

¹⁴² A 3.18/1:115,2.

¹⁴³ A 7.47/4:55,21 (SD 21.9). For a comparative study of **Methuna S**, see Hahn 1977.

¹⁴⁴ M 16/1:102,9 (SD 32.14); A 10.14/5:18,25 (SD 51.10e). Their Chin parallel, EĀ 51.4 (T2.817b1), includes this under the category of being a “mental corruption.”

¹⁴⁵ S 35.200/4:180,22. So, too, its Chin versions: SĀ 1174 (T2.315a2) and EĀ 43.3 (T2.759a18).

¹⁴⁶ For a psychological explanation of the term, see SD 7.10 (3).

¹⁴⁷ Eg, A 4:200, 204, 207.

¹⁴⁸ See also **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18,20/2:212), SD 62.3; **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,20/2:212), SD 63.4.

¹⁴⁹ See also: **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,60/2:251), SD 63.4.

¹⁵⁰ Timbaru is present at the *mahā,samaya*: see **Mahā,samaya S** (D 20,10/30d*/2:258), SD 54.4.

5.4.2 *Gandhabba* as “rebirth consciousness”

5.4.2.1 The Pali term *gandhabba* is mentioned, either by name or as a process, in these 3 suttas in connection with conception, namely:¹⁵¹

• Mahā,nidāna Sutta	D 15,21/2:63	SD 5.17	consciousness “descending” into the womb
• Mahā,taṇhā,saṅkhaya S	M 38,26/1:265 f	SD 7.10	<i>gandhabba</i>
• Assalāyana Sutta	M 93,18/2:157	SD 40a.2	<i>gandhabba</i>

These suttas define **conception** (*gabbhassāvakanti*) as arising when these 3 conditions are all present:¹⁵²

(1) there is the union of mother and father,	<i>mātā,pitaro ca sannipatitā honti</i>
(2) the mother is in season, and	<i>mātā ca utunī hoti</i>
(3) <u>the gandharva</u> is present.	<i>gandhabbo ca paccupaṭṭhito hoti</i>

5.4.2.2 The Majjhima Commentary explains *gandhabba* as a being about to enter the womb (*tatrû-paka,satta*), one that arises at that opportune moment (*tasmim okāse nibbattanako satto*) (MA 2:310), “coming into existence on account of karma” (*bhava,gāmi,kammunā*).¹⁵³ The Vinaya Subcommentaries (Ṭikā) suggest the etymology of *gandhabba* that is “about to enter the womb” as doing so because it is *gantabba*, “that which should go on.”¹⁵⁴

From all these textual explanations, it is clear that this is a different, more technical, usage of the term *gandhabba*. It does not refer to the fragrance-consuming gandharvas¹⁵⁵ of the 2 lowest heavens [5.4.1] but is a psychological term for the “being to be born” or “rebirth-consciousness,” as taught in early Buddhism.¹⁵⁶ This is our karmic “gene,” as it were, that moves on after death and seeks new life, like a plant-seed that grows again and perpetuates itself under the right conditions.

6 Love and the erotic in the heavens

6.1 HEAVENLY SEXUALITY

6.1.1 Nature of the study. This is a brief psychological survey of the personalities of **Sakra** as a deva and **Pañca,sikha** as a gandharva in the the 2 earth-bound heavens [1.1.2.2]—Cātum,mahā.rājika and Tāva,tim̄sa—the 2 lowest realms of the sense-based heavens, indeed, the lowest of all the heavens in the early Buddhist cosmology. The 2 heavens are said to be “**earth-bound**” because they are “native to the earth” (*bhummāni bhūtāni*), that is, they dwell “in Mt Sumeru,” a cosmic mountain not unlike Olympus of the gods in Greek mythology.¹⁵⁷ Sumeru, then, is a portal to the celestial world of the gods.

¹⁵¹ For a psychological explanation of the term, see SD 7.10 (3).

¹⁵² 4 types of conception—in terms of being aware of it or not—are listed in **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28,5/3:103) and **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.11(37)/3:231).

¹⁵³ MAṬ:Be 2:228; AAṬ:Be 2:148.

¹⁵⁴ VAṬ:Be (Sārattha,dīpanī) 2:13; Vimati,vinodanī-Ṭ (Be) 1:102. Cf **Kutūhala Sālā S** (S 44.9), where it is said that “when ... a being has laid down this body but has not yet been reborn in another body ... is fuelled by craving.” (S 44.-9/4:400), SD 23.15. This is an allusion to the “intermediate state,” also called *gandhabba*: see Wijesekere below.

¹⁵⁵ They are said to be “fragrance-eaters” at J 2:249 f, 3:188; VvA 36, 137; PvA 119.

¹⁵⁶ See O H de A Wijesekera, 1945, where he suggests that *gandhabba* means a “saṃsāric being in the intermediate stage (between death and birth).” See also **Is rebirth immediate?** (SD 2.17).

¹⁵⁷ KhpA 166m17-20. See SD 54.3b (3.5.1).

Like the ancient Greek gods, their higher gods, especially Zeus and Apollo, are known to be sexually promiscuous, often impregnating earthly women and shanghaiing anyone, who pleases them, into their heaven to serve them. In early Buddhist mythology, the higher gods (such as the brahmas), by their non-sensual dhyanic nature are not sexually inclined, since they enjoy greater bliss on a mental level beyond the gross sexuality of the physical body.

6.1.2 Sense-based gods. Both Sakra and Pañca,sikha, and the denizens of the 2 lowest heavens, are still sense-based beings, with imaginably Olympian bodies, that is, of a more refined physical form and larger dimensions. On account of their ethereal form, these devas (“shining ones”) and non-humans neither cast shadows nor do they show any physical lethargy in exerting themselves. They enjoy better food (finer than ours), especially “nectar or ambrosia” (*ojā*). Understandably, they also enjoy a greatly refined, more intense, more satiating pleasure than what we can only imagine. Since they are sense-based, these lower gods still indulge in sex (like us) but of a celestial kind.¹⁵⁸

Since these devas indulge in sex, they have children, too. Yet, their procreation is not of a biological nature [1.4.3.7]. The gods arise spontaneously (*opapātika*) [2.3.1.1]. Sakra is said to have 1,000 sons. Two sons and 4 daughters are named in the suttas and the Commentaries. The 2 sons are Susīma and Suvīra (SA 1:340-341) and they each has a sutta to the name: **the Suvīra Sutta** (S 11.1) and **the Susīma Sutta** (S 11.2).¹⁵⁹ The 4 daughters are mentioned in **the Sudhā,bhojana Jātaka** (J 535) as Āsā, Saddhā, Hirī and Sirī.¹⁶⁰

6.2 SAKRA’S SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

6.2.1 Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21)

6.2.1.1 The Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21) and **the Cūla Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 37) are closely connected with Sakra, with the events of the former preceding those of the latter. In the Sakka,pañha Sutta, we see a fearful, almost timid, Sakra, meeting the Buddha through the intercession of his servant, the minstrel Pañca,sikha. However, in the Cūla Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta, we see Sakra as being almost a different person, more self-confident, in full charge of the situation. We may surmise that all this is only natural, since in the former, Sakra is on earth with the Buddha, whereas in the latter, he is in his own heaven.

Yet, on closer study, we will see that the two scenarios represent two distinct, yet integral, aspects of Sakra’s personality—he is both a deeply spiritual being, deeply Dharma-spirited and compassionate, and also divinely sensuous, often enjoying sense-pleasures (*kāma,bhogī*) [1.1.3.2(2)]. Yet, Sakra is a stream-winner; ergo, he is a streamwinner who enjoys sense-pleasures.

When we understand and accept the nature of this last category of spiritual practitioners, as laid out in **the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73), Sakra’s conduct in both Suttas become happily clear to us—he is the happiest of beings, a god who enjoys both worldly bliss and spiritual freedom in a wholesome and harmonious manner that neither hinders his path progress nor harms anyone else.

6.2.1.2 How then do we explain Sakra’s conduct of **fearfulness and hesitance** in meeting the Buddha in the Sakka,pañha Sutta? [2.1.1]. Firstly, Sakra has a deep respect for others, even the lowly Bhuñjati, guarding the Buddha’s privacy, whose authority he could have easily dismissed but chooses to respect

¹⁵⁸ For more details on sex in the heaven, see SD 54.3a (3.3.3).

¹⁵⁹ S 11.1/1:216 f; S 11.2/1:218.

¹⁶⁰ J 535/5:392. However, since this is a story of the past, these daughters might be those of the Sakra of the Jātaka, ie, one of the distant past.

[2.1.2]. When he asks the Buddha about his first attempt to meet him, the Buddha hints that Sakra had driven his chariot too near a meditating area. We have noted that Sakra was embarrassed by this [2.1.3].

Even before this revelation, we see Sakra as being a determined deva: he solicits the intercession of just the right person—**Pañca,sikha**, one of the most popular of devas, an accomplished minstrel and a favourite attendant of the Buddha—to put in a good word for him. This strategy works and he gets to see the Buddha.

Hence, like Sakra, Pañca,sikha, too, is a being of sensuality and spirituality, both sweetly harmonized. Just as Sakra is determined to meet the Buddha, Pañca,sikha is driven to win his love, Bhaddā. In the end, it is a win-win situation for both master and servant, both lover and beloved.

6.2.1.3 The Sakka,pañha Sutta presents to us the devoutly spiritual side of Sakra’s wonderfully protean personality—leader, warrior, diplomat, lover and streamwinner. We also see him as a generously grateful person who acknowledges and rejoices in the kindness shown to him by Pañca,sikha [1.2.2.4].

We must wonder if **Pañca,sikha** himself is waiting for an opportunity like this, when he would be able to win over his beloved, Bhaddā. He is certainly self-confident, or, perhaps, desperate or love-sick enough to actually sing an erotic love song to the Buddha! But he has piously and cleverly woven praises of the Buddha, the Dharma and the arhats into his love-song—so that it has just the effect and benefit he must have foreseen.

6.2.2 Cūḷa Taṇhā,sāṅkhaya Sutta (M 37)

6.2.2.1 The Cūḷa Taṇhā,sāṅkhaya Sutta presents to us Sakra as a **self-confident deva** who has defeated the asuras, built a massive Vejayanta palace to celebrate it, and enjoying his heavenly pleasures—besides, he is also a streamwinner. Hence, he not only knows that he is “entitled” to such divine pleasures but he also knows his limits when it is reached.

The Sutta actually opens with Sakra confidently approaching the Buddha with a question on a topic which the Buddha has earlier on, in the Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21), answered only in brief—the *accanta,-niṭṭha* question [§2.6.6-9]. Instead of asking the Buddha for a detailed answer on the brief *accanta,-niṭṭha* teaching, Sakra requests the Buddha to, again, give a **“brief” explanation** of it. Clearly, he is not inclined to hear a long explanation, since he has “other” businesses awaiting him in Tāva.tiṃsa! We see here a hint of subtle mischief, like that of a playful but insightful student.

6.2.2.2 Later, back in Tāva,tīṃsa, we see Sakra enjoying sense-pleasures there, only to be interrupted by the arhat **Moggallāna**, coming to ask him to repeat what he has learned earlier from the Buddha! When Moggallāna arrives, Sakra is enjoying himself in his celestial garden, listening to “a hundred of the fivefold musical instruments.”¹⁶¹

Despite Moggallāna’s intrusion, Sakra deferently suspends his indulgences to welcome and attend to his monk-guest with every due respect. However, when Moggallāna asks Sakra to repeat what he has learnt from the Buddha recently, Sakra politely excuses himself—that he is very busy with constructing the sprawling Vejayanta hall to celebrate the devas’ victory over the asuras. Then, he offers to show Moggallāna around the majestic hall.

6.2.2.3 When Moggallāna notices Sakra’s over-indulgence in the delights of the new hall, he decides to teach him a lesson by psychically rocking the whole structure. When Sakra learns that Moggallāna is ser-

¹⁶¹ M 37,7/1:252 (SD 54.9). According to the Chin Saṃyukta-Āgama parallel, Sakra is bathing in a lake together 500 celestial nymphs, who were entertaining him with song: SĀ 500 (T2.133c2): 五百婁女遊戲浴池 *wǔ bǎi cái nǚ yóu xì yù chí*. When Moggallāna arrives, he tells them to stop singing: SĀ 505 (T2.133c4): 莫歌 *mò gē*.

ious about his request, he relents. He deferently recites what he has learnt, and correctly, too, to Moggallāna's satisfaction.

We see here Sakra the streamwinner, respectful and diligent in the Dharma, remembering and understanding the Dharma that he has learned. We also have **an arhat** who is concerned about this—he is no laid-back Mahāyāna “arhat,” but a real-life fully awakened saint of the historical Buddha who is keen to ensure that another junior saint knows his stuff and grows on the path. After all, it is said that while Sāriputta is like a “mother” who brings forth streamwinners, Moggallāna is like a “wet nurse” who nurtures them right up to arhathood.¹⁶²

6.2.3 Sakka Vatthu (DhA 15.8)

6.2.3.1 We have noted how **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** (M 37) [6.2.1] relates Sakra meeting the Buddha for the 1st times, learning some Dharma, and attaining streamwinning. Then, in **the Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 37) [6.2.2], Sakra returns to the Buddha to ask about an unfinished question—on the *accanta,-niṭṭha* pericope—with Moggallāna confirming Sakra's understanding that of teaching. [6.2.2.3]

6.2.3.2 Now, we will briefly examine a 3rd text which evidently records Sakra's last meeting with the Buddha, that is, **the Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8).¹⁶³ We are told that the Buddha, 10 months before his final passing away,¹⁶⁴ was afflicted with **dysentery**. While resting outside the hamlet of **Beḷuva**,¹⁶⁵ Sakra himself, in human form, came to attend on the sick Buddha.¹⁶⁶

6.2.3.3 Ordinarily, devas, from even 100 yojanas¹⁶⁷ would find human smell to be like that of a cadaver, but here, the devout Sakra (clearly knowing that this would be his last meeting with the Buddha), tells him that even from 84,000 yojanas, he smells the Buddha's fragrance of moral goodness (*sīla,gandha*). Sakra even unflinchingly carries the Buddha's chamber-pot on his divine head, removing it “as though he were holding a vessel of fragrance (*gandha,bhājana*).”¹⁶⁸

6.2.3.4 When the monks react with great admiration at Sakra's devotion, the Buddha explains that Sakra's affection for him arises from his being a noble disciple. He has laid aside the form of the *old* Sakra (*jarā,sakka,bhāva*), attained the fruit of streamwinning, and taken on the form the *young* Sakra (*taruṇa,-sakka,bhāva*)¹⁶⁹ [§2.8.2]. The Buddha relates how Sakra comes to him (as recorded in **the Sakka,pañha Sutta**) [§1.4; 2.2] with the fear of death,¹⁷⁰ led by Pañca,sikha, and meets him in the Inda,sāla cave, where he invites Sakra to ask any question he wishes. [§1.13]

¹⁶² M 141,5/3:248 (SD 11.11). See Nyanaponika & Hecker 1997:83-88.

¹⁶³ DhA 15.8/3:269-272 (SD 54.20).

¹⁶⁴ SA 3:351,23-27.

¹⁶⁵ Beḷuva (*gāmaka* or *gamaka* means “hamlet”; *pāda,gāma*, SA 3:201,28) was located south of Vesālī (MA 3:12,-24, spelt *beluva*), just outside her city-gates (SA 3:201,27-28). It is likely that it is also called Veḷuva, where Anuruddha died (Tha 919).

¹⁶⁶ On the Buddha's 1st dysentery attack (Beḷuva), see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.23/2:99), SD 9.

¹⁶⁷ A *yojana* or league is about 11.25 km or 7 m. Hence, 100 yojanas is about 1,125 km or 700 mi.

¹⁶⁸ The pious may read such noble accounts as an inspiration for serving monastics in the humblest way, but the real message is that we should care for the sick (incl our parents and others) to the best of our ability and the noblest of ways.

¹⁶⁹ DhA 3:15,15-17.

¹⁷⁰ This is mentioned by the Buddha in **Sakka V** (DhA 15.8,9/3:270), SD 54.20.

6.2.3.5 At the end of the teaching, 14 crores (140 million)¹⁷¹ beings attained “breakthrough” (*abhisamaya*),¹⁷² and Sakra himself attaining the fruit of streamwinning.¹⁷³ At the close of this teaching, the Buddha utters **Dh 206-209**,¹⁷⁴ where the Buddha praises the wisdom of the noble disciples, who are like relatives, even closer, to one another.¹⁷⁵ (SD 54.20)

6.3 SAKRA’S LOVE AFFAIRS

Sakra’s 4 wives are Sudhammā [6.3.2], Nandā [6.3.3]. Cittā [6.3.4] and Sujā [6.3.5]. In this section, we shall briefly examine Sakra’s love-life beginning with his past life as the youth Magha.

6.3.1 From *sahassa,yoni* to *sahassa,netrā*

6.3.1.1 We have noted the various contrast themes in Sakra, **a deva and a streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*), living a life of sensuality and spirituality in wholesome harmony [1.2.2.1]. It is uncertain whether Sakra continue to be amorous even as a streamwinner. This is not surprising because a streamwinner has only broken the 1st 3 fetters: *self-identity view, spiritual doubt and attachment to rituals and vows*.¹⁷⁶ He has not even weakened the next two fetters, those of sensual lust and aversion.¹⁷⁷ However, as a streamwinner, he would naturally keep to the 5 precepts, implying that he would not be committing adultery (which is against the 3rd precept).¹⁷⁸

6.3.1.2 Indeed, Sakra, before his assimilation into Buddhism, was one of the most sensual, lascivious and belligerent of the Vedic gods. A popular brahminical story relates how Sakra tried to seduce Ahalyā, the Vedic Brahma’s daughter and wife of the sage Gautama.¹⁷⁹ The sage, in retaliation, cursed him so that a thousand marks resembling the female organ (*yoni*) appeared throughout his body! Hence, he came to be called Sa,yoni (the one with the yonis) or Sahaśra,yoni (the one with a thousand yonis).

¹⁷¹ 14 crores (*cuddasannaṃ pāṇa,koṭīnaṃ*) (DhA 3:270,23). A crore (*koṭī*) is 10,000,000.

¹⁷² *Abhisamaya* refers to the “breakthrough” or penetration into the true nature of the 4 noble truths, usu meaning streamwinning. See foll n.

¹⁷³ **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21) closes with stating that “80,000 deities” attained streamwinning, too [§2.10.5]. The huge number here refers to other beings who attain other levels of sainthood, too. **Abhisamaya**, as used here, then, has a broader sense, referring to any of the 4 stages of sainthood, and incl those who have understood the truths but did not attain any of the stages. Hence, the huge figure.

¹⁷⁴ **Dh 206-208**, as noted here, are spoken by the Buddha at **Beḷuva**, where the Buddha spends his last rains and is afflicted with dysentery, in ref to Sakra’s devoted care of the Buddha then (DhA 15.8/3:269,12). They were *not* spoken by the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave, as stated in Dhammika, *Middle Land, Middle Way* (ed Nyanatusita), 2008: 103.

¹⁷⁵ Cf “The trustworthy are the best of relatives” (*vissāsa,pāramā ñātī*, Dh 204c); see **Spiritual friendship**, SD 34.1 (2.2).

¹⁷⁶ Ie, the fetters (*saṃyojana*) of *sakkāyamdiṭṭhi*, *vickicchā* and *sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*: see SD 3.3 (5). For all the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*), see SD 10.16 (1.6.6-8).

¹⁷⁷ Respectively, *kāma,raga* and *paṭigha*. Weakening these or the 3 unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion, one becomes a once-returner (*sakad-āgāmī*), and breaking all these 5 “lower” fetters makes one a non-returner (*anāgāmī*).

¹⁷⁸ Note that in the story of **Sujā**, Sakra takes pains to teach and guide her in the keeping of the 5 precepts [6.3.5].

¹⁷⁹ Mentioned in the Brahmaṇas, and the Puraṇas; twice in the Rāmāyaṇa (7.30.17-36) and twice in the Mahā-bharata.

In due course, Gautama, out of compassion, changed the *yonī* marks into eyes. Thereafter, Sakra came to be known as “Thousand-eyes” (*sahasra’akkha* or *sahassa,netta*). Sakra is known by this name in the following suttas:¹⁸⁰

Isayo Araññakā Sutta	(S 11.9/1:226)	Sakra and Vepa,citti go into the forest to meet some seers; Sakra is respectful to them but Vepa,citti does not; the seers address Sakra as “thousand-eyed.” (SD 54.21)
Sakka,nāma Sutta	(S 11.12/1:229)	“thinks of a thousand matters in a moment”; eyes = wisdom-eye. (SD 54.19)
Mahāli Sutta	(S 11.13/1:230)	(as in Sakka,nāma Sutta, S 11.12) (SD 99.11)

In these suttas, Sakra’s epithet has none of the old negative connotations, but has a wholesome sense.

6.3.2 Sudhammā¹⁸¹

6.3.2.1 Sudhammā is one of Magha’s 4 wives or mates (*pāda.pariṅkārīkā*) [4.2.2], and continues to be reborn so as Sakra’s wife. When Magha and his companions were building a rest-house for travellers, they did not wish women to have any share in the work.¹⁸² However, Sudhammā bribed the carpenter, who made a pinnacle of seasoned wood for the building and laid it aside with the words: “This pavilion is called Sudhammā” (*sudhammā nāma ayam sālā*).

When it was time for the erection of the pinnacle for Magha, the builder told him and his friends that it was impossible to erect a pinnacle then, as it must be of well-seasoned wood. A vain search was made for it. Sudhammā then agreed to give hers if she were allowed a share in the building. The men were at first unwilling but agreed in the end.

6.3.2.2 When Sudhammā died, she was born in Tāva,timsa. By her past merit, there came into being for her the Sudhammā, the moot-hall of the devas, 900 leagues in extent. There, the devas meet on the 8th day of each month, or when the Dharma is taught, and also for all their important festivals and occasions.¹⁸³ All buddhas, it is said, teach the Abhidhamma in the Sudhammā-hall. It is said that every deva-world has a Sudhammā-hall, and this name (*sudhamma,sabhā*) is gold standard for a fine hall.¹⁸⁴ (ThaA 3:174)

6.3.3 Nandā. She is one of Magha’s 4 wives or mates (*pāda.pariṅkārīkā*) [4.2.2]. When Magha and his friends were building their rest-house, Nandā had a lake dug in the grounds. As a result, she was reborn to continue as Sakra’s wife. The Nandā lotus-lake (*nandā pokkharāṇī*) came into existence on account of her merit.¹⁸⁵

6.3.4 Cittā. She is one of Magha’s 4 wives or mates (*pāda.pariṅkārīkā*) [4.2.2]. Māgha and his companions erected a rest-house, and Cittā had a flower-garden laid out close by wherein she grew every kind of flow-

¹⁸⁰ Cf **Mahā,vastu**: the Buddha “who shines like the 1000-eyes Maghava” (*sahasra,netro maghavān va sobhase*, Mvst 1:165, 167).

¹⁸¹ The accounts of **Sakra’s 4 wives** are found in the closing section of **Magha Vatthu** (DhA 2.7b/1:274-280), SD 54.22. Sudhammā’s story is at DhA 1:274 (SD 54.22).

¹⁸² See SD 39.1 (2.2).

¹⁸³ See eg **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,1.7.15/2:268), SD 54.8; **Makha,deva S** (M 83,13/2:79); **Vepa,citti S** (S 11.4,5/1:221), SD 54.6a; Tha 1198; J 6:97,8, 126,26.

¹⁸⁴ Sudhammā’s story is at DhA 1:269 f, 274 f (SD 54.22); J 1:201 f.

¹⁸⁵ Nandā’s story is at DhA 1:269 f, 285 (SD 54.22); J 1:201,26-28.

ering tree, shrub and creeper. As a result, she was reborn in Tāva,tiṃsa as Sakka's wife. The Citta,latā garden (*citta.lata,vana*), a plesance, came into being for her pleasure.¹⁸⁶

6.3.5 Sujā, daughter of Vepa,citti¹⁸⁷

6.3.5.1 Sujā or Sujātā, one of Magha 4 wives or mates (*pāda.parcārikā*) [4.2.2], in her present life, is known as the **"asura maiden"** (*asura,kaññā*).¹⁸⁸ On account of Sakra being Sujā's husband, he is called **Sujam,pati**, "lord of Sujā"—such as by her father, Vepa,citti.¹⁸⁹ She is also Magha's maternal cousin. While Magha's other 3 wives helped him in his good deeds, Sujā, priding in her kinship with him, spent her time in adorning herself.

6.3.5.2 When Magha was born as Sakka and looked for Sujā, he found that she had been born as a **crane** in a mountain cave (on account of her failure to make sufficient merits in her previous life). He visited her and brought her to Tāva,tiṃsa to show her how her companions had arisen there on account of their good karma. He then exhorted her to keep the 5 precepts.

She did so, eating only such fish as had died a natural death. One day, Sakra, wishing to test her, took the form of a fish and pretended to be dead. Just as Sujā was about to swallow the fish, it wriggled its tail and she at once let it go.

Living such a restrained life, she died a few days later and was born as **the daughter of a potter of Benares**. Sakra filled a cart with treasures disguised as cucumbers and drove it through the city. When people asked him for cucumbers, he said, "I will only give them to a woman who has kept the 5 precepts." Hearing this, Sujā claimed them, and Sakka, revealing his true identity, gave them to her.

6.3.5.3 Upon her death, Sujā was reborn as the daughter of **Vepa,citti**, king of the asuras, a bitter enemy of Sakra. Because of Sujā's great beauty, Vepacitti granted her the boon of choosing her own husband. On the day that she was to choose her husband, Sakra, assuming the form of an old asura, joined the gathering unnoticed.

Noticing Sakra, she was at once filled with love for him through their previous association. She threw the garland around the old asura. When others remarked that he was old enough to be her grandfather, Sakra, holding Sujā, rose into the air and announced his true identity.

The asuras chased after him but Mātali came in the Vejayanta chariot and drove them away to safety. In Tāva,tiṃsa, Sujā became Sakra's wife at the head of 25 million apsaras. She asked for and was granted a boon that she was allowed to accompany Sakra wherever he went.¹⁹⁰

6.3.6 Rohinī (Anuruddha's sister)

6.3.6.1 Before becoming a streamwinner, Sakra had an amorous affair with Rohinī. She was the sister of the elder Anuruddha. When the elder Anuruddha visited his family at Kapila,vatthu, she refused to see him because she had a skin eruption. Anuruddha sent for her, and when she came with her face covered with a piece of cloth, Anuruddha learned of her condition. He advised her to build an assembly-hall for the monks as an act of merit.

¹⁸⁶ Cittā's story is at DhA 1:269 f, 275 (SD 54.22); J 1:201 f.

¹⁸⁷ The story of Sujā or Sujātā story at DhA 1:269, 275-280 (SD 54.232); J 1:201 f, 3:491 f, 494. Cf DA 3:716.

¹⁸⁸ She is mentioned in **Sakka,nāma S** (S 11.12/1:229), SD 54.19, = **Mahāli S** (S 11.13/1:239), SD 99.11.

¹⁸⁹ **Na Dubbhiya S** (S 11.7/893*/1:225), SD 54.7; **Sakka,nāma S** (S 11.12/1:229) = **Mahāli S** (S 11.13/1:239); **Gaha-ṭha Bandanā S** (S 11.18/925*/1:234), SD 86.2 = **Satthāra Vandanā S** (S 11.19/931*/1:235), SD 86.3 = **Saṅgha Vandanā S** (S 11.20/938*/1:236), SD 86.4; **Sambari Māyā S** (S 11.23/943*/1:239).

¹⁹⁰ On Sujā's boon from Sakra, see **Magha V** (Dha 2.7,99), SD 54.22.

Consenting to this deed of merit, she sold her jewels and ordered the construction of a two-storey hall, with Anuruddha himself supervising its construction. At the dedication ceremony, she gave alms-offering to the Buddha and the monks. At the conclusion of the meal, the Buddha sent for her. She was reluctant to go to him owing to her ailment but was persuaded to do so.

6.3.6.2 The Buddha then told her the story of her past. Long ago, she was the chief consort of the king of Benares. Being jealous of a dancing-girl whom the king loved, she contrived to get powdered scabs on the girl's body, clothes and bed. The girl developed boils and her skin was ruined.

At the conclusion of the Buddha's teaching, Rohiṇī was healed and her skin ailment and radiated a golden hue. Having heard the Dharma, she herself attained **streamwinning**.

6.3.6.3 Upon dying, Rohiṇī was reborn as a young female deity (*deva, puttā*) in Tāva,tiṃsa at the junction of the boundaries of four deities. On account of her beauty, a deity from each of these zones claimed her as his. When the matter was referred to Sakra, he asked them how much they each loved her since they saw her.

The 1st deity said: "Since I saw her, my thoughts are unable to settle—it's like a battle-drum!"

The 2nd said: "My thoughts for her run wild like a mountain torrent!"

The 3rd said: "When I first saw her, my eyes popped out like those of a crab!"

The 4th said: "My thoughts are unable to remain still—like a banner on a shrine!"

Then, Sakra said to them: "Friends, as for you, your thoughts are on fire. For my part, if I can have this apsara, I will live, but if I cannot have her, I shall surely die!"

The other deities relented, "Maharajah, there is no need of your dying!" So saying, they yielded the female deity to Sakra and went their way.¹⁹¹ She was Sakra's darling and delight. Whenever she said, "Let's go and sport in such and such," he could not refuse her. (**Rohiṇī Khattiya,kaññā Vatthu**, DhA 17.1-/3:295-299)

6.4 SENSUALITY AND RENUNCIATION

6.4.1 Pleasure and pain

6.4.1.1 What drove Siddhattha from his palace to seek awakening to the true nature of life? The simple answer is (or are): **pleasure and pain**. His youthful life of pleasure in the 3 mansions is the epitome of the sensual and sexual life described in the secular classic **Kāma Sutra**, compiled by Vatsyāyana around the Buddha's time or just after (400-200 BCE).¹⁹² As a privileged youth of the warrior class, Siddhattha, was *flooded* with all the sensuality that a modern youth or sexual person can only imagine about: he was said to have 40,000 beautiful girls to serve and entertain him in his pleasure palace.

We must imagine that he lived in this manner from 16 to 29 (when he renounced the world), that is, for 13 years. In other words, all his youth, he was oblivious of the real world out there (or here) (J 1:58).¹⁹³ Today, we know this kind of limitation of chosen experiences with its negative effects by a number of psychological names, such as **the Rapunzel syndrome**.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ They relented prob either out of love for Sakra, or from fear of being leaderless—but most likely from noblesse oblige, since the gods are essentially divine nobility. We see a similar case of relenting by noblesse oblige in Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother, when the Buddha asked if he wanted to renounce the world: see (**Arahatta**) **Nanda S** (U 3.2) esp SD 43.7 (1.2.2).

¹⁹² This secular work should not be confused with **Kāma S** (Sn 4.1) with just a contrary theme on overcoming sensual lust: SD 52.1 (6.1.2.2).

¹⁹³ On Siddhattha's life in the 3 palaces, see SD 52.1 (6.1).

¹⁹⁴ See SD 52.1 (7.2.2.1).

6.4.1.2 For a healthy person whose physical and sexual routine was like our daily round of work and rest, where sex was taken for granted, and who was shielded from the sufferings, even discomforts and displeasures, of the world, we can imagine how naive Siddhattha’s reaction was when he “first” saw the 4 sights, especially the first 3 sights of an old man, a sick man and a dead man—the embodiment of **decay, disease and death**—the defining pains of our daily life. [6.4.2.2]

6.4.2 The way out

6.4.2.1 The young Siddhattha was basically living as a god in his sensual heaven, very much like **Sakra** in Tāvātimsa with his numerous thousands of apsaras (heavenly nymphs) and other divine diversions. However, Sakra was moderated in his spiritual experiences by notably an epiphany¹⁹⁵ of his own impending death [2.2.1.3].

Understandably, this terrified him—we can imagine how the Bodhisattva must have felt being confronted by 4 epiphanies! Acting on this early warning, Sakra rushes to meet the Buddha to listen to the Dharma. By this timely strategy, he attains a new lease of divine life even as he listens to the Buddha. At the end of the teaching, he wins the fruit of streamwinning [§2.10.4].

6.4.2.2 The Bodhisattva Siddhattha, on the other hand, had no one to teach him such effective Dharma, except for his charioteer, who seemed to know more about the world than he did. Indeed, his charioteer, **Channa**, was the commentator who explained to him, in reflective language, the meaning and significance of the first 3 signs: Siddhattha learns, it seems, for the first time what decay, disease and death really are. The dramatic language here is instructive: whenever we truly realize the significance of the moment, it is always veritably a “first-time, first-person” experience.¹⁹⁶

Imagine, we have our own 3 pleasure-palaces (or even just one), and suddenly some authority comes along and tells us that our lease has ended and we have to vacate our premises! We would surely be devastated: our love-nest and home are gone in one blow, and we are homeless! What we had taken for granted and for real is no more.

Hence, for Siddhattha, it was the 4th sight—that of **the renunciant**—that spurred him to flee from the source of his pains: the pleasure-palaces. He left the house for his true home in open nature where the answer to life is rooted. The answer to life’s mystery, then, is the gradual but fundamental **renunciation** of the roots of pleasure, and with that renunciation, both pain and suffering are uprooted, too. What does this mean?

6.4.3 Right renunciation

6.4.3.1 Ideally, then, Siddhattha awakens as **the Buddha** because he has renounced rightly. This means that he **has** experienced those things that must be renounced. He has experienced all the pleasures that the senses have to offer, and he is ready to let all that go. He also learns that the source of all those pleasures is the body itself. In his readiness to sacrifice both—sense-pleasures and the body as their source—he discovers the **middle way**.

At the same time, he learns that, on a deeper level, there are 2 kinds of pain: that of the body and that of the mind. When we strongly feel the pains of the body (or the senses), we don’t like them, and so we seek their *opposite*. We look for pleasure in that very same body, which is the source of that pain, too. It’s like trying to put out fire with fire.

¹⁹⁵ On epiphany, see SD 52.1 (7.2.3+7.2.4).

¹⁹⁶ On the 4 signs, see **Sukhumāla S** (A 3.38), SD 5.16(19.4.2); also **Mahā’padāna S** (D 14,2.1-2.14) + SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4 + 1.0.4.5).

6.4.3.2 Then, recalling his childhood experience of dhyana [6.4.4.1], he realizes that the pleasure of the mind is not only truly enjoyable, meaning that it is experienced more fully and totally, right at the source, the mind itself. Hence, he has the fundamental understanding that **sex** is a mental experience that is forced upon the body.

When we mistake sex as merely a bodily experience, it is like when we see an artist painting a beautiful picture, and we think that all the beauty comes from his brushes, the colours, his fingers, his eyes and the canvas: the beauty comes from the artist's mind-heart. Similarly, good music does not come from the pianist's fingers, or musical piece, or the acoustics, or the orchestra, or even the player's techniques alone: the musician must *lose* himself in the music.

Siddhattha realizes it is a **wrong view** to think that the body is the source of our pleasures, and so be attached to that body; then, it becomes the source of *pain*. When he learns that the pleasure felt by the mind that owns *not* the body—a selfless mind—is a wholesome pleasure, he discovers the gateway to the path of awakening.

6.4.3.3 Since the body can distract us when we think that it is the real source of pleasure, we need to have a realistic understanding of that body. This means that we should neither indulge in negative bodily acts nor communicate negatively (speech)—this is what **the precepts or morality** is really about. Properly trained and restrained, our body and speech prepare our mind for true and good pleasure.

Then, we need to train the mind, too, in a similar way—that it is not lost in the body or in itself, but to stay focused on what it really is—*impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise* every moment. When impermanence is seen and understood, the mind becomes so peaceful that it is able to give up its idea of self and ascend to the most beautiful heights. This is **dhyana**, the mind truly and fully absorbed in itself, free of itself.

The mind or heart that emerges from such profound stillness is **the clear eye of wisdom** that sees true reality which awakens us from the sleep of ignorance, which frees us from the slavery of the senses, called craving. Up till then, we have been slaves of craving on account of our ignorance. We are always enslaved by a situation that we are ignorant about: know neither the meaning nor purpose of what we do or what we are. This is like we have handed our remote to some outsider, foreigner or alien. How do we get out of such a predicament?

We must turn away from looking out there: the truth and beauty are *not* out there; they are *in* here, within us. We need to look within for the great Artist or Musician. We would not know or see him until we train our hands, fingers and eyes to work rightly; we train all our senses to work together with right focus and direction. This is the **truth**; then, **beauty** flows through our fingers and body into the canvas as beautiful hues or as moving musical sounds. We are then beginning to understand the meaning of "truth is beauty, and beauty truth."

6.4.3.4 Hence, if we renounce the world or claim to do so, but we have *nothing* to renounce—we have neither truly experienced pleasure nor understood pain—how can we ever succeed in living the holy life? Our lack of such fundamental spiritual experience then blinds us with the wrong view that the "**gain, honour and praise**" (*lābha, sakkāra, siloka*) of monkhood or of religion are pleasurable and desirable. We have seriously mistaken the fingers for the music.

However, we don't have to go through all the pleasures and pains that the Buddha has experienced. He is willing to share his experiences, through the suttas and the methods of the arhats handed down to us in the true path-goers, the Dharma-spirited wayfarers. When we have not gone through what the Buddha himself has, then we need to keep on seeking the right measure of truth and beauty that will guide us to the path. We need to renounce our idea that the path is about "gain, honour and praise." This is what we need to renounce right now before we can even move in the direction of the right path.

6.4.4 Beyond pleasure and pain

6.4.4.1 The truth, then, is that young Siddhattha was not a libertine, a heartless body of perpetual pleasure, as depicted in the stories of his youth. He was a **spiritually prodigious child**. When he was only 7, while his father was celebrating an agricultural fertility rite—the ploughing festival—he showed no interest in that worldly event.¹⁹⁷ He quietly and happily sat under the jambul tree and went into deep meditation: in fact, it is said that he attained **the 1st dhyana**. In other words, even at an early age, he was able to transcend his physical senses to enjoy pure mental bliss.¹⁹⁸

6.4.4.2 This very same childhood experience would later inspire him to turn away from his deleterious self-mortification, the very antithesis of sense-indulgence. Looking through this childhood window into the free mind, the ascetic Siddhattha sees “**a pleasure not to be feared; a pleasure that is wholesome**.”¹⁹⁹ He has discovered the “middle way”—the path of awakening that avoids both the *rejection* of the body (self-mortification) and the *celebration* of it (sense-indulgence).

Siddhattha, now the Buddha, is able to stay on the middle way, fully awakened to spiritual liberation by discovering that *pain* arises from the body of pleasure, and that *suffering* is the work of the mind that is preoccupied with the senses, our self-created world. Freeing himself from both, he attains the awakening that transcends both the body and the mind. He attains the unconditioned, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond life and death, nirvana: he becomes **buddha**, the awakened and liberated.

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Sakka,pañha Sutta

The Discourse on Sakra’s Questions

D 21

CHAPTER 1

[2:263]

1.1 {344}²⁰⁰ Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying outside a brahmin village named Amba,saṇḍā (Mango Woods),²⁰¹ in the east of Rāja,gaha, in Magadha. There he resided in the north of the village, in **the Inda,-sāla** cave,²⁰² in Vediya [Vediya]²⁰³ mountain.

¹⁹⁷ On the ploughing festival (*vappa,maṅgala*), see SD 9 (9.10.3.4); SD 36.1 (5.4.3); SD 52.1 (5.1.2.2).

¹⁹⁸ On his childhood 1st-dhyana experience, see **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31), SD 49.4.

¹⁹⁹ **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,32.2), SD 49.4.

²⁰⁰ Running numbers within {braces} are those of the Burmese Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā (6th Council) romanized edition.

²⁰¹ **Amba,saṇḍā** was so called because it was located near some mango forests (*amba,saṇḍānam avidure*, DA 3:-697,7).

²⁰² “**Inda,sāla cave**” (*inda,sāla,gūha*): see (1.5.1 + map 1.5.1).

²⁰³ **Vediya(ka) mountain**: see (1.5.2).

Sakra wishes to see the Buddha

1.1.2 Now at that time, **Sakra**, the lord of the devas, felt a longing to see the Blessed One.²⁰⁴

Then, it occurred to Sakra, the lord of the devas:

“Where now is the Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one?”

1.1.3 Then, Sakra, the lord of the devas, saw that the Blessed One was *staying outside a brahmin village named Amba,saṅḍā, in the east of Rāja,gaha, in Magadha. There he resided in the north of the village, in the **Inda,sāla** cave, in Vediya mountain.*

1.1.4 Seeing thus, he addressed **the Tāvatiṃsa devas**:

“This Blessed One, sirs, is *staying outside a brahmin village named Amba,saṅḍā, in the east of Rāja,-gaha, in Magadha. There he resides in the north of the village, in the Inda,sāla cave, in Vediya mountain.*

Let us, sirs, go and visit the Blessed One, the arhat, fully self-awakened one.”

1.1.5 “So be it, good fortune is yours (*evam bhaddan tava*)!”²⁰⁵ the deities of Tāva,tīmsa replied to Sakra, the lord of the devas.²⁰⁶

Pañca,sikha

1.2 {345} Then, Sakra, the lord of the devas, addressed **Pañca,sikha** (the “five-crested”), the gandharva devaputra:²⁰⁷ **[264]**

“This Blessed One, dear Pañca,sikha,²⁰⁸ *is staying near a brahmin village named Amba,saṅḍā, in the east of Rāja,gaha, in Magadha. There he resides in the north of the village, in the Inda,sāla cave, in Vediya mountain.*

Let us, dear Pañca,sikha, go and visit the Blessed One, the arhat, fully self-awakened one.”

1.2.2 “So be it, good fortune is yours!” [§1.1.5] Pañca,sikha, the gandharva devaputra, replied to Sakra, the lord of the devas.

1.2.3 Taking along the veena of yellow bilva, followed, attending to Sakra, the lord of the devas.²⁰⁹

1.2.4 {346} Then, Sakra, the lord of the devas, surrounded by the Tāva,tīmsa devas led by Pañca,sikha, just as a strong man would stretch his flexed arm or flex his stretched arm, even so, disappeared from Tāva,tīmsa and appeared at Vediya mountain in the north of the brahmin village named Amba,saṅḍā, in the east of Rāja,gaha, in Magadha.

Vediya mountain

1.3 Now at that time, Vediya mountain became exceedingly bright, and so was the brahmin village of Amba,saṅḍā, by the might of the devas.

Indeed, the people in the villages all around said:

²⁰⁴ *Tena kho pana samayena sakkassa devānam-indassa ussukkaṃ udapādi bhagavantaṃ dassanāya.* On the reason for Sakra’s desire to meet the Buddha, see (2.2.2). Comy gives a long explanation (MA 3:697,19-698,23).

²⁰⁵ On

²⁰⁶ *Evam bhaddan tavā’ti kho devā tāvatīmsā sakkassa devānam-indassa paccassosum.* On *bhaddan tava*, see (1.4.2).

²⁰⁷ *Atha kho sakko devānam indo pañca,sikhaṃ gandhabba,deva.puttaṃ* [Be Ce so; Ee Se *ganhabba,puttaṃ*, “the young gandharva”] *āmantesi. A deva,putta* (lit, “deva’s son”)—anglicized as “devaputra”—also means “a young deva” or deity of low rank.

²⁰⁸ “Dear Pañca,sikha,” *tata pañca,sikha.*

²⁰⁹ *Beluva,paṅḍu,vīṇaṃ ādāya sakkassa devānam-indassa anucariyaṃ upāgami.* This is a great golden veena, yellow like ripe bilva (*beluva,pakkaṃ viya paṅḍu,vaṇṇaṃ suvaṇṇa,mahā.vīnaṃ*, SA 1:184,32). It is orig Māra’s: on how Sakra obtains it, see Sn 449 (**Mahā Padhāna S**, Sn 3,2) + SD 51.11 (3.3.2). On *beluva*, see M 77,29.2 (SD 49.5a).

“For sure, Vediya mountain is on fire today! Vediya mountain is burning today! Vediya mountain is blazing today! Why now is Vediya mountain exceedingly bright today, and the brahmin village of Amba,saṅḍa, too?”

They felt a sense of urgency; their hair was standing on end.

Sakra aska Pañca,sikha to see the Buddha

1.4 Then, Sakra, the lord of the devas, addressed **Pañca,sikha**, the gandharva devaputra:²¹⁰ [265]

“For someone like me, my dear Pañca,sikha, difficult to approach are the Tathagatas, when they are deep in solitude, meditating, rapt in dhyana!²¹¹

1.4.2 {347} But, my dear Pañca,sikhā, if you were to please the Blessed One first, and with your first having pleased him, then, after that, I will be able to see the Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one.”²¹² [§2.10.1]

“So be it, good fortune is yours!” [§1.1.5] Pañca,sikha the gandharva devaputra replied to Sakra, the lord of the devas.

1.4.3 Bringing along the veena of yellow bilva, he approached the Inda,sāla cave.

Then, he stood at one side, thinking: “Thus far will I be neither too far nor too near the Blessed One. He will hear my voice.”²¹³

Pañca,sikha’s song (pañcasikha,gīta.gāthā) [§1.7*] [5.1; 6]

1.4.4 {348} Standing at one side, **Pañca,sikha**, the gandharva devaputra, let his veena²¹⁴ of yellow bilva be heard,²¹⁵ and he recited²¹⁶ these verses regarding the Buddha, the Dharma,²¹⁷ the arhats and love.²¹⁸ [§1.6.4]

<p>1.5 <i>vande te pitaraṃ bhadde timbaruṃ sūriya,vacchase²²⁰ yena jātā’si kalyāṇī ānanda,jananī mama</i></p>	<p>(1)</p>	<p>O Bhaddā,²¹⁹ Suriya,vacchasā, I honour your father, Timbaru, who has sired such a beauty, the fount²²¹ of my joy.</p>	<p><i>b</i> <i>a</i></p>
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²¹⁰ On gandharva, see (5.4). “Deva,putra” (*deva,putta*), ie, a young or junior male deity.

²¹¹ *Durupasaṅkamā kho tāta pañcasikha tathāgatā mādisena, jhāyī jhānaratā, tad antaraṃ* [only Be; Be:Ka Ce Ee Se *tad anantaram*] *paṭisallīnā*. Sakra is unlikely to know that the Buddha is in dhyana as “absorption,” *jhāna*, which here is likely to mean simply “meditation.” On *jhāna* broadly as “meditation,” see SD 33.1b (4.4.3).

²¹² *Yadi pana tvarṃ tāta pañca,sikha bhagavantaṃ paṭhamāṃ pasādeyyāsi, tayā tāta paṭhamāṃ pasāditaṃ pacchā mayāṃ taṃ bhagavantaṃ dassanāya upasaṅkameyyāma arahantaṃ sammā,sambuddhan’ti.*

²¹³ *Ettāvatā me bhagavā n’eva atidūre bhavissati nāccāsanne, saddaṇ ca me sossatīti ekam antaṃ aṭṭhāsi.*

²¹⁴ On the veena (Hindi, “bin”), see (5.2.5).

²¹⁵ “Be heard,” *assāvesi*, “caused to be heard,” aor 2 sg of caus of *suṇāti*, “to hear.”

²¹⁶ *Abhāsi* (V 4:54,15), aor of *bhāsati*, “to speak (to), say, recite, call.”

²¹⁷ Ee so; Be Ce Se add *saṅghūpasaṅhitā*, “regarding the sangha,” here. “Arhats” here stands for the sangha [1.1.2.2].

²¹⁸ *Ekam antaṃ ṭhito kho pañca,sikho gandhabba,devaputto beluva,paṇḍu,vīṇaṃ assāvesi* [Se *veluva,paṇḍu,vīṇaṃ ādāya*], *imā ca gāthā abhāsi buddhūpasaṅhitā dhammūpasaṅhitā* [*saṅghūpasaṅhitā*, see prec n] *arahantūpasaṅhitā kāmūpasaṅhitā*. On the Buddha, the Dharma, arhats and love as themes, see (1.1.2.2).

²¹⁹ Comy on §1.6.3* says that her name is **Bhaddā**; since she is accomplished in body, she is called **Suriya,vacchasā**, “glory of the sun” (next line) (DA 3:704,18 f). See (1.3.1).

²²⁰ Throughout: Be + Comy Se *sūriya,vacchase*; Ce Ee *suriya,vaccase*. Comy explains *suriya,vacchasā* as meaning one “whose body, from toe to crown, is radiant like the sun” (DA 3:701,7-13). See (1.3.1).

²²¹ *Jananī*, “source, that which generates”; also “mother.” A wordplay.

- 1.5.2 *vāto'va sedakaṃ*²²² *kanto*
pānīyaṃ'va pipāsato
aṅgī,rasi piyā me'si
dhammo arahatāṃ iva [266] (2) Like a breeze to one who sweats,
like a drink to one who thirsts,
my beloved, you are sunshine,²²³
as the Dharma is to arhats.
- 1.5.3 *āturass'eva bhesajjāṃ*
bhojanaṃ'va jighacchato.
*parinibbāpaya (maṃ)*²²⁴ *bhadde*
jalantam iva vārinā (3) Just as medicine is to the sick,
just as food is to the hungry;
quench (me), O Bhaddā,
like water quenches the burning.
- 1.5.4 *sīt'odakaṃ*²²⁵ *pokkharāṇiṃ*
yuttaṃ kiñjakkha, reṇunā
nāgo ghammābhitatto'va
ogāhe te thanūdaraṃ (4) As an elephant, summer-scorched,²²⁶ *c*
plunges into a lotus lake's cool water, *a*
adrift with filament²²⁷ and pollen— *b*
let me plunge into your breast and belly.²²⁸
- 1.5.5 *accaṅkuso'va*²²⁹ *nāgo'va*²³⁰
*jitaṃ me tutta, tomaraṃ*²³¹
kāraṇaṃ na-p, pajānāmi
*sammatto lakkhaṇ'ūruyā*²³² (5) As an elephant heedless of the goad,
fretted by hook and pike,
I know not the force of my deeds,
drunken with the form of your thighs.
- 1.5.6 *tayi gedhita, citto'smi*²³³
cittaṃ vipariṇāmitaṃ
paṭigantuṃ na sakkomi
vaṅka, ghasto'va ambujo (6) To you my heart is bound,
my mind is twisted around.
No way can I turn back
as a fish hooked on its bait.
- 1.5.7 *vām'ūru*²³⁴ *saja maṃ bhadde*
saja maṃ manda, locane
palissaja maṃ kalyāṇi
etaṃ me abhipatthitaṃ. (7) O Bhaddā, fair of thigh, embrace me!²³⁵
Embrace me, O soft-sweet eye!
Embrace me, O beautiful one!
This is what I've longed for.

²²² Be Ee *sedakaṃ*; Ce Se *sedatāṃ*.

²²³ A wordplay. Comy says that she is so called because her body (*aṅga*) emit radiance (DA 3:701,22 f). See (2.3.2).

²²⁴ Ce Ee *maṃ*; Be Se omits (prob because it breaks the metre). It's possible to have *maṃ* if we read *parinibbāpay' maṃ*.

²²⁵ Be Ce Se *sīt'odakaṃ*; Ee *sīt'odakim*.

²²⁶ "Scorched by summer heat," *ghammābhitatto'va*: S 12.66/2:110,3 (SD 107.9), 12.68/118,6 (SD 70.11); Sn 1014 (5.1 Vatthu, gāthā) ; J 231/2:223,13*; PvA 114,13; VvA 40,8.

²²⁷ "Filament," *kiñjakkha*, ie, the hair-like stem of the stamen from its base to the anther: see [Parts of a lotus](#).

²²⁸ Comy: Like an elephant, having plunged into a lotus-lake, having drunk its fill, remains blissfully submerged in the water, only its trunk-tip is to be seen (DA 3:701,33-702,2).

²²⁹ *Accaṅkuso*, from *ati* (beyond) + *aṅkusa* (the goad), "beyond the control of the goad," ie, heedless of the mahout.

²³⁰ Be Ce *va*; Ee Se *ca*.

²³¹ See **Danta, bhūmi S** (M 125): an elephant-pike (*tomara, hattham*, M 125,12.11/3:133,18), SD 46.3. Cf **Soṇa Paṇḍita Cariya** (C 3.5): (the mind recoiled as if) "harshly bit by the goad" (*tutta, vega, hatam*, C 3.5,2*/95,19).

²³² Be Ce Se *lakkhaṇ'ūruyā*; Ee *lakkhaṇ'ūrasā*; Comy: *ūrasā* in text (DA 3:702m4), *ūruyā* in explanation (DA 3:702,-13). Cf Tha 27, 233; **Saṅkappa J** (J 251/ 2:275). By lectio difficilior, we must conclude the more difficult reading must be the right one. *Ūru*, "thighs," is mentioned in §1.5.7* (Be). U Ko Lay (Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, Myanmar), *Dīgha Nikāya* vol 2, tr it as "your pair of exquisite thighs." (2007:297).

²³³ Be Ce *gedhita, citto'smi*; Ee *gathita, citto'smi*; Se *gadhita, citto'smi*.

²³⁴ Be Se *vām'ūru*; Ce Ee Ke *vām'urū* (= J 2:443,11).

²³⁵ U Ko Lay: "My dear, who has a pair of exquisite thighs! Please put your arms around me." (op cit 2007:297).

- 1.5.8 *appako vata me santo
kāmo vellita,kesiyā
aneka,bhāvo²³⁶samuppādi
arahante'va dakkhiṇā* (8) Alas, so wanting in peace am I!
The desire for your curly hair
swells up in many ways—
like rightful gifts to the arhats.
- [267]
- 1.5.9 *yam me atthi kataṃ puññaṃ
arahantesu tādisu
taṃ me sabb'aṅga,kalyāṇi
tayā saddhiṃ vipaccataṃ²³⁷* (9) Whatever merit there is I've done
in the arhats such as these,
may it be beautiful in every way for me,
for it to be sweetly ripened with you.
- 1.5.10 *yam me atthi kataṃ puññaṃ
asmiṃ pathavi,maṇḍale²³⁸
taṃ me sabb'aṅga,kalyāṇi
tayā saddhiṃ vipaccataṃ* (10) Whatever merit there is I've done
in this mandala of the earth,²³⁹
O altogether fair-limbed one, may it
be ripened so that I'm with you.²⁴⁰
- 1.5.11 *sakya,putto'va jhānena
ekodi nipako sato
amataṃ muni jigimsāno²⁴¹
tam ahaṃ sūriya,vacchase²⁴³* (11) Just as the Sakya son is one
in dhyana, adept and mindful,
the silent sage desiring the death-free²⁴²—
so I desire you, Suriya,vacchasā!
- 1.5.12 *yathā pi muni nandeyya
patvā sambodhim uttamaṃ
evaṃ nandeyyaṃ²⁴⁴ kalyāṇi
missī,bhāvaṃ²⁴⁵ gato tayā* (12) Just as the sage would delight,
having won supreme self-awakening—
so, too, O fair one, would I be blissful
to become one with you.
- 1.5.13 *sakko ce me varaṃ dajjā
tāvatiṃsānam issaro
tāhaṃ bhaddē vareyyāhe
evaṃ kāmo daḷho mama* (13) If Sakra, almighty lord of the 33,
were to grant me a boon,
'tis you, Bhaddā, that I would ask—
so strong is my love for you.

²³⁶ Be Ke Se *aneka,bhāvo*; Ce *aneka,pāgo*; Ee *aneka,bhāgo*. Ke n *anekabhāgo'ti'pi pātho*. The 3rd syllable should be resolved to make metre: *anek'bhāvo ...* .

²³⁷ Be Ee Comy Se *vipaccataṃ*; Ce *vipaccitaṃ*.

²³⁸ Be Ce Se *paṭhavi,maṇḍale*; Ee *puṭhavi,maṇḍale* = J 5:156,9. Cf *puṭhavi,maṇḍale*, Sn 990. Both readings have the same sense.

²³⁹ The 2 lowest heavens—those of the 4 great kings (*cātu,mahā,rājika*) and the 33 (*tāva,timsa*)—are “earth-bound” realms [SD 54.31 (3.5.1)]. The earth looks like a circle (*maṇḍala*) from that height—the gods can see this, but earthlings then believed the earth was like a flat disc. In cosmological and meditative terms, we must see a mandala (anglicization of *maṇḍala*) as being 3-dimensional and comprising various components or quadrants (as a world-system).

²⁴⁰ Comy: Let all that be the fruit to just be with you (*taṃ sabbaṃ tayā saddhim eva vipākaṃ detu*, DA 3:10 f).

²⁴¹ Be *jigīsāno*; Ce Ee Se *jigimsāno*. 2nd syllable must be resolved to keep metre: *am'taṃ muni ...* .

²⁴² This is, of course, Pañca,sikha's unawakened opinion, since the Buddha is already awakened and need not seek nirvana any further. However, a better explanation is given below: Pañca,sikha composed this song at a time when Gotama was still seeking awakening [§1.6.2]. On his reason for composing the song [§163-164].

²⁴³ Resolution of 4th syllable needed to keep metre: *sū'rya ...* .

²⁴⁴ Be Ke Se *nandeyyaṃ*; Ce Ee *nandeyya*.

²⁴⁵ Be Ee Se:MC *missī,bhāvaṃ*; Ce *missi,bhāvaṃ*; Ke Se:SR *missa,bhāvaṃ*.

- 1.5.14 *sālaṃ va na ciraṃ phullaṃ*
pitaraṃ te sumedhase
vandamāno namassāmi
*yassās'etādisī pajā'ti*²⁴⁷ (14) As a sal tree just in full flower,²⁴⁶
 so well wise is your father:
 Honouring, I worship him,
 for a peerless offspring such as this!

1.6 {349} When this was said,²⁴⁸ the Blessed One said to Pañca,sikha, the gandharva devaputra:²⁴⁹
 “The sound of your strings, Pañca,sikha, blended [harmonized] well with your singing, and your singing blended well with the sound of your strings.²⁵⁰ Moreover, Pañca,sikha, neither did your veena out-pace your song, nor your singing out-pace your veena.²⁵¹ [5.2]

1.6.2 When, Pañca,sikha, did you compose these verses regarding the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and love?” [§1.4.4]

“It was this once before the great awakening, [268] when the Blessed One was dwelling at the foot of the goatherd banyan tree, on the Nerañjarā bank, in Uruveḷā.²⁵²

1.6.3 At that time, bhante,²⁵³ I was longing for the one name Bhaddā Sūriya,vacchasā,²⁵⁴ the daughter of Timbaru, the king of the gandharvas.

But, bhante, that sister loves another named Sikhaṇḍī,²⁵⁵ the son of the charioteer Mātali.²⁵⁶ She favours him.²⁵⁷

1.6.4 Since, bhante, I was unable to obtain that sister by any means,²⁵⁸
 bringing along the veena of yellow bilva, I went to the abode of Timbaru, king of the gandharvas,
 and let the veena of yellow bilva be heard, as I recited these verses
 regarding the Buddha, the Dharma, the arhats and love,²⁵⁹ thus: [§1.4.4]

²⁴⁶ Here, the imagery is that of life and abundance, with hints of beauty and fecundity. On “A sal tree just in flower,” cf “early spring in a joyous season” in **Subhā Thī** (Tha 371), SD 20.7.

²⁴⁷ Comy reads this is **yass' as' etādisī pajā'ti yassa asi etādisī dhītā**, “for having a daughter such as this” (DA 3:-703,34).

²⁴⁸ *Evaṃ vutte*: notice that *vutte* here refers to Pañca,sikha's singing or recitation.

²⁴⁹ Note that the Buddha does not criticize Pañca,sikha for his “worldly” song. While living as a young man in his 3 palaces, Siddhattha has himself often heard such song. It is “old sweet song” that has lost its flavor for him, but it reminds him of how far he has progressed since then.

²⁵⁰ *Saṃsandati kho te pañca,sikha tanti-s,saro gīta-s,sarena, gīta-s,saro ca tanti-s,sarena*. The Buddha's comment here on Pañca,sikha's voice prob means that they are sung as smoothly as the path of a hawk circling the sky; not attacking the syllable with excessive force, nor with the pressure of the tongue, nor too loudly, nor with a quivering voice. The syllables are recited just as a tigress carries her cubs with her teeth, neither biting them nor holding them so loosely that they may fall. On Vedic chant, see Rowell 1992:87 f.

²⁵¹ *Na ca pana* [Se *n'eva pana*] *te pañca,sikha tanti-s,saro gīta-s,saraṃ ativattati, gīta-s,saro ca tanti-s,saraṃ*.

²⁵² *Ekam idaṃ bhante samayaṃ bhagavā uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre aja,pāla,nigrodhe* [Ce Ee aja-pāla.nigrodha,mule] *paṭhamābhisambuddho*.

²⁵³ Note that the gandharva Pañca,sikha addresses the Buddha politely as “**bhante**” (P & anglicized), “Venerable sir,” from the start.

²⁵⁴ On her name, see §1.5.1* n.

²⁵⁵ Be Ce Se *sikhaṇḍī*; Ee *sikhaddhī*. See Mvst 2:190.

²⁵⁶ *Sā kho pana bhante bhaginī para,kāminī hoti, sikhaṇḍī nāma mātaliṣṣa saṅgāhakassa putto*.

²⁵⁷ *Tam abhikaṅkhati*.

²⁵⁸ *Yato kho ahaṃ bhante taṃ bhaginim nālatthaṃ kenaci pariyāyena*.

²⁵⁹ On these categories, see §1.4.4.

Pañca,sikha's song (reprise) [§1.5*]

1.7	(1)	<i>O Bhaddā, Suriya,vacchasā, who has sired such a beauty,</i>	<i>I honour your father, Timbaru,²⁶⁰ the fount of my joy.</i>	(15) ²⁶¹
1.7.2	(2)	<i>Like a breeze to one who sweats, my beloved, you are sunshine,</i>	<i>like a drink to one who thirsts, as the Dharma is to arhats.</i>	(16)
1.7.3	(3)	<i>Just as medicine is to the sick, quench (me), O Bhaddā,</i>	<i>Just as food is to the hungry; like water quenches the burning.</i>	(17)
1.7.4	(4)	<i>As an elephant, summer-scorched, adrift with filament and pollen—</i>	<i>plunges into a lotus lake's cool water, let me plunge into your breast and belly.</i>	(18)
1.7.5	(5)	<i>As an elephant heedless of the goad, I know not the force of my deeds,</i>	<i>fretted by hook and pike, drunken with the form of your thighs.</i>	(19)
1.7.6	(6)	<i>To you my heart is bound, No way can I turn back</i>	<i>my mind is twisted around. as a fish hooked on its bait.</i>	(20)
1.7.7	(7)	<i>O Bhaddā, fair of thigh, embrace me! Embrace me, O beautiful one!</i>	<i>Embrace me, O soft-eye! This is what I've longed for.</i>	(21)
1.7.8	(8)	<i>Alas, so wanting in peace am I! swells up in many ways—</i>	<i>The desire for your curly hair like rightful gifts to the arhats.</i>	(22)
1.7.9	(9)	<i>Whatever merit there is I've done may it be beautiful in every way for me,</i>	<i>in the arhats such as these, for it to be sweetly ripened with you.</i>	(23)
1.7.10	(10)	<i>Whatever merit there is I've done O altogether fair-limbed one, may it</i>	<i>in this mandala of the earth, be ripened so that I'm with you.</i>	(24)
1.7.11	(11)	<i>Just as the Sakya son is one the silent sage desiring the death-free—</i>	<i>in dhyana, adept and mindful, so I desire you, Suriya,vacchasā!</i>	(25)
1.7.12	(12)	<i>Just as the sage would delight, so, too, O fair one, would I be blissful</i>	<i>having won supreme self-awakening— to become one with you.</i>	(26)
1.7.13	(13)	<i>If Sakra, almighty lord of the 33, 'tis you, Bhaddā, that I would ask—</i>	<i>were to grant me a boon, so strong is my love for you.</i>	(27)
1.7.14	(14)	<i>As a sal tree just in full flower, Honouring, I worship him,</i>	<i>so well wise is your father: for a peerless offspring such as this!</i>	(28)

1.7.15 When this was said, bhante, Bhaddā Suriya,vacchasā said to me:

'But, sir, I have never seen this Blessed One face to face. I've only heard of him when I went to dance before the Tāvatiṃsa devas in the Sudhamma hall.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ These verses are to be read line by line from left to right. For nn, see those at §1.5.

²⁶¹ **The verses** of this Sutta, incl their reprises, are given running numbers.

²⁶² Comy remarks that this is when Sakra uttered his eulogy in **Mahā, govinda S** (D 19,3/2:221), SD 63.4 (DA 3:739,-8-10).

Since you indeed laud that Blessed One, let us meet today!²⁶³ [269]

1.7.16 Thus, Blessed One, I've not met with that sister after that till this day."²⁶⁴

Sakra's visit (sakkûpasāṅkama)

1.8 {350} Then, it occurred to Sakra, the lord of the devas:

"Pañca,sikha, the gandharva devaputra, and the Blessed One are engaged in friendly conversation with one another."

1.8.2 So, he called out to Pañca,sikha:

"My dear Pañca,sikha, salute the Blessed One for me, saying: 'Sakra, Blessed One, the lord of the devas, along with his entourage, salute²⁶⁵ with their heads at the Blessed One's feet.'"²⁶⁶

"So be it, good fortune is yours!" [§1.1.5] replied Pañca,sikha, the gandharva devaputra to Sakra, the lord of the devas, and saluted the Blessed One, saying:

"Sakra, Blessed One, the lord of the devas, along with his ministers and entourage, salute with their heads at the Blessed One's feet."

1.8.3 "Let it be so, Pañca,sikha. May Sakra, lord of the devas, along with his ministers and entourage, be happy!²⁶⁷ For, devas, humans, asuras, nagas, gandharvas and whatever other crowds and masses there be, desire happiness.²⁶⁸" [§2.1.1]

1.8.4 {351} For, that is the way that tathagatas salute [greet] such mighty yakshas. Thus saluted by the Blessed One, **Sakra**, the lord of the devas, entered the Inda,sāla cave, saluted the Blessed One, and stood at one side.

The Tāva,timsa devas, too, *entered the Inda,sāla cave, saluted the Blessed One, and stood at one side.*

Pañca,sikha, the gandharva devaputra, too, *entered the Inda,sāla cave, saluted the Blessed One, and stood at one side.*²⁶⁹

Inda,sāla cave becomes a Dharma-hall

1.9 At that time, what is uneven in the Inda,sāla cave became even; the narrow became wide; darkness disappeared from the cave, light appeared.²⁷⁰ Such was [270] the might of the devas.

1.9.2 {352} Then, the Blessed One said to Sakra, the lord of the devas:²⁷¹

²⁶³ *Yato kho tvaṃ mārisa taṃ bhagavantam kittesi, hotu no samāgamo'ti.* Here *no* is the pronoun "us" (royal pl).

²⁶⁴ *So yeva no bhante tassā bhaginiyā saddhiṃ samāgāmo ahoṣi, dāni,tato pacchā'ti.* Here *no* mean "not."

²⁶⁵ "Respectfully salute," **abhivādehi**, imp 2 sg caus of *abhivādati* (*abhi*, "towards" + √VAD, to speak), "to salute (respectfully, on arrival and at departure)." Cf *abhivandati* (*abhi* + √VAND, to greet), "to salute respectfully, honour."

²⁶⁶ *Abhivādehi me tvaṃ tāta pañca,sikha bhagavantam* "Sakko bhante devānam indo sāmaccosa,parijano bhagavatopāde sirasā vandatīti.

²⁶⁷ *Evaṃ sukhī hotu pañca,sikha sakko devānam indo sāmacco sa,parijano.*

²⁶⁸ *Sukha,kāmā hi devā manussā asurā nāgā gandhabbā ye c'aññe santi puthu,kāyāti.*

²⁶⁹ Note that Pañca,sikha has earlier left the cave to invite Sakra and the rest into the cave to meet the Buddha; hence, he is the last to enter—he salutes the Buddha once again, this time as part of the entourage, and both out of respect for the Buddha (as teacher and host) and for Sakra (as his master).

²⁷⁰ *Tena kho pana samayena inda,sāla,guhā visamā santī samā sampādi* [Ee so; Be Ce Se:SR *samapādi* both times], *sambadhā santī urundā* [Be Ce Ee *urundā*; Be:Ka *uruddā*; Se:SR *uruddhā*] *sampādi, andha,kāro guhāyaṃ antaradhāyi, āloko udapādi.*

²⁷¹ Note here that the Buddha greets Sakra first: see D 5,7 (SD 22.8); D 4,6 (SD 30.5); SD 45.16 (2.5.3(2)).

“This is wonderful for **the venerable Kosiya!** This is amazing for the venerable Kosiya, who has much work, who has much duties—that he should come here!”²⁷²

1.9.3 “For a long time, bhante, I’ve wished to come and see the Blessed One, but was held back by one task or another of the Tāva,timsa devas, but was unable to come and see the Blessed One.”²⁷³

1.9.4 There was this one occasion, bhante, when the Blessed One was residing in **the Saḷala cottage**, outside Sāvattḥī.²⁷⁴ Then, bhante, I went to Sāvattḥī to see the Blessed One.

Bhuñjati

1.10 Now at that time, the Blessed One was seated, wrapt in some samadhi.

1.10.2 And **Bhuñjati**,²⁷⁵ a female attendant²⁷⁶ of Vessavaṇa, the great king,²⁷⁷ who was waiting on the Blessed One, stood worshipping with palms together (in anjali).²⁷⁸

1.10.3 Then, I said to Bhuñjati:

‘Sister, please salute the Blessed One on my behalf, thus:

“Sakra, bhante, the lord of the devas, along with his ministers and entourage, salute the Blessed One with their heads at his feet.”

1.10.4 When this was said, that Bhuñjati²⁷⁹ said to me:

“This is not the time, sir, to see the Blessed One. He is in solitude.” [271]

1.10.5 In that case, sister, when the Blessed One has emerged from that samadhi, please salute the Blessed One on my behalf, thus:

“*Sakra, bhante, the lord of the devas, along which his ministers and entourage, salute the Blessed One with their heads at his feet.*”

1.10.6 Did that sister, bhante, salute the Blessed One on my behalf? Does the Blessed One recall that sister’s words?”

“She did salute me, lord of the devas. I remember that sister’s words.

1.10.7 And this, too: the sound of the venerable’s chariot-wheels roused me from that samadhi!”²⁸⁰

²⁷² *Atha kho bhagavā sakkam devānam indam etad avoca “acchariyam idam āyasmato kosiyaṃ, abhutam idam āyasmato kosiyaṃ tāva bahu,kicassa bahu,karaṇīyassa yad idam idh’āgamanan’ti.*

²⁷³ *Cira,paṭikāhaṃ bhante bhagavantam dassanāya upasaṅkamitu,kāmo, api ca devānam tāvatimsānam kehici kehici [Be Ce Ee so; Se:SR kehici] kicca,karaṇīyehi vyāvaṇo, evāhaṃ nāsakkhim bhagavantam dassanāya upasaṅkam-itum. Cf Vakkali S (S 22.87/3:120,23) in ref to Vakkali (SD 8.8).*

²⁷⁴ *Ekam idam bhante samayam bhagavā sāvattḥiyam viharati salaḷāgārake. Salaḷāgāra* or Salaḷa,ghara was a cell in Jeta,vana. which Comy defines as “a fragrant cell of salaḷa wood” (*salaḷa,maya,gandha.kuṭi*) (DA 3:705,24). Elsewhere, it was said to be a leaf-hut of salaḷa trees (*salaḷa,rukkha,maya*) or a hut with a salaḷa tree at its door (SA 3:263,2-3). Comy to **Mahā’padāna S** (DA 2:407,8-11) says that Salaḷa,ghara is one of the 4 chief dwellings, (*mahā,-gehāni*) of Jeta,vana. It was built by Pasenadi at a cost of 100,000. **Salaḷāgāra S** (S 52.8) mentions Anuruddha as staying therein (S 52.8/5:300). This visit by Sakra is not mentioned in the suttas as we have them. [2.1.2]

²⁷⁵ Be *bhūjati*; Ce Ee *bhuñjati*; Se *bhujagī*. See (4.2).

²⁷⁶ On *paricārikā*, see (1.4.3).

²⁷⁷ **Vessavaṇa** (also called Kuvera) is the great king (*mahārāja*), divine protector of the northern quarter and lord of the yakshas: see SD 54.3a (3.3.3.1); on his realm, SD 52.1 (2.2.1.7).

²⁷⁸ *Bhūjati ca nāma vessavaṇassa mahā,rājassa paricārikā bhagavantam paccupaṭṭhitā hoti, pañjalikā namassa-mānā tiṭṭhati.* See (4.2).

²⁷⁹ “That Bhuñjati,” *sā bhūjati* (Be Ke). This seems to hint at a mild annoyance of Sakra’s part. See (4.2.1)

²⁸⁰ *Apicāham āyasmato nemi,saddena* [Be Ee *nemi,saddena*; Se *cakka,nemi,saddena*] *tamhā samādhimhā vuṭṭhi-to’ti.* See (2.1.1.2). Note here that it is *not* that the Buddha is “annoyed” by the noise, but that Sakra *has* made that noise. As a rule, visitors would park their chariots, elephants, etc, at a safe distance, and then quietly walk the rest of the way to meet the Buddha: see eg, “Ajātasattu Vedehi,putta of Magadha, went on his tusker as far as the ground would permit, dismounted and went up to the gate of the pavilion on foot.” (D 2,11/1:50), SD 8.10.

1.11 ²⁸¹“Bhante, I have heard and understood from these devas themselves who arose in the Tāva,-
tiṃsa host well before us that when the tathagatas, the arhats, full self-awakened ones, arise in the world,
the heavenly hosts increase, the asura hosts decrease.”²⁸²

I have myself, bhante, witnessed this²⁸³ that when the tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened
has arisen in the world, **the heavenly hosts increase, the asura hosts decrease.**²⁸⁴

The story of Gopaka (gopaka,vatthu)²⁸⁵

1.11.2 {353} Right here, bhante, in Kapila,vatthu, there was a Sakya lady named **Gopikā**, deeply faith-
ful in the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha, well-fulfilled in moral virtue, who, having abandoned the
idea of womanhood, cultivated that of manhood.²⁸⁶

1.11.3 With the body’s breaking up, after death, she arose in a heavenly world, in fellowship with the
Tāva,tiṃsa devas, attaining sonship with us.²⁸⁷

And there they knew her thus: ‘Gopaka devaputra, Gopaka the deva-son.’

1.11.4 Now, bhante, there were **3 other monks** who, having followed [lived] the holy life under the
Blessed One, were reborn amongst the lowly host of gandharvas.²⁸⁸

They, surrounded by the 5 cords of sensual pleasures, indulging in them, come here to serve and enter-
tain us.²⁸⁹

1.11.5 Gopaka devaputra rebuked²⁹⁰ their serving and entertaining us: **[272]**

‘**Where’s the face,**²⁹¹ sirs? [Where’s your face, sirs?] You’ve not listened to the Blessed One’s Dharma!
[You’ve not heard the Blessed One’s Dharma]!’²⁹²

1.11.6 Here am I, having been a woman, *deeply faithful in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha,
well-fulfilled in moral virtue, who, having abandoned the idea of womanhood, cultivated that of manhood.*
[§1.11.2]

²⁸¹ Note the abrupt break here, probably a moment of awkward silence. The suave Apollo-like Sakra then diplomat-
ically turns to divine sweet talk—about a Sakya woman (in keeping with the trend initiated by Pañca,sikha)—to put
himself in good light again, as it were. [§2.1.1.3]

²⁸² *Ye te bhante devā amhehi paṭhama,taraṃ tāvatimsa,kāyaṃ upapannā, tesam me sammukhā sutam sammu-
khā paṭiggahitam “yadā tathāgatā loke uppajjanti arahanto sammā,sambuddhā, dibbā kāyā paripūrenti, hāyanti
asura,kāyā’ti.*

²⁸³ “I have myself witnessed this,” *tam me idam bhante sakkhi,ditṭham.*

²⁸⁴ See **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18,12/2:208), SD 62.3, qu in **Mahā,govinda S** (D 19,3/2:222), SD 63.4.

²⁸⁵ This is a **“nested” story**: note the 3 layers of narrative. The narrator is Sakra (1st layer); he speaks of Gopaka
(2nd layer), who rebukes the gandharvas, etc (3rd layer). Then, there is the sutta narrator who is the over-all narrator.
See (4.3).

²⁸⁶ *Sā itthi,cittam* virājetvā purisa,cittam** bhāvetvā. **[Be *itthitam* but *itthi,citta* below; Ee Se *itthi,cittam*];
****[Be *purisattam* but *purisa,cittam* below; Ee Se *purisa,cittam*].

²⁸⁷ *Kāyassa bheda param maraṇā sugatim saggam lokam upapannā, devānam tāvatimsānam saavyatam
amhākam puttattam ajjhupagatā.*

²⁸⁸ *Aññe’pi bhante tayo bhikkhū bhagavati brahma,cariyam caritvā hīnam gandhabba,kāyaṃ upapannā.*

²⁸⁹ *Te pañcahi kāma,guṇehi samappitā samaṅgī,bhūtā paricārayamānā amhākam upaṭṭhānam āgacchanti amhā-
kam pāricariyam.*

²⁹⁰ “Rebuked,” *paṭicodesi*, aor 3 sg of *paṭicodeti* (*paṭi*, “against” + √*cuD* (to impel) →*codeti*, “to accuse”), “to ac-
cuse, blame, reprove” (V 4:217; M 12/1:72 x2; U 45).

²⁹¹ “Where’s the face ... ?” **kuto,mukhā**. Comy is not satisfactory and no translation so far seemed to have under-
stood the full significance of this idiom. See (1.4.1).

²⁹² *Kuto,mukhā nāma tumhe mārisā tassa bhagavato dhammam assuttha* [Be Ce Se:MC *assutthā*, aor 2 pl of
suṇoti (Geiger 1994: §159); Ee *assutvā*; Se:SR *āyūhiṭṭha*, aor 2 pl of *āyūhati*, “to strive”].

1.11.7 With the body's breaking up, after death, I arose in a heavenly world, in fellowship with the Tāva,tiṃsa devas, attaining the sonship of Sakra, the lord of the devas!

And there they knew me thus: "Gopaka devaputra, Gopaka the deva-son."

1.11.8 But, you, sirs, having followed the holy life under the Blessed One, *have been reborn in the lowly host of gandharvas!*

What a sorry sight, sirs, when we see our fellows-in-Dharma *reborn amongst the lowly host of gandharvas!*²⁹³

1.11.9 Bhante, of these devas, rebuked by Gopaka devaputra, two of them obtained mindfulness here and now, and joined the host of Brahma's ministers (*brahma,purohita*), but *one* deva still clung to a life of sensuality.

Gopaka's verses

{354}

- 1.12 *upāsikā cakkhumato ahoṣim
nāmam pi mayhaṃ ahu gopikā'ti
buddhe ca dhamme ca abhippasannā
saṅghaṃ c'upaṭṭhāsim pasanna,cittā* (29)²⁹⁴ 'A lay-woman follower was I of the one
with eyes: by name **Gopikā** was I,
deeply faithful, the Buddha, the Dharma and
the sangha I supported with a heart of faith.
- 1.12.2 *tass'eva buddhassa sudhammatāya
sakkassa putto'mhi mahā'nubhāvo
mahā,jutiko ti,divûpapanno
jānanti maṃ idhā'pi gopako'ti* (30) By virtue of the Buddha's good Dharma,
a Sakya son of great glory am I, who has
arisen in great radiance 'mongst the 33 devas:
they know me here as **Gopaka**.
- 1.12.3 *ath'addasaṃ bhikkhavo diṭṭha,pubbe
gandhabba,kāyûpagate vasīne
imehi te gotama,sāvakāse
ye ca mayam pubbe manussa,bhūtā* (31) Then, I saw monks I've seen before,
arisen and living amongst the gandharva host.
They were Gotama's disciples,
when we were humans before.
- 1.12.4 *annena pānena upaṭṭhahimhā
pādûpasaṅgayha²⁹⁵ sake nivesane [273]
kuto,mukhā nāma ime bhavanto
buddhassa dhammaṃ na paṭiggahesuṃ²⁹⁸* (32) I supported them with food and drink,
washing their feet in my own home.²⁹⁶
Where's the face,²⁹⁷ these good sirs
who grasped not the Buddha's Dharma?
- 1.12.5 *paccattaṃ veditabbo hi dhammo
sudesito cakkhumatānubuddho
aham hi tumh'eva upāsamaṇo
sutvāna ariyāna subhāsītāni* (33) For, the Dharma must be known for oneself,
well taught by the eyed one and his disciples,
For I, serving only you,
have heard the good words of the nobles.
- (To the 3 monks:)
- 1.12.6 *sakkassa putto'mhi mahā'nubhāvo
mahā,jutiko ti,divûpapanno* A Sakya's son of great glory am I, who have
arisen in great radiance 'mongst the 33 devas.

²⁹³ *Duddiṭṭha,rûpaṃ vata bho addasāma, ye mayam addasāma saha,dhammike hīnaṃ gandhabba,kāyaṃ upapanne'ti.*

²⁹⁴ **The verses** of this Sutta, incl their reprises, are given running numbers.

²⁹⁵ Be Ee Se *upasaṅgayha*; Ce *upamaggayha*. **Upasaṅgayha** indecl (absol of *upa*, "up close" + *saṅgaṇhāti*, "to favour, treat kindly"), "taking hold of, claspng."

²⁹⁶ On the significance of the above 2 lines, see (4.3.1.3).

²⁹⁷ On the significance of "Where's the face ... ?" see (4.3.1.2).

²⁹⁸ Be ... *dhammāni paṭiggahesuṃ*; Ce ... *dhammāhi paṭiggahesuṃ*; Ee Se ... *dhammaṃ na paṭiggahesuṃ*.

- tumhe pana seṭṭham upāsamānā
anuttaram brahma,cariyam caritvā* (34) But you, having served the best,
had lived the peerless holy life.
- 1.12.7 *hīnaṃ kāyaṃ upapannā bhavanto
anānulomā bhavatūpapatti
duddiṭṭha,rūpaṃ vata addasāma
saha,dhammike hīna,kāyūpapanne* (35) You, good sirs, have arisen in a lowly host,
contrary to arising in progress.
What a sorry shape we see you to be,
fellows in Dharma arisen in a lowly host!
- 1.12.8 *gandhabba,kāyūpagatā bhavanto
devānam āgacchatha pāricariyam
agāre vasato mayhaṃ
imaṃ²⁹⁹ passa visesataṃ* (36) You, sirs, have arisen in the gandharva host,
you come to serve the devas.
For me, see this distinction, *d*
one living a household life! *c*
- 1.12.9 *itthī hutvā sv-ajja pumo'mhi devo
dibbehi kāmehi samaṅgi,bhūto*
(Sakra:)
*te coditā gotama,sāvakena
samvegam āpādu³⁰⁰ samecca³⁰¹ gopakaṃ* (37) They, rebuked by Gotama's disciple,
felt samvega, heeded Gopaka:
- 1.12.10 *handa vitāyāma³⁰² vyāyāma³⁰³
mā no mayam para,pessā ahumhā*
[274] *tesam duve vīriyam ārabhimsu
anussaram gotama,sāsanāni* (38) "Come, let us strive, let us exert ourselves!
Let us not be servants of others!"
Two of them made an effort,
recalling Gotama's teachings.
- 1.12.11 *idh'eva cittāni virājayitvā
kāmesu ādīnavam addasaṃsu
te kāma,samyojana,bandhanāni
pāpima,yogāni³⁰⁴ duraccayāni* (39) Right here their minds are cleansed of dust:
they saw the danger of sense-pleasures.
They broke the bonds and fetters,
the evil one's yokes, so hard to overcome.
- 1.12.12 *nāgo'va sandāna,guṇāni³⁰⁵ chetvā
deve tāvatimse atikkamimsu
sa,indā devā sa,pajāpatikā
sabbe sudhammāya sabhāy'upaviṭṭhā* (40) Like an elephant breaking tethers and bonds,
they crossed beyond the Tāva,timsa devas,
along with Indra, with Pajāpatī,³⁰⁶
all seated in the Sudhamma hall.
- 1.12.13 *tesam nisinnānam abhikkamimsu
vīrā virāgā virajaṃ karontā
te disvā samvegam akāsi vāsavo
devābhībhū deva,gaṇassa majjhe* (41) Of those who were seated, they went up to
the heroes becoming passion-free, dust-free.
Vāsava, the overlord of devas, in the midst
of the deva-host, seeing them, felt samvega:

²⁹⁹ Be Ce Se *imaṃ*; Ee *idaṃ*.

³⁰⁰ **Āpādu** (also *āpāduṃ*), aor 3 pl of *apajjati*, "to come to, attain, undergo."

³⁰¹ *Samecca*: Comy glosses with "going with" (*samāgantvā*, DA 3:708,35), which I take figuratively.

³⁰² Be *viyāyāma*; Ce *byāyamāma*; Ee *vitāyāma*; Se *vigāyāma*. Comy glosses **vitāyāma** with *uyyamāma* (DA 3:709,-1), 1 imp pl of *uyyamati*, "to exert oneself, strive after."

³⁰³ Be *vyāyāma*; Ce Ee Se:MC *viyāyamāma*; Se:SR *vigāyamāma*. Comy: *viyāyamāma* = *vyāyamāma* (DA 3:709,1).

The usu form is **vāyamati** (*vi* + *ā* + √YAM, to reach), "to struggle, strive, endeavor, exert oneself." The n *vāyāma* means "effort."

³⁰⁴ Be Ee *pāpima,yogāni*; Ke Se *pāpimato yogāni*.

³⁰⁵ Be *sannāni guṇāni*; Ce Ee *sandāna,guṇāni*; Se *santāni guṇāni*.

³⁰⁶ Comy says that **Pajā,patī** (angl as Prajapati) "sits with" (*upaviṭṭha*) Sakra (DA 3:709,17-19): [4.3].

- 1.12.14 *imehi te hīna,kāyûpapannā
deve tāvatimse abhikkamanti
samvega,jātassa vaco nisamma
so gopako vāsavam ajjhabhāsi* (42) “By these born in a lowly host
have the Tāvatiṃsa devas been overcome!”
Considering this cry of samvega,
Gopaka spoke to Vāsava:
- 1.12.15 *buddho pan’ind’atthi manussa,loke
kāmābhibhū sakyā,munīti ñāyati
tass’eva te puttā satiyā vihīnā
coditā mayā te sati,majjha,latthum* (43) “O Indra, there’s Buddha in the human world,
known as Sakya,muni,³⁰⁷ conqueror of sensuality.
These are his sons who have lost their minds.
Rebuked by me, they won their minds’ heart.
- [275]
- 1.12.16 *tiṇṇaṃ tesāṃ āvasīn’ettha³⁰⁸ eko
gandhabba,kāyûpagato vasīno
dve ca sambodhi,pathānusārino
deve’pi hīlenti samāhitattā* (44) Of the three, one yet dwells here,
amongst the gandharva host, he lives; but
two follow the self-awakening path:³⁰⁹
on account of stillness, they scorn the devas.
- GOPAKA’S LION-ROAR
- 1.12.17 *etādisī dhamma-p,pakāsan’ettha
na tattha kiṃ kaṅkhati koci sāvako
nitiṇṇa,oghaṃ vicikiccha,chinnaṃ
buddhaṃ namassāma jinaṃ jan’indam* (45) By such Dharma presented here,
let the disciple have no doubt in it:
the Buddha is a flood-crosser, doubt cut off—
let’s honour the conqueror, leader of beings!
- 1.12.18 *yan tedhammaṃ idha-ñ,ñāya
visesaṃ ajjhagaṃsu³¹⁰ te
kāyaṃ brahma,purohitaṃ
duve tesāṃ visesagū* (46) Who here rightly know the Dharma,
they win distinction:
to the host of Brahma’s ministers,
these two are masters of distinction.”
- SAKRA’S REQUEST TO THE BUDDHA
- 1.12.19 *tassa dhammassa pattiyā
āgat’amhāse³¹¹ mārisa
kat’āvakāsā bhagavatā
pañham pucchem mārisā’ti* (47) ‘For the attaining of that Dharma,
sir, we have come.
If leave be granted by the Blessed Lord,
we, sir,³¹² would question ask.”³¹³

THE BUDDHA INVITES SAKRA TO ASK QUESTIONS

1.13 {355} Then, it occurred to the Blessed One:

³⁰⁷ “Sakya,muni” is a late canonical term, found such as in **Ratana S** (Sn 225), but common in Comys and post-Bud-dha works. This is a marker that **Sakka,pañha S** is not an early canonical work, prob a middle-period text [1.1.3.3].

³⁰⁸ Be Se *āvasīn’ettha*; Ce *vasīn’ettha*; Ee *avasīn’ettha*.

³⁰⁹ Comy: They attained the path of non-returning (*anāgāmi,maggānusārino*, DA 3:709,30).

³¹⁰ Be Ce Ee *ajjhagaṃsu*; Se *ajjhagamāṃsu*.

³¹¹ Be Ce *āgatamhāsi*; Ee *āgat,amhāse*; Se *āgatamhāpi*.

³¹² “Sir,” **mārisa** (pl *mārisā*, Sn 682; J 1:47, 49) (Skt *māriṣa* = *madṛṣa*), meaning, “worthy colleague or friend,” an affectionate term (*piya.samudācāra,vacanaṃ*) devas use to address others, esp devas in their host (S 11.3/1:218,34). Note that Sakra addresses the Buddha as *bhante* throughout [§1.9.3 etc]. Hence, to address the Buddha or any monk thus (eg S 40.10/4:270,16, Sakra addresses Moggallāna thus, SD 12.22; A 6.34,4, where brahma Tissa addresses Moggallāna thus, SD 54.5) is to regard them as “one of us.” It is also used by kings to address one another (S 3.12/1:80,4). Comy explains it as a term of affection wishing another to “be without suffering” (*niddukkha*, SA 1:17,14).

³¹³ This is Sakra’s initiative in seeking to question the Buddha, whose response follows [§48*], from which comes the sutta **title**.

“For a long time has this Sakra [yaksha] been pure.³¹⁴ Whatever question he will ask, will surely be to good purpose, not lacking so. And whatever I answer to what he has asked, that he will surely quickly understand.”

1.13.2 {356} Then, the Blessed One uttered this verse to Sakra, the lord of the devas:³¹⁵

<p><i>Puccha vāsava maṃ pañham yaṃ kiñci manas’icchasi tassa tass’eva pañhassa aham antaṃ karomi te’ti.</i></p>	<p>“Question me, Vāsava, [ask me a question],³¹⁶ whatever your heart desires. To that and every question, too, I will make an end of it!”</p>
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(48)

End of the 1st recital (*paṭhama, bhāṇavāro niṭṭhito*)

CHAPTER 2

SAKRA’S 1ST QUESTION SERIES (PART 1) [3.1]

[276]

2.1 {357} Given the opportunity, Sakra, the lord of the devas, asked the Blessed One this **1st question**:

“**What fetters**, sir, are there for devas, humans, asuras, nagas, gandharvas, and whatever other crowds and masses there be, wishing thus:

‘May we dwell with no hate, no violence, no injuring, no ill will, no anger’—

but, all the same, they dwell with hate, with violence, with injuring, with ill will, with anger.”³¹⁷ [§1.8.3]

This is the **1st question**³¹⁸ Sakra, the lord of the devas, asked the Blessed One.

2.1.2 “There are the fetters of **jealousy and avarice** (*issā, macchariya*),³¹⁹ lord of devas, *for devas, humans, asuras, nagas, gandharvas, and whatever other crowds and masses there be, wishing thus:*

‘May we dwell with no hate, no violence, no injuring, no ill will, no anger’—

but, all the same, they dwell with hate, with violence, with injuring, with ill will, with anger.”

This is the Blessed One’s answer to the question asked by Sakra, the lord of the devas. [3.1.1]

STREAMWINNING REFRAIN (1) [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10]

2.1.3 Satisfied, Sakra, the lord of the devas, delighted and rejoiced in the word of the Blessed One: “This is so, Blessed One; this is so, well-farer [sugata].

³¹⁴ Ie, since Sakra was **Magha** doing good works with his 33 friends. Comy gives a very long account of Sakra’s “purity” (*visuddhi*), ie, a life of moral virtue and public service from the time he was the young prince Magha (DA 3:710,22-718,21). The Magha story is also found in J 1:199-206 & DhA 2.7b/1:265-280; SD 39.1 (2.2).

³¹⁵ The Buddha qu this verse (§48*) in **Sakka V** (DhA 15.8,9/3:270), SD 54.20.

³¹⁶ We may tr this Pali line *literally*, “Ask me a question, Vāsava!” We can then take “question” (*pañha*) as an accountable noun, so that this is “The discourse on Sakka’s question (or questioning).” Cf Malay for “question,” *per-tanyaan*, which can be singular or an abstract noun.

³¹⁷ *Kiṃ saṃyojanā nu kho mārisa devā manussā asurā nāgā gandhabbā ye c’aññe santi puthu, kāyā, te ‘averā adaṇḍā asapattā avyāpajjā viharemu averino’ti iti ca n’esaṃ hoti, atha ca pana sa, verā sa, daṇḍā sa, sapattā sa, -vyāpajjā viharanti sa, verino’ti.*

³¹⁸ Ce Ee *bhagavantam imam paṭhamam pañham*, Be Se:MC omit *paṭhamam*; Se:SR *imam bhagavantam paṭhamam pañham*.

³¹⁹ “Jealousy and avarice” (*issā, macchariya*), part of the set of mental fetters according to Abhidhamma (Vbh 17): see **Vitakka Santhāna S** (M 20,8.2) n, SD 1.6; SD 46.15 (1.4.2).

Here, having heard the Blessed One's answer to the question,
doubt is crossed over, uncertainty has been removed in me."³²⁰

SAKRA'S ANUMODITVĀ REFRAIN (1)³²¹ [§§2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.1, 2.7.1]

2.2 {358} Sakra, the lord of the devas, having thus indeed delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One's word, [277]

asked him another question:³²² [§2.4]

SAKRA'S 1ST QUESTION SERIES (PART 2) [3.1.2]

2.2.2 "But, sir, jealousy and avarice—
 what is their source, what is their cause,³²³ what is their birth, **what is their origin?**³²⁴

When what is [exists], do *jealousy and avarice* exist?³²⁵

When what is not, do *jealousy and avarice* not exist?"³²⁶

2.2.3 "*Jealousy and avarice*, lord of devas, have **loving and unloving** (*piyâppiya*)³²⁷ as their source,
loving and unloving as their cause, *loving and unloving* as their birth, *loving and unloving* as their origin."³²⁸

When loving and unloving are [exist], do *jealousy and avarice* exist.³²⁹

When loving and unloving are not, do *jealousy and avarice* not exist."³³⁰ [3.1.2]

SAKRA'S 1ST QUESTION SERIES (PART 3) [3.1.3]

2.2.4 "But, sir, loving and unloving—
 what is their source, what is their cause, what is their birth, **what is their origin?**

When what is [exists], do *loving and unloving* exist?

When what is not, do *loving and unloving* not exist?"

³²⁰ *Attamano sakko devānam indo bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandi anumodi "evam etaṃ bhagavā evam etaṃ su-gata, tiṇṇāṃ ettha kaṅkhā vigatā kathaṃ, kathā bhagavato pañha, veyyākaraṇaṃ sutvā'ti.* Sakra's overcoming of doubt [here + §§ 2.3.7 etc] attests to the fact that Sakra is a streamwinner of the path: see §2.10.4 which records his attaining of its fruition [3.5]. On Sakra's streamwinning, see SD 54.8 (4).

³²¹ Sakra's *anumoditvā* refrain comprises the closing words: "asked him another question" (§§2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.1), except for the last refrain which closes with: "said to him" (§2.7.1).

³²² "Asked ... another question," *bhagavantam uttariṃ* [Be *uttari*; Ce Ee Se *uttariṃ*] *pañham apucchi*.

³²³ Although *samudaya* is best tr as "arising," esp in connection with the 4 noble truths, here, with the 4 key words used in a non-technical sense, it simply means "from what does it arise?" Hence, "cause," in a non-technical sense, helps to keep the smooth aesthetic flow of the sentence.

³²⁴ *Issā, macchariyaṃ pana mārisa kiṃ nidānaṃ kiṃ samudayaṃ kiṃ jātikaṃ kiṃ pabhavaṃ, kismiṃ sati issā, macchariyaṃ hoti, kismiṃ asati issā, macchariyaṃ na hotīti.* The word-series, "source, ... cause, ... birth, ... origin" (*nidānā ... samudayā ... jātikā ... pabhavā*) are also used in **Mahā Niddesa** comy on mental proliferation (*papañca*) at Sn 874d: see SD 6.14 (3.3.3.4), which is here [§16] elaborated in terms of dependent arising. See also **Vatthūpama S** (M 7,3) + SD 32.5 (2.2); **Cūḷa Sīha, nāda S** (M 11,16), SD 49.2.

³²⁵ *Kismiṃ sati issā, macchariyaṃ hoti.*

³²⁶ *Kismiṃ asati issā, macchariyaṃ na hoti.*

³²⁷ "Loving and unloving," *piyâppiya*, also: "agreeable and disagreeable; pleasant and unpleasant; dear and not dear"; also as *piyaṃ + appiyaṃ*: Sn 363, p78,13, 450, 811, 968. See PED: *piya*; CPD: *appiya*.

³²⁸ *Issā, macchariyaṃ kho devānam inda piyâppiya, nidānaṃ piyâppiya, samudayaṃ piyâppiya, jātikaṃ piyâppiya, -pabhavaṃ.*

³²⁹ *Piyâppiye sati issā, macchariyaṃ hoti.*

³³⁰ *Piyâppiye asati issā, macchariyaṃ na hoti.*

2.2.5 “**Desire** (*chanda*), lord of devas, is their cause, their birth, their origin.

When desire is [exists], do *loving and unloving* exist.

When desire is not, do *loving and unloving* not exist. [3.1.3]

SAKRA’S 1ST QUESTION SERIES (PART 4) [3.1.4]

2.2.6 But, sir, desire—

what is its source, what is its cause, what is its birth, **what is its origin?**

When what is [exists], does *desire* exist?

When what is not, does *desire* not exist?”

2.2.7 **Thinking** (*vitakka*), lord of devas, is its cause, its birth, its origin.

When thinking is [exists], does *desire* exist.

When thinking is not, does *desire* not exist. [3.1.4]

SAKRA’S 1ST QUESTION SERIES (PART 5) [3.1.5]

2.2.8 “But, sir, thinking—

what is its source, what is its cause, what is its birth, **what is its origin?**

When what is [exists], does *thinking* exist?

When what is not, does *thinking* not exist?”

2.2.9 “**Proliferation of conception and perception** (*papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*), lord of devas, is its cause, its birth, its origin.

When proliferation of conception and perception is [exists], does *thinking* exist.

When proliferation of conception and perception is not, does *thinking* not exist.

SAKRA’S 1ST QUESTION SERIES (PART 6) [3.1.6]

2.3 How, sir, does a monk, having practised, is one who has taken the path conducive to and leading to **the ending** of proliferation of conception and perception?³³¹ [§2.4]

Meditation on feeling (*vedanā kammaṭṭhāna*)

[278]

2.3.2 {359} **Happiness** [mental joy] (*somanassa*), I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to [to be pursued] and not to be resorted to [to be avoided].³³²

Sorrow [mental pain] (*domanassa*), I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*), I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to.

2.3.3 {360} **Happiness**, I say, lord of devas, is of **2 kinds**: to be *resorted to* and not to be *resorted to*.

When this is said, on account of what is it said?

(1) Therein, when we know of that happiness:

‘Pursuing this happiness, unwholesome states will *increase*, wholesome states will decrease—
this kind of happiness should *not* be resorted to.

³³¹ *Katham paṭipanno pana mārisa bhikkhu papañca,saññā,saṅkhā,nirodha,sāruppa,gāminim paṭipadam paṭipanno hotīti.*

³³² *Somanassam pāham [Be Ce Ee pāham; Ke Se cāham] devānam inda duvidhena vadāmi sevittabbarā pi asevitabbarā pi.*

(2) Therein, when we know of that happiness:

‘Pursuing this happiness, wholesome states will *increase*, unwholesome states will decrease—

This kind of happiness should be *resorted to*.

(3) Therein, if it is *accompanied* by **thinking** and by **pondering**,³³³ and if it is accompanied by *neither* thinking nor pondering—

the one that is accompanied by **neither** thinking *nor* pondering is the more refined.

Happiness, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds: to *be* resorted to and *not* to be resorted to.

When this is said, *on account of this* it is said.

2.3.4 {361} **Sorrow**, I say, lord of devas, is of **2 kinds**: to *be* resorted to and *not* to be resorted to.

When this is said, on account of what is it said?

(1) Therein, when we know of that sorrow:

‘Pursuing this sorrow, unwholesome states will *increase*, wholesome states will decrease—
this kind of sorrow should be *not* be resorted to.

(2) Therein, when we know of that sorrow:

‘Pursuing this sorrow, unwholesome states will *decrease*, wholesome states will increase—
this kind of sorrow should be *resorted to*.

(3) Therein, if it is *accompanied* by **thinking** and by **pondering**, and if it is accompanied by *neither* initial application nor sustained application—

the one that is accompanied by **neither** thinking *nor* pondering is the more refined.

Sorrow, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds: **[279]** to *be* resorted to and *not* to be resorted to.

When this is said, *on account of this* it is said.

2.3.5 {362} **Equanimity**, I say, lord of devas, is of **2 kinds**: to *be* resorted to and *not* to be resorted to.

When this is said, on account of what is it said?

(1) Therein, when we know of that equanimity:

‘Pursuing this equanimity, unwholesome states will *increase*, wholesome states will decrease—
this kind of equanimity should *not* be resorted to.

(2) Therein, when we know of that equanimity:

‘Pursuing this equanimity, unwholesome states will *decrease*, wholesome states will increase—
this kind of equanimity should be *resorted to*.

(3) Therein, if it is *accompanied* by **thinking** and by **pondering**, and if it is accompanied by *neither* thinking nor pondering³³⁴—

the one that is accompanied by **neither** thinking *nor* pondering is the more refined.

Equanimity, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds: to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. When this is said, *on account of this* it is said. [3.1.6]

2.3.6 {363} Thus, lord of devas, a monk, having practised, takes the path conducive to and leading to **the ending of the proliferation of conception and perception**.

This is the Blessed One’s answer to the question asked by Sakra, the lord of the devas.

³³³ “Thinking and pondering,” *vitakka, vicāra*. The context here is *not* that of dhyana, but broadly keeping our “daily” mind free of thoughts; hence, equanimous. The significance here is that to be truly happy, we need to spend time cultivating wholesome feelings, direct experiences of truth and beauty, taking them for what they really are: any more or any less would involve “thinking.”

³³⁴ In a dhyana framework, this pair (as dhyana-factors) would be “joy and happiness” (*pīti, sukha*). Clearly, here, the Buddha is speaking in term of ordinary but wholesome mindfulness. Further, we see Sakra becoming a stream-winner, which does not require the attainment of dhyana: see SD 3.3 (0.3).

STREAMWINNING REFRAIN (2) [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10]

2.3.7 Satisfied, Sakra, the lord of the devas, delighted and rejoiced in the word of the Blessed One: “This is so, Blessed One; this is so, well-farer [sugata].

Here, having heard the Blessed One’s answer to the question,
doubt is crossed over, uncertainty has been removed in me.” [§2.1.3]

Restraint in accordance with the monastic code (*pātimokkha, saṃvara*)

SAKRA’S 2ND QUESTION³³⁵ [3.2]

SAKRA’S ANUMODITVĀ REFRAIN (5) [§§2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.1, 2.7.1]³³⁶

2.4 {3.6.4} Sakra, the lord of the devas, having thus indeed delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word,

asked him another question: [§2.2]

2.4.2 “But how, sir, does a monk, having practised, is one who has practised **restraint in accordance with the monastic code** (*pātimokkha, saṃvara*)?” [§2.3]

2.4.3 “**Bodily conduct**, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to.

Verbal conduct [Speech], I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to.

Quest [Seeking], I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. [280]

2.4.4 **Bodily conduct**, I say, lord of devas, is of **2 kinds**, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. When this is said, on account of what is it said?

(1) Therein, when we know of that bodily conduct:

‘Pursuing this bodily conduct of mine unwholesome states will increase, wholesome states will decrease —this kind of bodily conduct should *not* be resorted to.

(2) Therein, when we know of that bodily conduct:

‘Pursuing this bodily conduct of mine unwholesome states will decrease, wholesome states will increase —this kind of bodily conduct should be *resorted to*.

Bodily conduct, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. When this is said, on account of this it is said.

2.4.5 **Verbal conduct**, I say, lord of devas, is of **2 kinds**, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. When this is said, on account of what is it said?

(1) Therein, when we know of that verbal conduct:

‘Pursuing this verbal conduct of mine unwholesome states will increase, wholesome states will decrease —this kind of verbal conduct should *not* be resorted to.

(2) Therein, when we know of that verbal conduct:

‘Pursuing this verbal conduct of mine unwholesome states will decrease, wholesome states will increase —this kind of verbal conduct should be *resorted to*.

Verbal conduct, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. When this is said, on account of this it is said.

³³⁵ Comy lists this as the “2nd questioning” (*dutiya, pucchāyam*, DA 3:735,22).

³³⁶ See n at “Sakra’s *anumoditvā* refrain (1)” [§2.2.1].

2.4.6 **Quest** [Seeking],³³⁷ I say, lord of devas, is of **2 kinds**, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to. When this is said, on account of what is it said?

(1) Therein, when we know of that quest:

‘Pursuing this quest of mine unwholesome states will increase, wholesome states will decrease
—this kind of quest should *not* be resorted to.

(2) Therein, when we know of that quest:

‘Pursuing this quest of mine unwholesome states will decrease, wholesome states will increase
—this kind of quest should be *resorted to*.

Quest, I say, lord of devas, is of 2 kinds, namely, to be resorted to and not to be resorted to.

When this is said, on account of this it is said. **[281]**

2.4.7 Thus, lord of devas, a monk, having practised, is one who has practised restraint in accordance with the monastic code. [§2.4.2]

This is the Blessed One’s answer to the question asked by Sakra, the lord of the devas.

STREAMWINNING REFRAIN (3) [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10]

2.4.8 Satisfied, Sakra, the lord of the devas, delighted and rejoiced in the word of the Blessed One:
“This is so, Blessed One; this is so, well-farer [sugata].

Here, having heard the Blessed One’s answer to the question,

doubt is crossed over, uncertainty has been removed in me.” [§2.1.3]

Sense-restraint (*indriya, saṃvara*)

SAKRA’S 3RD QUESTION³³⁸ [3.3]

SAKRA’S ANUMODITVĀ REFRAIN (5) [§§2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.1, 2.7.1]³³⁹

2.5 {365} Sakra, the lord of the devas, having thus indeed delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word,

asked the Blessed One another question: [§2.4]

2.5.2 “But how, sir, does a monk, having practised, is one who has practised **sense-restraint** (*indriya, saṃvara*)?”³⁴⁰

2.5.3 Lord of devas,

a **form** cognizable by³⁴¹
is of 2 kinds, I say,

the eye
to be resorted to; *not* to be resorted to.³⁴²

³³⁷ Note that here, where we would expect the 3rd karmic door, the mind, we have “quest” (*pariyesanā*). Here, a special aspect of mental training is stressed: that of the right quest, for awakening and nirvana. For details on the 2 kinds of quest: see **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 26,5-14), SD 1.11.

³³⁸ Comy takes this as the “2nd question” (*dutiya pucchayam*) (DA 3:735,23).

³³⁹ See n at “Sakra’s *anumoditvā* refrain (1)” [§2.2.1].

³⁴⁰ The foll sense-restraint cycle—the Buddha gives a brief teaching and Sakra elaborates it—apparently occurs only here in Dīgha Nikāya and recurs only once in Majjhima in **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114,22-38/3:55) where the Buddha gives a brief teaching and Sāriputta elaborates it (SD 39.8).

³⁴¹ Comy (on M 114) says that in this section (on the sense-bases), the phrase, “with one another” (*aññam-añña*), is omitted because the distinction is not in the object but in how we regard it. For one person, for example, lust, etc, arise towards a particular form, etc, but another person, on the other hand, developing disgust and dispassion, attains nirvana (*nibbuti*) on account of the same form, etc (MA 4:102).

³⁴² *Cakkhu, viññeyyam rūpaṃ, pāham devānam inda duvidhena vadāmi sevitabbam pi asevitabbam pi*. The tr follows the Pali closely by rendering asyndetonically (without any conjunction) this and the other sentences in their respective context here. The Pali sentence, however, has the particle *pi*—thus: *sevitabbam pi asevitabbam pi*—which

Lord of devas,	a sound cognizable by is of 2 kinds, I say,	<u>the ear</u> to <i>be</i> resorted to; <i>not</i> to be resorted to.
Lord of devas,	a smell cognizable by is of 2 kinds, I say,	<u>the nose</u> to <i>be</i> resorted to; <i>not</i> to be resorted to.
Lord of devas,	a taste cognizable by is of 2 kinds, I say,	<u>the tongue</u> to <i>be</i> resorted to; <i>not</i> to be resorted to.
Lord of devas,	a touch cognizable by is of 2 kinds, I say,	<u>the body</u> to <i>be</i> resorted to; <i>not</i> to be resorted to.
Lord of devas,	a mind-object cognizable by is of 2 kinds, I say,	<u>the mind</u> to <i>be</i> resorted to; <i>not</i> to be resorted to.

2.5.4 When this was said, Sakra, the lord of the devas, said to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, what has been briefly spoken by the Blessed One regarding this matter without elaborating its meaning in detail, I understand the meaning in detail, thus.³⁴³

(1) Bhante, just as **form** is cognizable by the eye,
whatever kind of form, bhante, cognizable by *the eye*,
when the form *is* resorted to, unwholesome states increase, wholesome states decrease—
such a form is *not* to be resorted to.

But whatever kind of form, bhante, cognizable by *the eye*,
when resorted to, unwholesome states decrease, wholesome states increase—
such a form [282] is to be *resorted to*.

(2) Bhante, just as **sound** is cognizable by the ear,
whatever kind of sound, bhante, cognizable by *the ear*,
when the sound *is* resorted to, unwholesome states increase, wholesome states decrease—
such a sound is *not* to be resorted to.

But whatever kind of sound, bhante, cognizable by *the ear*,
when resorted to, unwholesome states decrease, wholesome states increase—
such a sound is to be *resorted to*.

(3) Bhante, just as **smell** is cognizable by the nose,
whatever kind of smell, bhante, cognizable by *the nose*,
when the sound *is* resorted to, unwholesome states increase, wholesome states decrease—
such a sound is *not* to be resorted to.

But whatever kind of sound, bhante, cognizable by *the ear*,
when resorted to, unwholesome states decrease, wholesome states increase—
such a sound is to be *resorted to*.

(4) Bhante, just as **taste** is cognizable by the tongue,
whatever kind of taste, bhante, cognizable by *the tongue*,
when the taste *is* resorted to, unwholesome states increase, wholesome states decrease—
such a taste is *not* to be resorted to.

But whatever kind of taste, bhante, cognizable by *the tongue*,

can be tr either as “and” or “or.” Hence, an asyndetic tr here accommodates this “pregnant” sense: see n on **Pali polysemy**: SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2; 2.2); SD 54.3b (2.1.1.4).

³⁴³ *Imassa kho aham bhante bhagavatā saṅkhittena bhāsitassa, vitthārena attham avibhattassa, evam vitthārena attham ājānāmi.* In **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114,23), (SD 39.8), Sāriputta says the same thing to the Buddha. However, Sakra omits mentioning the sentences in the Buddha’s brief teaching [§2.5.3], which Sāriputta does.

when resorted to, unwholesome states decrease, wholesome states increase—
such a taste is to be *resorted to*.

(5) Bhante, just as **touch** is cognizable by the body,
whatever kind of touch, bhante, cognizable by *the body*,
when the touch *is* resorted to, unwholesome states increase, wholesome states decrease—
such a touch is *not* to be resorted to.
But whatever kind of touch, bhante, cognizable by the body,
when resorted to, unwholesome states decrease, wholesome states increase—
such a touch is to be *resorted to*.

(6) Bhante, just as a **mind-object** is cognizable by the mind,
whatever kind of mind-object, bhante, cognizable by *the mind*,
when the mind-object *is* resorted to, unwholesome states increase, wholesome states decrease—
such a mind-object is *not* to be resorted to.
But whatever kind of mind-object, bhante, cognizable by the mind,
when resorted to, unwholesome states decrease, wholesome states increase—
such a mind-object is to be *resorted to*.

STREAMWINNING REFRAIN (4, unique)³⁴⁴ [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10]

2.5.5 Bhante, what has been briefly spoken by the Blessed One regarding this matter without elaborating its meaning in detail, **I have thus understood the meaning in detail**.

Here, having heard the Blessed One's answer to the question,
doubt is crossed over, uncertainty has been removed in me. [§2.1.3]

SAKRA'S ANUMODITVĀ REFRAIN (5) [§§2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.1, 2.7.1]³⁴⁵

2.6 {366} Sakra, the lord of the devas, having thus delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One's word, asked him another question: [§2.5]

SAKRA'S 4TH QUESTION (*aneka, dhātu*) [3.4]

2.6.2 "Sir, **do all the recluses and brahmins teach the one same thing**, keep the one same morality, have the one same belief,³⁴⁶ seek the one same goal?"³⁴⁷

2.6.3 "The recluses and brahmins, lord of devas, do **not all teach the one same thing, keep the one same morality, have the one same belief, seek the one same goal.**"

2.6.4 "But, **why**, sir, do the recluses and brahmins not all teach the one same thing, keep the one same morality, have the one same belief, seek the one same goal?"

³⁴⁴ This key passage (§2.5.5) on Sakra having understood in detail the meaning of what has been only *briefly* spoken by the Buddha, as a refrain, *stands on its own*, except for the last sentence, which recurs in §§2.1.2, 2.3.7, 2.4.8 & 2.6.10.

³⁴⁵ See n at "Sakra's anumoditvā refrain (1)" [§2.2.1].

³⁴⁶ Comy glosses *ekanta-c, chandā* (lit, of one desire, will or purpose) with "one ideology" (*eka, laddhikā*) (DA 3:-737,15).

³⁴⁷ *Sabb'eva nu kho mārisa samaṇa, brāhmaṇā ekanta, vādā ekanta, sīlā ekanta, chandā ekanta, ajjhosānāti*. A related question (on the attainments of other teachers) is asked by Subhadda in **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,2,26.1), SD 9, and brahmin Piṅgala, koccha in **Cūḷa Sārôpama S** (M 30,2), SD 53.9, but in those cases, the Buddha set the questions aside.

2.6.5 “The world, lord of devas, is of **numerous elements, various elements**.³⁴⁸

In such a world of *numerous elements, various elements*, beings naturally incline to adhere to one or other element, to which they adhere strongly and are addicted to stubbornly, holding that ‘Only *this* is true! All else is empty [foolish]!’³⁴⁹

Hence, the recluses and brahmins, lord of devas, do not all teach the one same thing, keep the one same morality, have the one same belief, seek the one same goal.”

SAKRA’S 5TH QUESTION (*accanta,niṭṭha*) [3.5]

2.6.6 “Sir, have **all** of the recluses and brahmins **reached the utter end**,³⁵⁰ **[283] reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal?**”³⁵¹

2.6.7 “Not all of the recluses and brahmins, lord of devas, have *reached the utter end, reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal.*”

2.6.8 “But **why**, sir, have not all of the recluses and brahmins *reached the utter end, reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal?*”

2.6.9 “Only those, lord of devas, who are **freed by the destruction of craving**³⁵²—they are those who *have reached the utter end, reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal.*

Hence, not all of the recluses and brahmins *reached the utter end, reached the total security from bondage, reached the highest in the holy life, reached the ultimate goal.*”³⁵³

STREAMWINNING REFRAIN (5) [§§2.1.3, 2.3.7, 2.4.8, 2.5.5, 2.6.10]

2.6.10 Satisfied, Sakra, the lord of the devas, delighted and rejoiced in the word of the Blessed One: “This is so, Blessed One; this is so, well-farer [sugata].

Here, having heard the Blessed One’s answer to the question, doubt is crossed over, uncertainty has been removed in me.” [§2.1.3]

SAKRA’S ANUMODITVĀ REFRAIN (5) [§§2.2.1, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.6.1, 2.7.1]³⁵⁴

2.7 {367} Sakra, the lord of the devas, having thus indeed delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word, said to him:

³⁴⁸ *Aneka,dhātu nānā,dhātu kho devānam inda loko.* Comy glosses *dhatu* with “disposition” (*ajjhāsaya*, DA 3:737,-18).

³⁴⁹ *Tasmim̄ aneka,dhātu nānā,dhātusmim̄ loke yaṃ yad’eva sattā dhātuṃ abhinivisanti, taṃ tad’eva thāmasā parāmāsā abhinivissa voharanti* “*idam eva saccaṃ mogham aññan’ti.*

³⁵⁰ “Who has reached utter end,” **accanta,niṭṭha** (mfn): *accanta* (Skt *atyanta*) = *ati* + *anta*, “reached the end or limit” of absolute perfection; *niṭṭha* (Ved *niṣṭhā, niḥṣṭhā*) = *nis* + *ṭhā* (from *-ṭhā*, “end, conclusion, perfection, height, summit, object, goal”), as in *niṭṭhaṃ gata = niṭṭhaṃ,gata*, “who has attained the goal, perfection” (= *pabbajitānaṃ arahattaṃ patta*), S 3:99 (*a-*); A 2:175, 3:450, 5:119 f; Dh 351; Pm 1:81, 161; DhA 4:70.

³⁵¹ *Sabb’eva nu kho mārisa samaṇa,brāhmaṇā accanta,niṭṭhā accanta,yogakkhemī accanta,brahmacārī accanta,-pariyosānāti.* On the *accanta,niṭṭha* pericope, see SD 54.8 (3).

³⁵² “Freed by the destruction of craving,” **taṇhā,saṅkhaya, vimuttā**. The “destruction of craving” is elaborated in a discourse of that name, **Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 37), when Sakra approaches the Buddha for “a brief explanation” of this particular question (SD 54.8).

³⁵³ Note that the Buddha only briefly answers this. Sakra will return to the Buddha for a further teaching on this, as recorded in **Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 37), SD 54.8.

³⁵⁴ See n at “Sakra’s *anumoditvā* refrain (1)” [§2.2.1].

2.7.2 “Passion [Emotion],³⁵⁵ bhante, is a disease; passion is a boil; passion is a dart;³⁵⁶ passion just drags this person into arising in this or that existence, so that this person falls into high states and low states.³⁵⁷”

2.7.3 Bhante, while the other recluses and brahmins, outsiders,³⁵⁸ gave me no opportunity for asking these questions, the Blessed One has answered me at length,³⁵⁹ so that the dart of doubt and uncertainty has been extracted by the Blessed One.³⁶⁰”

Sakra and the forest seers

[284]

2.7.4 “You admit, then, lord of devas, that you have asked the other recluses and brahmins these same questions?”

“Yes, I do, bhante, I have asked **the other recluses and brahmins** these same questions.”

2.7.5 “Then, lord of devas, if it isn’t troublesome for you, tell me how they answered you.”

“It’s not troublesome for me to tell you, bhante, when the Blessed One is seated, or others like the Blessed One.”

“Well, then, lord of devas, tell me.”³⁶¹

2.7.6 I, bhante, approached those whom I regarded as recluses and brahmins because they were dwelling in secluded forest abodes.³⁶² Having approached them, I asked them these questions.

2.7.7 When asked, they were not able to answer. Unable to answer, they instead questioned me:³⁶³ ‘What is your name, venerable?’

2.7.8 When asked by them, I replied: “‘I, sirs, am Sakra, the lord of the devas.’”

Then, they asked me further: ‘But, venerable lord of devas, on what business have you come to this place?’ Whereupon I taught them the Dharma as I have heard, as I have mastered it.’

2.7.9 And they, with just that much, were satisfied, saying:³⁶⁴

‘We have seen Sakra, the lord of the devas! What we asked him, he answered us.’

Contrarily, indeed, instead of *my* becoming their disciple, it turns out that *they* became my followers!³⁶⁵

2.7.10 SAKRA’S STREAMWINNING-PATH. But, I, bhante, am the Blessed One’s disciple, **a streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world, surely going over to self-awakening.³⁶⁶ [§2.10.4]

³⁵⁵ *Ejā* (fem), *eja* (masc, neut), disturbance, being emotional; a word for *taṇhā*: **Ejā S 1+2**, SD 29.10+11.

³⁵⁶ This stock phrase, *ejā bhante rogo, ejā gaṇḍo, ejā sallam*, recurs in **Ejā S 1** (S 35.90/4:65), SD 29.10 + **Ejā S 2** (S 35.91/4:66), SD 29.11.

³⁵⁷ *Ejā bhante rogo, ejā gaṇḍo, ejā sallam, ejā imam purisam parikaḍḍhati tassa tass’eva bhavassa abhinibbattiyā, tasmā ayam puriso uccāvacam āpajjati.*

³⁵⁸ “Outsiders” (*bahiddhā*): this refers to both “non-Buddhists” and those who have not attained the path. See **Cūḷa Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 27,25.4) n + SD 40a.5 (1.1.2).

³⁵⁹ *Yesāham bhante pañhānam ito bahiddhā aññesu samaṇa, brāhmaṇesu okāsa, kammaṃ pi nālattham.*

³⁶⁰ *Te me bhagavatā vyākatā, dīgha, rattānusayino yañ ca pana* me [vl vā] vicikicchā, kathaṃ, kathā sallam, tañ ca bhagavatā abbuḷhan’ti. * [Ce Ee so; Be Se:Mc dīgha, rattānusayitañ ca pana me; Se dīgha, rattānupassatā, yañ ca pana me.]*

³⁶¹ This whole subsection recurs with Ajāta, sattu and the Buddha in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2) where the former relates his meetings with the 6 teachers. (D 2,15.3/1:51 f), SD 8.10.

³⁶² These forest-dwelling recluses and brahmins clearly are the Upanishadic seers. [2.2.1]

³⁶³ *Te mayā puṭṭhā na sampāyanti, asampāyantā mamarā yeva paṭipucchanti.*

³⁶⁴ *Te tāvataken’eva attamanā honti.*

³⁶⁵ *Te aññā-d-atthu mamarā yeva sāvakā sampajjanti, na cāham tesam.*

³⁶⁶ Sakra is here declaring that he is a streamwinner (of the path) before the Buddha and the congregation. See below, after the conclusion of the Buddha’s teaching, when he attains the fruition of streamwinning [§2.10.4]: see esp (1.2.4). See also **Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) + SD 54.20 (2.2.2.2).

Talk on the experience of joy (*somanassa, paṭilābha, kathā*)

2.7.11 {368} “You admit, then, lord of devas, that you have before experienced **bliss**, tasted **joy**, such as this.”³⁶⁷ [285]

“I do admit, bhante, that I have before experienced bliss, tasted joy, such as this.”

“Now, lord of devas, in what way do you admit that you have before felt bliss, tasted joy, such as this?”

2.7.12 Once upon a time, bhante, the devas and the asuras were in the thick of battle with one another.³⁶⁸ In that battle, the devas won, the asuras lost.³⁶⁹

2.7.13 After the battle was won, bhante, it occurred to me, the victor of the battle.³⁷⁰

‘Henceforth, the devas will now enjoy both divine nectar and asura nectar!’³⁷¹

2.7.14 THE 2 QUESTS. Yet, bhante, my obtaining of bliss, obtaining of joy, on account of blows and wounds [rod and sword], does **not** conduce to revulsion, fading away (of defilements), ending (of suffering), stilling (of the mind), to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana.³⁷²

But, bhante, having heard the Dharma from the Blessed One—this obtaining of bliss, **obtaining of joy, not on account of blows and wounds [rod and sword]**, **does** conduce to revulsion, fading away (of defilements), ending (of suffering), stilling (of the mind), to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana.³⁷³

Sakra’s 6 reasons for being joyful

2.8 {369} Now, lord of devas, what were the reasons you were considering, when you declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy?³⁷⁴

“I, bhante, was considering **6 reasons** when I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

2.8.2 (1) *idh’eva tiṭṭhamānassa
deva, bhūtassa me sato
puna-r-āyu ca me laddho
evam jānāhi mārisa*

As I’m still remaining right here,
mindful of my deva-state,
having obtained my life once again:³⁷⁵
know thus, sir.³⁷⁷

³⁶⁷ *Abhijānāsi no tvaṃ devānam inda ito pubbe eva, rūpaṃ veda paṭilābhaṃ somanassa paṭilābhan’ti.*

³⁶⁸ “In the past,” the devas and asuras were often engaged in battle: see esp **Sakka Saṃyutta** (S 1:216-225), esp S 11.1 (SD 114.13), 11.2 (SD 114.14), 11.3 (SD 15.5), 11.4 (SD 54.17), 11.5 (SD 54.7), 11.6 (SD 86.22). For its origin, see SD 15.5 (3.7.1); SD 39.2 (1). On the end of this belligerence, see **Na Dubbhiya S** (S 11.7), SD 54.7.

³⁶⁹ As in (**Sakka**) **Vepa, citti S** (S 11.4,3/1:221), SD 54.6, which records events just preceding those of **Cūḷa Taṇha, -saṅkhaya S** (M 37,9), SD 54.9.

³⁷⁰ *Tassa mayhaṃ bhante taṃ saṅgāmaṃ abhivijjivā [Be Ee Se so; Ce abhivijjivā] vijjita, saṅgāmassa etad ahoṣi.*

³⁷¹ *Yā c’eva dāni dibbā ojā yā ca asurā ojā, ubhayam etaṃ [Be Ee so; Ce Se ubhayam’ettha] devā paribhuñjissantīti.*

³⁷² *So kho pana me bhante veda, paṭilābho somanassa, paṭilābho sa, daṇḍāvacarō sa, satthāvacarō na nibbidāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

³⁷³ This section on “the 2 quests,” is a gist of the teaching of “ignoble quest” (*anariya, pariyesanā*) and the “noble quest” (*ariya, pariyesanā*): see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,5-14), SD 1.11.

³⁷⁴ *Kiṃ pana tvaṃ devānam inda attha, vasaṃ sampassamāno eva, rūpaṃ veda, paṭilābhaṃ somanassa, paṭilābhaṃ pavedesīti.*

³⁷⁵ This marks the **rebirth** of the young **Sakra** (*taruṇa, sakka*), the current god, and his 1st meeting with the Buddha. Sakra’s last meeting with the Buddha is recorded in **Sakka V** (DhA 15.8), SD 54.20. Following the scholars’ dates for the Buddha’s death—410-400 BCE—Sakra is now at least 2,420 years old! **Tāvatiṃsa devas’ lifespan** is 1,000 celestial years or 36 M earth-years! See SD 54.3a (2.2.1.1). On the Buddha’s dates, see SD 49.8b (12.1.3).

³⁷⁶ **The verses** of this Sutta, incl their reprises, are given running numbers.

³⁷⁷ It is likely that the Buddha at once knows **Sakra’s rebirth**. Significantly, this verse may signify the “death” of the Vedic Indra/Śakra and the birth of the Buddhist **Sakka** (anglicized as Sakra), both literally and figuratively. It should

This, bhante, is **the 1st reason, [286]** seeing which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

- 2.8.3 (2) *cutâham diviyā kāyā
āyurm hitvā amānusam
amūlho gabbham essāmi
yattha me ramatī mano* (50) Falling from the gods, I,
having forsaken this non-human life,³⁷⁸
shall go to an unconfused birth
wherein my mind delights.

This, bhante, is **the 2nd reason**, seeing which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

- 2.8.4 (3) *svâham amūlha,pañhassa³⁷⁹
viharam sāsane rato
ñāyena viharissāmi
sampajāno paṭissato* (51) I, with my questions cleared up,
dwell with delight in the teaching.
I will dwell in the right path,
mindful, clearly understanding.

This, bhante, is **the 3rd reason**, seeing which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

- 2.8.5 (4) *ñāyena me carato ca
sambodhi ce bhavissati
aññātā viharissāmi
sv-eva anto bhavissati* (52) And if I live the right path,
then, self-awakening shall be mine.
I will dwell in true knowledge,
I will indeed gain the ending (of samsara).

This, bhante, is **the 4th reason**, seeing which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

- 2.8.6 (5) *cutâham mānusā kāyā
āyurm hitvāna mānusam
puna devo bhavissāmi
deva,lokamhi uttamo* (53) Falling from the human host [body],
forsaking the human life,³⁸⁰
I will again be a deva,
supreme in the deva-world.

This, bhante, is **the 5th reason**, seeing which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

- 2.8.7 (6) *te³⁸¹ pañita,tarā devā
akaniṭṭhā yasassino.
antime vattamānamhi
so nivāso bhavissati* (54) Sublimar than the devas
are the Akaniṭṭha,³⁸² the glorious,
when my last life rolls to its end,
that shall be my abode. **[287]**

also be noted this Sutta records Sakra as attaining streamwinning [1.2.4]: alluded to in **Sakka V** (DhS 25.8). On the significance of this moment as the Sutta's **climax**, see (2.2.3.4). See K Arunasiri 2003:631 f.

³⁷⁸ This hints at Sakra's vision of his impending death that urgently moved him to meet the Buddha [2.2.3.1]. Chronologically, the impending rebirth ("shall go to an unconfused birth") alluded to here [v 50*] occurs just before v 49*, describing his "having obtained my life once again." Technically, these 2 verses refer to the *same* thought-moment: the death-consciousness (*cuti,citta*) of his previous birth [v 50*] which is the rebirth-consciousness (*paṭisandhi,citta*) of his new life [v 49*]. However, in most other (less wholesome) cases, the rebirth is, as a rule, not immediate, involving an intermediate state (*antarā,bhava*): see **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (3+4); SD 2.7 (1.2.2).

³⁷⁹ Ee Se:SR so; Be Ce Se:MC *amūlha,pañhassa*.

³⁸⁰ Clearly here, Sakra alludes to his life and work as Magha, the fruit of which is his rebirth as the lord of Tāva,tim-sa. See **Magha V** (DhA 2.7,54), SD 54.22.

³⁸¹ Be: *ye* (?); Ce Ee Se *te*.

³⁸² Akaniṭṭha is the 5th and highest plane of the 5 pure abodes, inhabited only by non-returners: SD 10.18 (13.1.6).

This, bhante, is **the 6th reason**, seeing which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

These, bhante, are **the 6 reasons**, considering which I declared such obtaining of bliss, such obtaining of joy.

Sakra's 9 verses: the lion-roar

2.9 {370} (1) SAKRA'S ASPIRATIONS [2.4.4.1]

- 2.9.1 (1) *apariyosita,saṅkappo
vicikiccho kathaṅ,kathī
vicariṃ dīgham addhānaṃ
anvesanto tathāgataṃ* (55) When intentions are unfulfilled,
there is doubt, one is uncertain.
Long have I wandered
seeking the tathagata [thus come].³⁸³
- 2.9.2 (2) *y'assu maññāmi samaṇe
pavivitta,vihārino
sambuddhā iti maññāno
gacchāmi te upāsituṃ* (56) Surely, these recluses, I thought,
who dwell secluded,
must be self-awakened—thinking so,
I went and approached them.
- 2.9.3 (3) *kathaṃ ārādhanā hoti
kathaṃ hoti virādhanā.
iti puṭṭhā na sampāyanti³⁸⁴
magge paṭipadāsu ca* (57) How shall I gain success?
How will I fail?
Thus asked, no answer came
for going on the path.
- 2.9.4 (4) *ty-assu yadā maṃ jānanti
sakko devānam āgato
ty-assu mam eva pucchanti
kiṃ katvā pāpuṇī idaṃ* (58) They knew me then
as Sakra, of the gods, who has come.
Then, they questioned me:
having done what have you reached this here?
- 2.9.5 (5) *tesaṃ yathā,sutaṃ dhammaṃ
desayāmi jane sutaṃ
Ten'ass'attamanā honti
diṭṭho no vāsavo'ti ca.* (59) The Dharma as I've heard it
I taught to people who listened.
Satisfied by it they said:
Vāsava has been seen by us!

(2) SAKRA'S INSPIRATION [2.4.4.2]

- 2.9.6 (6) *yadā ca buddham addakkiṃ
vicikicchā vitāraṇaṃ
so'mhi vīta,bhayo ajja
sambuddhaṃ payirupāsiya³⁸⁵* (60) But since I've seen the Buddha,
doubt has been overcome.
Today, fear-free am I,
having gone up to the self-awakened.
- 2.9.7 (7) *taṇhā,sallassa hantāraṃ
buddhaṃ appaṭipuggalaṃ* The destroyer of the dart of craving,
the peerless Buddha,

³⁸³ If Sakra has not yet met the Buddha, then, **tathagata** here clearly refers to any “saint” who will teach him the way of spiritual liberation. [2.2.1].

³⁸⁴ Be so; Ce Ee Se *sambhonti*.

³⁸⁵ Be Ce Ee so; Ke Se:SR *payirupāsayim*; Se:MC *payirupāsiyim*.

	<i>aham vande mahā,vīraṃ buddham ādicca,bandhunaṃ</i>	(61)	the great hero, I honour, the Buddha, kinsman of the sun. [288]
2.9.8	(8) <i>Yaṃ karomase brahmuno samaṃ devehi mārisa tad ajja tuyhaṃ dassāma³⁸⁶ handā sāmaṃ karoma te</i>	(62)	Just as Lord Brahma sir, is worshipped by the gods, today, we see you as him: come, let us worship you!
2.9.9	(9) <i>tuvam eva asi³⁸⁷ sambuddho tuvaṃ satthā anuttaro sa,devakasmiraṃ lokasmiraṃ n’atthi te paṭipuggalo’ti</i>	(63)	You are indeed the self-awakened, you are the supreme teacher in the world with its devas— there is no other like you!

Sakra’s gratitude to Pañca,sikha

2.10 {371} Then, Sakra, the lord of the devas, addressed **Pañca,sikha**, the gandharva devaputra:

“You have been a great help to me, my dear Pañca,sikha. For, it was you who have first pleased the Blessed One [§1.4.2]. Only after that we approached to see the Blessed One, the arhat, fully self-awakened one.

2.10.2 I will take the place of a father to you; you will be king of the gandharvas. And I will give you Bhaddā Suriya,vacchasā, whom you have longed for.”³⁸⁸

2.10.3 Then, Sakra, the lord of the devas, having struck the earth with his palm, thrice uttered this udana [word of uplift]:³⁸⁹

“Homage to him, the Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one!”

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassāti. [1.3.3.2]

Sakra’s fruit of streamwinning [1.2.4]

2.10.4 Now, while Sakra, the lord of the devas, was engaged in dialogue explaining all this, the dust-free spotless Dharma-eye arose in him,³⁹⁰ thus:

“Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to pass away,”

Yaṃ kiñci samudaya,dhammaṃ, sabbam taṃ nirodha,dhamman’ti. [§2.7.10]

³⁸⁶ Ke so; Be Ee *kassāma* (1 pl pres of *karoti*, “to do”); Se:SR *dassāmi*.

³⁸⁷ Be Ce so; Ee Se:MC *tuvam eva’si*; SBe:SR *tvam eva sirhva*.

³⁸⁸ *Pettike vā ṭhāne ṭhapayissāmi, gandhabba,rājā bhavissasi, bhaddaṃ ca te sūriya,vacchasaṃ dammi, sā hi te abhipatthitā’ti*

³⁸⁹ *Atha kho sakkō devānam indo pāṇinā paṭhaviṃ parāmasitvā tikkhattuṃ udānaṃ udānesi.*

³⁹⁰ *Imasmiraṃ ca pana veyyākaraṇasmiraṃ bhaññamāne sakkassa devānam-indassa virajam vītamaḷam dhamma,cak-khurū udapādi.* This the Sakra’s attaining of the fruition of streamwinning, also mentioned by the Buddha in **Sakka V** (DhA 15.8,10/3:270), SD 54.20. [1.2.4].

2.10.5 And this occurred to [289] 80,000 deities,³⁹¹ too.³⁹²

2.10.6 Such were the questions asked by Sakra, which were answered by the Blessed One.³⁹³ Hence, this dialogue is called **the Sakka,pañha**, “the questions of Sakra.”

— evaṃ —

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³⁹¹ Referring to this event, **Sakka V** (DhA 15.8,10) says that 14 crores of beings (*cuddasannam pāṇa,koṭīnam*) (DhA 3:270,23). A crore (*koṭī*) is 10,000,000; thus totalling some 140 M! This huge number refers to “beings” (*pāṇa*), ie, deities and others.

³⁹² This is noted by Comy on **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10): *So upekkhā,pañha,vissajjan’āvasāne asīti,sahassāhi devatāhi saddhim sot’apatti,phale patiṭṭhāsi* (DA 3:749,27-750,2) = MA 1:235,13-15 with *upekkhā*- omitted. Note that both refers to the “fruition” (*phale*) of streamwinning. [6.2.3.5].

³⁹³ *Iti ye sakkena devānam indena ajjhittā,pañhāpuṭṭhā, te bhagavatā vyākatā*. CPD, sv *ajjhittā-pañhā*, says this is a wr, corrected by Comy as *ajjhesita,pañhā puṭṭha,pañhā*, “a question asked or inquired” (DA 3:740,28; VA 1:103,-3; UA 310,36 ≈ DhA 4:101,22 (vl *abhijhittha*, cf *samijhittha*, J 6:12,25*)).