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Mahā Saccaka Sutta

The Greater Discourse to Saccaka | M 36

Theme: Spiritual cultivation involves both body and mind

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2015

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.1.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta, the “greater discourse to Saccaka,” like **the Cūḷa Saccaka** (M 35), records a dialogue between the Buddha and the debater Saccaka.¹ The venue of both Suttas is the Pinnacled Hall in the Mahāvana near Vesālī. In the latter Sutta, the Buddha explains the non-self nature of the 5 aggregates.² The Sutta has a parallel in Sanskrit fragments,³ entitled “bodily cultivation” (*kāya, bhāvanā*) [§5].

1.1.2 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36) Saccaka questions the Buddha on the disciplining of the body and the mind. To show his mastery of both body and mind, the Buddha recounts his life as the Bodhisattva, from the time of renouncing the world to that of the great awakening.

1.1.3 Amongst its highlights, the Sutta reports Saccaka as having engaged the 6 heterodox teachers⁴ in debate. They are said to have “drifted away from the topic of discussion” (*bahiddhā katharṁ apanesi*), and so are defeated. [§49]

1.1.4 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta is a valuable document on **the Buddha’s life**, giving graphic details of his asceticism, climaxing with the realization that his weakened body is unable to support his mind in his spiritual quest.

1.1.5 When the Bodhisattva decides to take **the middle way**, beginning with taking a meal to regain his bodily strength, the group of 5 monks (*pañca, vaggiya*) leaves him in disappointment [§§31-33]. But the Bodhisattva perseveres and attains buddhahood [§§34-44]. Saccaka expresses his great admiration for the Buddha and acknowledges his superiority over other teachers.

¹ For personal details of Saccaka the nirgrantha’s son, see SD 26.5 (1).

² **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35/1:227-237), SD 26.5, where see (1) on Saccaka Aggivessana.

³ A parallel of the whole Sutta is found in fragments 329r4-34032 of Dīrgha Āgama ms, ed Liu 2009:48-63. Other parallels incl SHT 3.931:186 f, SHT 3.997A:258 f, identified SHT 7:273), frag bleu 18.4 of Pelliot collection, ed as no 148 in Hartmann 1991:262, frag SI B/141 in Bongard-Levin 1989:509, and frag Or 15003/24 of Hoernle coll, ed Wille 2006:72. SHT 3.931 parallels the 3rd simile on the dry fire-sticks [§19/1:242,1] and the Bodhisattva’s realization dhyanic pleasure should not be feared, giving up self-mortification and taking food [§33/1:247,1]. Hoernle and Pelliot frags parallel parts of the Buddha’s teaching on cultivation of body and mind [§7/1:239,12]; SHT 3.997A and frag SI B/141 parallels the closing section [§§56-57/1:251]. For other parallels, see nn in the relevant sections in the translation itself below.

⁴ See **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,16-32/1:52-59), SD 8.10.

1.2 SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

1.2.1 Saccaka [§2]

The Sutta opens with the Buddha preparing to enter Vesālī for alms. [§3] Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, is sauntering towards the Gabled Hall, and Ānanda informs the Buddha that Saccaka has come to debate with him. The Buddha sits down and Saccaka approaches him.

1.2.2 Saccaka's views

[§4] Saccaka explains to the Buddha that there were **2 kinds of ascetics**. The first torture their bodies and suffers the painful consequences [§4.5]. Then, there are those who only assert their minds, but they, too, suffer painful consequences [§4.7]. Then, he asks if it's true that the Buddha's followers practise mental cultivation without any bodily cultivation [§4.8].

[§5] The Buddha then asks Saccaka to define what he means by "**bodily cultivation**." Saccaka replies with the shorter self-mortification pericope, that is, the naked ascetic's self-mortification.

[§6] The Buddha then asks if they actually ate so little food as purported, and Saccaka admits that they do eat and drink as they wish. In that case, charges the Buddha, they have gone against their own practice [§6.2].

[§6.3] The Buddha then asks Saccaka what he knows about "**mental cultivation**," but Saccaka is unable to answer. [§7] The Buddha explains that he sees "bodily cultivation" differently, and how the body and mind are cultivated in the Buddha's way.⁵

1.2.3 The Buddha's answer

1.2.3.1 [§8] The Buddha explains that one who is "**bodily uncultivated and mentally uncultivated**" simply enjoys pleasurable feelings but dislikes painful feelings. [§9] The one who is "**bodily cultivated and mentally cultivated**" is neither drawn to pleasant feelings nor troubled by painful feeling.

"Cultivated in body" (*bhāvita, kāya*) means developed in the "body" of the 5 sense-doors (*bhāvita, -pañca, dvārika, kāya*), that is, having sense-restraint. "Uncultivated in body" (*abhāvita, kāya*) means uncultivated in the "body" of the 5 sense-doors (*abhāvita, pañca, dvārika, kāya*), that is, lacking in sense-restraint. (SA 2:395)

1.2.3.2 The Commentary glosses "**bodily cultivation**" (*kāya, bhāvanā*) as insight (*vipassanā*) and "**mental cultivation**" (*citta, bhāvanā*) as concentration (*samādhi*). When the noble disciple experiences a pleasant feeling, he is not overwhelmed by it because, by his cultivation of insight, he understands the feeling to be impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. And when he experiences painful feeling, he is not overwhelmed by it because, by his cultivation of concentration, he is able to escape from it by entering into one of the dhyanas. (MA 2:286) [2.3.2].

REMARK 1. From the above, it seems that bodily cultivation means the ability to maintain natural mental calm when feeling bodily pain or discomfort, while mental cultivation is the same response towards unpleasant or stressful mental feelings.

Essentially, §§8+9 are saying that the Buddha (and his disciples, too) is able to maintain natural inner calm even when painful feelings arise in the body (in terms of bodily actions and speech) or the mind (in terms of thoughts).

⁵ On discussion related to feeling, see §10.3 n.

1.2.4 The Buddha chides Saccaka

[§10] When Saccaka declares his belief that the Buddha is “cultivated both in body and mind,” the Buddha disapproves, charging him with presumptuousness—“**these words you have spoken are rather personal and bold**”—meaning that Saccaka has no way of knowing anything by his own direct experience, and that he does not know the significance of what he has said. In the suttas, one who is “bodily cultivated” (*bhāvita,kāya*) is neither drawn to pleasant feelings nor troubled by painful feeling. [1.2.3]

[§11] Interestingly, Saccaka, accepts the Buddha’s remark, and asks if it true that pleasant feeling or painful feeling do not overwhelm him. The Buddha replies, “Why not?”

1.2.5 The great quest

[§§12-13] The Buddha then relates how, as “a black-haired youth,” he renounces the world to live the holy life. **[§14]** First, he goes to study under Ājāra Kālāma, from whom he masters the 3rd formless dhyana [§§14.4+9]. **[§15]** Then, under Uddaka Rāma,putta (Rāma’s son), he learns Rāma’s method, with which he attains the 4th formless dhyana [§§15.4+9]. With nothing more to learn, he leaves them.

REMARK 2. There is no good reason not to regard the Bodhisattva’s training under the 2 teachers as historical. If we accept this premise, then, the fact that he is able to reach either of these 2 formless attainments implies that he has mastered the 4 dhyanas, but still lacks the right view regarding their significance. [Remark 3]

[§16] He comes to a place outside Senā,nigama, near Uru,velā, where he finds “a pleasant spot ... conducive for spiritual effort.”

[§§17-19] **The parable of the 3 kinds of fire-sticks** records his reflections on the need for a truth-seeker to ensure that both body and mind (the twin fire-sticks) are not defiled by sensual lust (wet), but should be undefiled (dry). Reflecting in this way, he goes on to practise self-mortification.

REMARK 3: Some of us might be puzzled that in the following paragraphs the Bodhisattva is shown engaging in self-mortification *after* he has concluded that such practices are not helpful the attainment of awakening [4.2.2]. However, it should be noted that the parable of the 3 fire-sticks is not about asceticism, but the danger of sensual lust to spiritual practice. Hence, its location is not an issue at all [4.3.2].

1.2.6 Self-mortification

[§20] The Bodhisattva first practises “with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate” to gain “unremitting mindfulness.” He finds himself only being exhausted by this [§20.5].

[§§21-25] Then, he practises **breathless [non-breathing] meditation** in 4 increasingly difficult levels.

REMARK 4: These 4 stages of breathless meditation probably refer to an early attempt at attaining the 4 dhyanas [Remark 3], but then he “fears” the attending joy, and hence the bodily pains that he experiences. [Remark 5]

[§26] He appears dead or dying to the gods (which would be the case, if he is practising dhyana). Some gods think he has become a saint—an arhat—that is, attained his goal.

1.2.7 The starvation austerity

[§27] Then, he thinks of “cutting off food entirely,” and when the gods propose to infuse him with divine essence, he refuses.

[§28] He goes on to take “very little food,” so that in time his body “reached a state of extreme emaciation.” His body suffers bodily. He feel on his face when he defaecated or urinated [§28.3]. **[§29]** People think he looks black or brown, though some think he is sallow [§28.4]

[§30] Realizing that he is no nearer to awakening, he reflected on his efforts, and wonders, “Could there be another path to awakening?” [§30.3]

1.2.8 The middle way

[§§31-32] He recalls attaining the 1st dhyana as a child during the ploughing festival, and realizes that he should “not fear the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states.” [§32.2]

REMARK 5. This section is highly significant in suggesting that he has been cultivating dhyana, but always with the notion that its joy is unwholesome! This is the crucial turning-point wherein he gives up this wrong view. [Remark 4]

[§33] He breaks his fast, and takes “some solid food” to nourish his extremely weak body [§33.2]. When he takes some “boiled rice and gruel” [§33.4], the attending group of 5 monks are shocked, thinking that he “has given up his struggle and reverted to luxury” [§33.4].

REMARK 6. This is another highly significant point in religious history when the Buddha-to-be is deserted even by those who have believed in him right to just the moment of awakening. He will be facing the moment of full awakening all by himself under the bodhi tree. This is one of the key reasons, he will later declare that he has “no teacher” in his full awakening.

1.2.9 The 4 dhyanas

[§§34-37] When the Bodhisattva feels nourished, he goes on to cultivate the 4 dhyanas (again), successively.

REMARK 7. Clearly, he has already mastered dhyana, but this time, he fully surrenders himself, as it were, to all its joy and clarity. We could also say that in his previous attempts at dhyana, he is haunted by the view that the attending joy is “sensual and unwholesome” [§32.2]. In other words, he does not, at that time, realize that the dhyanas are wholesome if he merely experiences them, letting the joy arise and pass away, *without* being attached to them, such as when he attains to the 3rd and the 4th formless attainments under the 2 teachers [§§12-13].

1.2.10 The great awakening: the 3 knowledges

[§38] On account of his attaining the 4th dhyana, the Bodhisattva is able to attain the 3 true knowledges: those of (1) the recollection of past lives [§38.2], (2) the passing away and reappearance of beings [§40.2], and (3) the destruction of the influxes, by which “darkness was banished and light arose” [§44.3], in other words, he awakens. The Buddha’s recount of his quest for awakening ends here.

1.2.11 The Buddha's mental state

[§45] The Buddha then tells Saccaka that when he teaches, each listener personally relates to his teaching. After every session of teaching or talking, the Buddha's mind returns to its habitual deep meditative state.

REMARK 8. Here, we have a rare glimpse into the Buddha's description of his own habitual mental state, that of keeping "on the very same sign of concentration as before" [§45.3].

Saccaka declares his faith in the Buddha's words [§45.4].

1.2.12 Day-rest and delusion

[§45.5] Saccaka then asks the Buddha if he sleeps in the day. [§46] The Buddha answers that he only does so during the hot season, at midday after the noon meal, and does so mindfully.

[§46.2] Saccaka then says that some recluses and brahmins call this "dwelling in delusion" (*sammoha vihāra*). [§47] The Buddha replies that this is true for those who are still unawakened, but he is himself fully awakened, and, as such, has no delusion.

1.2.12 Saccaka praises the Buddha

[§48] Saccaka is fully convinced and praises the Buddha that despite his often forward, even rude, questions and remarks, the Buddha remains unvexed. In fact, his complexion becomes only more radiant.

[§§49-54] Saccaka admits that whenever he engaged with any of **the 6 teachers**,⁶ during difficult moments, they would prevaricate and show annoyance and anger—but not the Buddha.

1.2.13 Saccaka departs

[§§55-56] Satisfied, Saccaka takes leave. (However, he does not go for refuge).

2 Cultivation of body, cultivation of mind

2.1 SACCAKA'S VIEW OF THE BODY

2.1.1 The body and asceticism

2.1.1.1 Saccaka approaches the Buddha, raising the matter of **bodily cultivation** against mental cultivation, claiming that the Buddha's followers cultivated only the mind, but not the body [§4.8]. When the Buddha questions Saccaka about bodily cultivation, he replies, mentioning the names of three Ājīvikas [§5.2] and how they practise asceticism [§5.3]. However, by Saccaka's own admission, they are not strict about their diet, eating what and when they like [§§6.1-6.2].

2.1.1.2 When the Buddha then asks Saccaka what he understands by **mental cultivation**, Saccaka is unable to answer [§6.3]. The Buddha then tells Saccaka that the monks do not subscribe to his view of bodily cultivation [§7.1]. The Buddha then declares that Saccaka has wrong view about bodily cultivation and mental cultivation, and that he will teach him the right cultivations [§7.2].

⁶ The 6 teachers, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,16-31), SD 8.10.

2.1.2 Overwhelmed by pleasure and pain

2.1.1.3 When both body and mind are **uncultivated**, we are infatuated by pleasant feelings, both bodily and mental. When the pleasant feelings end, we feel pain [§8.1], and suffer as a result [§8.2].

Arisen pleasant feeling, too, overwhelms our mind and remains because of our uncultivated body, here meaning body and speech are not developed, that is, we lack moral virtue. In short, here by *bodily cultivation*, the Buddha means **moral virtue**, that is, the first of the 3 trainings.⁷ [§8.3]

2.1.1.4 And arisen painful feeling, too, overwhelms our mind and remains because of an uncultivated mind, here meaning the mind is not developed in terms of mindfulness, calm and insight, that is, we lack mental concentration or samadhi. In short, here by *mental cultivation*, the Buddha means **samadhi**, that is, the second of the 3 trainings. [§8.4]

2.1.1.5 As such, both our body and mind are uncultivated. The first two of the 3 trainings are missing from us. As such, we will not progress, and worse, we will be dragged around and drowned in the floods of pleasure and pain.

2.2 THE BUDDHA’S TEACHING ON SPIRITUAL CULTIVATION

2.2.1 Bodily training

When both body and mind are **cultivated**, we are *neither* infatuated by pleasant feeling *nor* do we run after pleasure. When the pleasant feeling ends, we may feel pain [§9.1], but we are not troubled by it [§9.2].

Arisen pleasant feeling, too, does *not* overwhelm our mind and remain, because of our cultivated body. Here, “cultivated body” means that our body and speech are developed, that is, we have moral virtue, that is, we—whether lay or renunciant—are in the habit of keeping the precepts, especially the 5 precepts. In short, by *bodily cultivation*, the Buddha means **moral virtue**, that is, the first of the 3 trainings, as already mentioned [§9.3; 2.1.1.3]

2.2.2 Mental training

Furthermore, arisen painful feeling does not overwhelm our mind and remains because of a cultivated mind. Here, “cultivated mind” means that the mind is developed in terms of mindfulness, calm and insight, that is, we have mental concentration or samadhi. In short, here by *mental cultivation*, the Buddha means **samadhi**, that is, the second of the 3 trainings, as already mentioned. [§9.4; 2.1.1.4]

2.2.3 Cultivated body and mind

Both our body and mind are cultivated, too. We are undergoing the first two of the 3 trainings. As such, we will progress spiritually, as we are beyond the dangers of the floods of pleasure and of pain.

2.3 COMMENTARIAL INTERPRETATION

2.3.1 The Majjhima Commentary gives a different explanation of this section. According to Buddhaghosa, §§8+9 are essentially saying that the Buddha (and his disciples, too) are able to maintain natural inner calm even when painful feelings arise in the body or the mind [2.2.1.1].

⁷ On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

2.3.2 Buddhaghosa here explains “bodily cultivation” as insight (*vipassanā*) and “mental cultivation: as concentration (*samādhi*). When the noble disciple experiences pleasant feeling, he is not overwhelmed by it because, by his cultivation of insight, he understands the feeling to be impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. And when he experiences painful feeling, he is not overwhelmed by it because, by his cultivation of concentration, he is able to free himself from it by attaining one of the dhyanas. (MA 2:286)

2.3.3 Although Buddhaghosa gives a rather narrow interpretation of bodily cultivation and mental cultivation, we can still see his comments as presenting a mental perspective of the training of the body and the mind. The point is that moral virtue is the foundation for mental cultivation, that is, attaining concentration (*samādhi*)—which, here, also means “mental calm” (*samatha*). Without concentration, there will be no wisdom (*vipassanā*), and without wisdom, there is no concentration (Dh 372).⁸

This whole teaching is found in some detail in an integrated teaching given in **the (Dasaka) Cetanā’-karaṇīya Sutta** (A 10.2) and **the (Ekā, dasaka) Cetanā’karaṇīya Sutta** (A 11.2), where we are shown how we do not even have to “intend” (think about) our meditation. We only need to devote ourselves to moral virtue, the training of our body and speech, and our meditation will then flow naturally into mental calm, flower into wisdom and fruit in liberation.⁹

3 Āsajja upanīya

Here we shall examine an interesting stock phrase that has so far not been fully understood, but has a clear usage in the context of this Sutta, and gives us a good idea of its meaning:

3.1 MEANING OF ĀSAJJA UPANĪYA

Addhā kho te ayam aggivessana āsajja upanīya vācā bhāsītā. [§10.2]

3.1.1 According to the Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD), **āsajja** is an absolutive of *āsādeti*, meaning:

- (1) to hit, attack, assail, offend, behave disrespectfully,
- (2) to come upon, encounter; often confounded with *āpajja*. See CPD: *āsajja*.¹⁰

3.1.2 CPD defines **upanīya** as “bringing forward (charges), criticizing, accusing.” It is an absolutive of *upaneti*, “leads to; alludes to.” See DP: *upanīya*.

3.2 Te ... āsajja upanīya vācā bhāsītā, “these words you have spoken are rather personal and bold” [§10.2].

3.2.1 **Āsajja upanīya, vācā bhāsītā** is stock.¹¹ In the context of §10.2, the meaning here is probably that the interlocutor Saccaka (gotra name, Aggivessana) is attempting to speak as if he could read the Buddha’s mind or knew his spiritual level, but without any personal experience himself. Saccaka presumptuously declares that the Buddha “is cultivated in body and mind,” without having cultivated thus himself. Hence, the Buddha disapproves of him.

⁸ See SD 8.4 (3.1.3).

⁹ A 10.2/5:2-4 (SD 41.6) & A 11.2/5:312 f (SD 33.3b).

¹⁰ On **āsajja**, see also Sn:N 253 n448 & Tha:N 287 f n1204.

¹¹ **M 36/1:240,7** (SD 49.4), **127/3:152,14** (SD 54.10); **A 3.60/1:172,20** (SD 16.10), **4.35/2:37,1** (SD 82.9).

3.2.2 The Madhyama Āgama parallel has 汝善達此論 *rǔ shàn dá cǐ lùn*, “You are good [right, wise] in arriving at this conclusion” (MĀ 143 @ T1.650).

3.2.3 Here are the various attempts at translating the above sentence [3.2]:

F L Woodward “Your words come close and challenge me to a statement” (A 1:172 & 2:37 = A:W 1:156 & 2:42).

Ṭhanissaro “You have affronted me with your personal statement.”

Bodhi “You have spoken strikingly befitting words.” (A:ÑB 61)

Bodhi “Your words are offensive and discourteous.” (M 1:240 = M:ÑB 335; M 3:152 = M:ÑB 1006), but the contexts here (offensive) are clearly different from that of the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta (A 3.60). [3.2.5]

3.2.4 The Commentaries explain the phrase as follows:

“having knocked against virtues, and having offended” (*guṇe ghaṭṭetvā c’eva upanetvā ca*, MA 2:287,-4);

(literal) “words spoken, knocking up against my virtues, thrusting up against my virtues” (*mama guṇe ghaṭṭetvā, mama guṇānaṃ santikaṃ upanīta vācā bhāsītā*, (AA 2:272,8).

3.2.5 K Anuruddha’s *Dictionary of Pali Idioms*, translates it as “Having made a personal reference (to me) words were uttered” (2004:179).

In all the other cases, this phrase is used in answering a confrontational remark, but in the Pāṭihāriya Saṅgārava Sutta (A 3.60), it is in response to either a polite or directly investigative remark that Saṅgārava makes.

3.3 Various contemporary translators have translated the expression in the following ways:

I B Horner	“offensive and presumptuous”	(1954)
Burma Piṭaka Association	“taunting and sarcastic”	(1989)
Bodhi	“offensive and discourteous”	(1995)
Analayo	“discourteous”	(2011)

3.4 The expressions appear in the following suttas:

Mahā Saccaka Sutta	The Buddha to Saccaka	M 36,10/1:240,5	SD 49.4
(Ceto,vimutti) Anuruddha Sutta	Anuruddha to Kaccāna	M 127,17/3:152,14	SD 54.10
(Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta	The Buddha to a brahmin	A 3.60,7/1:172,20	SD 16.10
(Mahā,purisa) Vassaka,kāra Sutta	The Buddha to a brahmin	A 4.35/2:37,1	SD 82.9

On each of the occasions here, the visitor has just acknowledged some accomplishment of the Buddha, or Anuruddha in the second Sutta.

In **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), the debater Saccaka declares his belief that the Buddha is cultivated both in body and mind.

In **the (Ceto,vimutti) Anuruddha Sutta** (M 127), the monk Kaccāna tells the monk Anuruddha that the latter must have personally met the devas.

In **the (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60), a brahmin states that the Buddha must be endowed with psychic powers, telepathic knowledge, and the ability to teach how to cultivate the mind.

And in **the (Mahā,purisa) Vassa,kāra Sutta** (A 4.35), a brahmin voices his belief that the Buddha works for the benefit of mankind, has control over his mind, is able to attain dhyanas, and has destroyed the influxes.

In all these cases, the reply given by the Buddha and Anuruddha, according to Analayo, “gives the impression as if the earlier statements by his visitors were made in an ironic manner.” (2011:730 n222)

3.5 PRAISING AN ARHAT

3.5.1 Anuruddha

3.5.1.1 The (Ceto,vimutti) Anuruddha Sutta (M 127) records Kaccāna (not Mahā Kaccāna)¹² as remarking that the arhat Anuruddha has described the devas as if he has personal experience of them. Anuruddha tells Kaccāna (who is not yet an arhat), that he is being “personal and bold,” and then explains that he has indeed personally met those devas, so that he speaks from personal experience.¹³

3.5.1.2 This is perhaps the only case of *āsajja upanīya* being used by someone other than the Buddha, that is, another arhat, Anuruddha. The interlocutor here is a monk named Ahiya or Sabhiya Kaccāna, clearly one who is not (yet) an arhat—because an arhat is able to read another arhat’s mind (just as we would of someone we know well), or an arhat would be wiser in giving praises. [3.5.2]

3.5.2 The impartiality of the saints

3.5.2.1 The (Saṅgha) Bala Sutta (A 9.5), in its definition of the 4 powers of conciliation (*saṅgha-bala*)—generosity, pleasant speech, beneficent conduct and impartiality—defines the “foremost of impartiality” as

that between a streamwinner	and	a streamwinner,
that between a once-returner	and	a once-returner,
that between a non-returner	and	a non-returner,
that between an arhat	and	an arhat. ¹⁴

A good example of such supreme impartiality amongst the saints is that of Anuruddha and his companions, Nandiya and Kimbila, as recorded in **the Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128), where Anuruddha, after saying that he shows lovingkindness in deed, speech and thought to them, declares to the Buddha:

“Bhante, here I think thus: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and instead do what these venerables wish to do. It seems, bhante, that we are of different bodies but of one mind!’”¹⁵

3.5.2.2 The teaching here [3.5.2.1] is that a saint, especially an arhat, is naturally selfless and is easily aware of another arhat’s mind. This is the attraction of like-mindedness, as pointed out by the Buddha in **the Caṅkamana Sutta** (S 14.15). As groups of monks are mindfully walking up and down in meditation or exercising themselves, the Buddha points to the assembled monks how the great arhats, and those

¹² The Pali eds give varying names: Abhiya Kaccāna (M:Ee 3:142,22; M:Se 3:289,10), Sabhiya Kaccāna (M:Be 3:187,22; M:Ce 3:336,26). **Sabhiya** (prob another person), according to Thera,gāthā Comy, is so called because his mother had given birth to him on the mid-journey, in an inn (*antarā,magg sabhāyaṃ vijāyi, ten’assa sabhiyo tv-eva nāmaṃ akaṃsu*, ThaA 2:113,29). The same explanation recurs in Mvst (Senart 1897:394,7), according to which *sabhāye jāto’ti nāma kṛtāḥ* (Basak 1968:235,33, & Oguibénine 1996:60,41: *kṛtam*). For Chin sources on Kaccāna, see Analayo 2011:728 n212.

¹³ M 127/3:152 (SD 54.10).

¹⁴ A 9.5,6(4), SD 2.21.

¹⁵ M 128,12.1/3:156 (SD 5.18 §12a).

like Ānanda and Devadatta, who tend to be followed by those with like qualities. These are the wholesome qualities of the monks, except for those following Devadatta, whose common quality is “bad desires.”¹⁶

The other saints—and also the true individuals (*sappurisa*), well-grounded in the Dharma—are also in varying, but to significant degrees, able to read the minds of their kind (as we are likely to know the minds of those close to us). In other words, their praises are not “personal and bold,” as their words not only reflect true reality, but they have themselves attained to the spiritual level of those whom they praise. Their praises, in other words, are true and wholesome.

3.6 PRAISING THE BUDDHA

3.6.0 Occasionally, translators of early Buddhist texts come across some interesting and difficult Pali expressions that are baffling and difficult to translate, such as the phrase *āsajja upanīya*. In such cases, we often see a clear difference between the scholars with their technical accuracies and academic uncertainties, and the practitioners with their inspired joy and intuitive¹⁷ clarity.

With all our technical learning and mastery of grammar, we may still not be able to tease out the true sense of the expression. On the other hand, if we are familiar with the Dharma spirit and the saints’ ways—in other words, if we read the expression and the passage with faith and wisdom—we are more likely to understand with fair certainty what it really means.

There are at least two suttas that describe how even those who are merely inspired by the Buddha’s teaching (not to speak of the wise disciples or of saints of the path) show their faith in the Buddha, not by empty praises, but by presenting the Buddha’s qualities in proper perspective. Based on such a perspective, we are able to see the Buddha as one who gives us true and complete teachings on the Dharma.

3.6.1 Pilotikā’s thunder

3.6.1.1 The Cūḷa Hatthi, padôpama Sutta (M 27,2.4-6), SD 40a.5 describes how the brahmin Jāṇussoṇī, king Pasenadi’s chaplain, meets the wanderer Pilotikā Vacchāyana:

2.4 “What do you think, master Vacchāyana, of the recluse Gotama’s clarity of wisdom?”¹⁸

Do you think he is wise?¹⁹

“But who am I, sir, that I would know the recluse Gotama’s clarity of wisdom?”²⁰

Indeed, one must surely have to be the recluse Gotama’s equal, too, to know his clarity of wisdom!”²¹

¹⁶ S 14.15 (SD 34.6).

¹⁷ Scholars often use “intuitive” euphemistically (sometimes sarcastically) to describe a practitioner’s interpretation of their scriptures, which interpretation they regard as lacking scholarly quality or approval. I think “intuitively” is the perfect word to describe how we, as practitioners, should read and reflect on the suttas—with spontaneity and joy. To be unintuitive is to be unjoyful. From the context in either case (the scholar or the practitioner), we can surely surmise who is really the more “intuitive,” if it matters at all.

¹⁸ “Clarity of wisdom,” *paññā, veyyatiyaṃ*, alt tr “lucidity of wisdom”; as at **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12), where the Buddha tells Sāriputta that “even if you have to carry me about on a litter, still there will be no change in the Tathagata’s clarity of wisdom” (M 12,62/1:82), SD 49.1; also at SD 1.13.

¹⁹ The whole line: *Tam kiṃ maññasi, bhavaṃ bhāra, dvājo samaṇassa gotamassa paññā’veyyatiyaṃ paṇḍito maññe’ti?* This whole section [§2.4-2.6] is also in the conversation btw the brahmins Piṅgiyānī and Kāraṇa, pālī in **Kāraṇa, pālī S** (A 5.194/3:236-239), SD 45.11.

²⁰ *Ko cāham, bho, ko ca samaṇassa gotamassa paññā, veyyatiyaṃ jānissāmi?* This remark and his foll one are the same as those he utters to Subha in (**Brahma, vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99,30.2+3/2:208 f), SD 38.6.

2.5 “Truly master Vacchāyana praises the recluse Gotama with high praises!”²²

“Who am I, sir, to praise the recluse Gotama?”

Surely, master Gotama is praised by the praised²³ as the best amongst devas and humans.”

(M 27,2.4-5), SD 40a.5

3.6.1.2 When asked by Jāṇussoṇī why he is so devoted to the Buddha, Pilotikā replies that it is because the Buddha is able to convince any kind of audience regarding the Dharma—whether the audience comprises nobles, or priests, or houselords, or recluses. Pilotikā is saying that as far as true praise goes, only those equal to us or wiser than us can meaningfully praise us. So, too, it is only proper for us to praise others when we are wiser or more mature, or, at least, as wise as they are.

3.6.1.3 The wanderer Pilotikā declares his deep faith in the Buddha’s ability to inspire anyone, *whether kshatriyas, brahmins, houselords or recluses*, by his teachings, so that they do not ever think of challenging him. He calls this the Buddha’s “4 footprints” (*cātu pada*), alluding to the notion that a large elephant hoofprint connotes a large elephant. We must understand that the ancient Indians respected and loved elephants.²⁴

3.6.2 Piṅgiyānī’s faith

3.6.2.1 A second sutta passage that will help us better understand the phrase *āsajja upanīya* is found in **the Kāraṇa,pālī Sutta** (A 5.194), which recounts the meeting between the brahmins Kāraṇa,pālī and Piṅgiyānī, who has just returned from meeting the Buddha. Kāraṇa,pālī then asks Piṅgiyānī:

1.3 “What do you think, master Piṅgiyānī, of the recluse Gotama’s clarity of wisdom?²⁵ Do you think he is wise?”²⁶

“But who am I, sir, that I would know the recluse Gotama’s clarity of wisdom?”²⁷

Indeed, one must surely have to be the recluse Gotama’s equal, too, to know his clarity of wisdom!”²⁸

²¹ *So’pi nūn’assa tādiso’va yo samaṇassa gotamassa paññā,veyyattiyam jāneyyāti.* “Clarity of wisdom,” *paññā,veyyattiyam*, alt tr “lucidity of wisdom”; as at **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12), where the Buddha tells Sāriputta that “even if you have to carry me about on a litter, still there will be no change in the Tathagata’s clarity of wisdom” (M 12,62/1:82), SD 49.1; also at SD 1.13.

²² This remark and his previous one are the same as those he utters to Subha in **(Brahma,vihāra) Subha S** (M 99,30.2+3/2:208 f), SD 38.6.

²³ Comy lists “the praised” (*pasattha*) as foll: rajah Pasenadi (praised by the people of Kāsi-Kosala), Bimbisāra (praised by those of Aṅga-Magadha), the Licchavīs of Vesālī (praised by the Vajjīs), the Mallas of Pāvā and of Kusinārā (praised by the kshatriyas in their respective districts), brahmins such as Caṅkī (praised by other brahmins), laymen-disciples (*upāsaka*) such as Anātha,piṇḍika (praised by other laymen disciples), laywomen disciples such as Visākhā (praised by other laywomen disciples), wanderers such as Sakul’udāyi (praised by many other wanderers), nuns such as Uppala,vaṇṇā (praised by other nuns), great elders such as Sāriputta (praised by many hundreds of other monks), devas like Sakka (praised by many thousands of other devas), brahmas such as Mahā,brahmā (praised by many thousands of other brahmas)—they all praise the Buddha, the one with the ten powers (*dasa,bala*) (MA 2:196 f).

²⁴ On the delightful story of the elephant of Pārileyyaka forest, see SD 6.1 (3). On how a war elephant is trained (and its intelligence), see **Danta,bhūmi S** (M 125,12), SD 46.3.

²⁵ “Clarity of wisdom,” *paññā,veyyattiyam*, alt tr “lucidity of wisdom” [3.6.1.1: M 27,2,4 n]

²⁶ This whole section (§1.3-1.50) also in the conversation between the brahmins Jāṇussoṇī and Pilotikā [3.6.1.1].

²⁷ *Ko cāham, bho, ko ca samaṇassa gotamassa paññā,veyyattiyam jānissāmi?*

²⁸ *So’pi nūn’assa tādiso’va yo samaṇassa gotamassa paññā,veyyattiyam jāneyyāti.*

1.4 “Truly master Piṅgiyānī praises the recluse Gotama with high praises!”
 “Who am I, sir, to praise the recluse Gotama?
 Surely, master Gotama is praised by the praised²⁹ as the best amongst devas and humans.”
 (A 5.194,1.4+5), SD 45.11

3.6.2.2 Piṅgiyānī replies that we must be as wise as the Buddha, or perhaps wiser, to praise him. In other words, if we, who are not awakened like the Buddha, were to praise him, it is an empty praise, being presumptuous, or even disrespecting him. When asked why he is so devoted to the Buddha, Piṅgiyānī replies that he finds the Dharma to be like excellent food—satisfying, filling, and fragrant—and cooling like a delightful lotus pond on a hot day. In short, the Dharma is good in every way for him.³⁰

3.6.3 Praises

These two passages teach us to be wary of praises and praising. Before we praise someone we should really know the person, his quality and ability (there is, of course, the chance that we may be wrong). The Sutta describes both Pilotikā and Piṅgiyānī as being deeply respectful of the Buddha that they do not dare vainly praise the Buddha, lest they are misperceived as being better than he.

These two passages give us the disciples’ or “public” side of the practice of praising. Now, we go back to **the Buddha’s own response to praises**, as already noted at the start [3.6.2]. In the 4 Suttas cited, we see the Buddha rejecting the praises from others. He is not like a god or God who is perceived by believers to need or demand praises and worship from others. If we praise God, for example, are we not presuming that we know better than God?

3.6.4 “Personal and bold”

3.6.4.1 In the (Majjhima) Sappurisa Sutta (M 113), the Buddha explains the qualities of the true individual and of the false, empty person, and the nature of praises.³¹ The praise from the wise—to the extent it is honest and true—is inspiring, reflecting our own goodness. The praise of the foolish—to the extent that it is false and ulterior—should be shunned, politely or otherwise.

On a simple level, a truly wise parent or teacher’s praise is well worth it, if he actually brings the best out of others. Conversely, it behooves us to praise our children, students and charge, when we know them really well, for their benefit. Otherwise, beware of those who praise us: are they simply being personal and bold, presuming to know us better than we know ourselves.

3.6.4.2 The correct translation of *āsajja upanīya* here then would be something like, “personal and bold.” The Buddha tells those who praise him that they are being “personal and bold.” We do not imagine the Buddha as feeling taunted, offended or even annoyed in anyway. He is merely telling his praisers not to presume things. “Do you really know me to say such praises?” How can they really know the Buddha when they have not yet cultivated the Dharma to fruition themselves?³²

²⁹ For Comy on “the praised” (*pasattha*), see M 27,2.5 n [3.6.1.1].

³⁰ A 5.194,1.4+5 (SD 45.11).

³¹ M 113 (SD 23.7).

³² In **Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28), when Sāriputta praises the Buddha, he asks Sāriputta whether he has known all the Buddhas of the past, the future, and the present one. Sāriputta replies that he does so keeping to “the drift of the Dharma” (*dhamm’anvaya*), meaning that he understands the Dharma as an arhat, an awakened being, himself (D 28,1+2), [SD 14.14](#).

3.6.4.3 Only a saint will truly know another saint, or only an arhat may truly know another.³³ The Buddha is the first arhat, and he is able to know anyone’s virtue and personality as he wishes. Hence, his praise or rebuke, and his teachings, are true and beneficial for us. In other words, we are reminded to be worthy of praising others, especially those we see as being praiseworthy!

3.6.4.4 The Buddha, however, is a truly compassionate teacher. For, even though the questioner is presumptuous, still the Buddha declares to Saccaka, “Surely, these words spoken are rather personal and bold, but I shall nevertheless explain (the Dharma) to you.”³⁴ Hence, it is not wrong to conclude (and to reflect on) the reminder: Before we praise others, let us examine if we are ourselves worthy of praise and of praising others. And we need to reflect on this as often as possible—and be surprised by the insights that arise from it over time.³⁵

4 The parable of the fire-sticks [§17-19]

4.1 SUMMARY

4.1.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta records the Buddha as relating a parable of the 3 fire-sticks [§§17-19] before describing his self-mortification. This parable of 3 similes shows the challenges facing those who seek awakening. Essentially, the first two similes illustrate the incompatibility of sensual lust and spirituality, while the third simile shows how a purified mind easily rises into spirituality.

The 1st fire-stick simile is that of someone trying to start a fire with a fire-stick wet with sap that is still soaked in water [§17]. If we are indulging in sensual pleasures, our minds are so caught up with the body, that it is impossible for us to free the mind, much less work towards awakening.³⁶ Instead of “wet with sap,” we can also say “sappy” here. “Sappy,” colloquially, describes someone as being “sad or romantic in a foolish or exaggerated way, that is, one under the spell of lust or worldly love.”³⁷

4.1.2 The 2nd fire-stick is still sappy but left on dry land [§18]. No matter how hard we try, we will still be unable to start a fire with this sappy stick. This means that even when we have stopped indulging in sensual lust, but if we still *think* about it—that is, our mind is still soaked up with sensual lust—even when we practise austerities, we will still be unable to meditate, much less to attain awakening.

This second simile is, in fact, the key one with regards to Saccaka’s view: that spiritual liberation can only be achieved through bodily austerity, that is, as long as the body does not indulge in sensual lust (but failing to note the state of the mind). The Buddha utterly rejects such a notion: whether we torture the body or not, it has nothing to do with striving for awakening, which is a *mental* process.

³³ On the impartiality of one saint to another, see (Saṅgaha) **Bala Sutta** (A 9.5,6(4)), [SD 2.21](#).

³⁴ **Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36,10.2), SD 49.4.

³⁵ See (**Ceto.vimutti**) **Anuruddha S** (M 127,17) + SD 54.10 (1.2.2.2).

³⁶ In the case of the 2nd simile, while M:Ee 1:241,26 reads *kāyena c’eva kāmehi avūpakaṭṭhā*, M:Be 1:308,22, M:Ce 1:574; M:Se 1:449,6 read *vūpakaṭṭha*, which, given the context, is the preferable reading, as also noted by Trenckner 1888 in M:Ee 1:550,23 (M:Be 1:308,21 also reads *kāyena c’eva cittena ca*, which similarly does not fit the 2nd simile); cf also Dutoit 1905:32. The corresponding Skt fragment 336r5 in Liu 2009:57, in fact, reads *kāyena vyapākṛṣṭ(ā) viharanti [na] ci[tt](e)[n](a)*, cf also Liu 2009:110 n1+3, although fragment 336v1 in Liu 2009: 58 reads the same for the 3rd simile, where, from the context, we would expect the reading *kāyena vyapākṛṣṭa viharanti cittena ca*.

³⁷ On the different kinds of love, see **Love**, SD 38.4.

4.1.3 According to the 3rd fire-stick simile, just as starting a fire will only be possible with a dry fire-stick and dry wood, so, too, only when we are bodily and mentally free from sensuality, will we be able to reach awakening. Such a state has nothing to do with whether we practise austerities or not.³⁸ It simply means that, to gain awakening, we need to keep our mind free of sensual lust, and our body needs to be healthy, in a moral and bodily sense, too.

4.2 LOCATION OF THE PARABLE

4.2.1 The Lalita,vistara and the Mahāvastu agree with the Mahā Saccaka Sutta in placing these 3 similes before the Bodhisattva’s ascetic practices.³⁹ The Sanskrit fragment version, however, places them *after* the description of the ascetic practices. Thus, they connect us to the Bodhisattva recalling his experience of the 1st dhyana.⁴⁰ The Saṅgha,bheda,vastu, too, first describes most of the ascetic practices and only then presents the 3 similes.⁴¹

4.2.2 Were the 3 similes misplaced?

4.2.2.1 Bodhi here remarks, “It is puzzling that ... the Bodhisatta [Eng, “Bodhisattva”] is shown engaging in self-mortification *after* he had come to the conclusion that such practices are useless for the attainment of enlightenment. This dissonant juxtaposition of ideas raises a suspicion that the narrative sequence of the sutta has become jumbled. The appropriate place for the simile of the fire-sticks, it seems, would be at the end of the Bodhisatta’s period of ascetic experimentation, when he has acquired a sound basis for self-mortification.” (M:ÑB 1229 n387).

4.2.2.2 In a similar vein, Analayo notes: “As the three similes in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta imply that awakening does not necessarily require austerities, it is puzzling that the Mahā Saccaka Sutta places them before the bodhisattva’s ascetic practices. If the bodhisattva had already realized that austerities are not necessary for awakening before undertaking them, there would have been little reason for him to engage in them at all [4.2.2.1]. In this respect, the Sanskrit fragment version’s presentation seems to fit the context better.” (2011: 235 f). [4.3.3.1]

4.2.3 Interpolated episodes?

Another scholar, Bronkhorst, thinks that the episode of the 3 similes [§§17-19] and the episode where Saccaka contrasts the composed behaviour of the Buddha with the evasive reactions⁴² of the 6 heterodox teachers [§§48-54], were interpolated, suggesting that

³⁸ §19.6 follows the 3rd simile with this conclusion: “even if these good recluses and brahmins were to feel painful feeling, racking, piercing feelings ... they are capable of knowledge, vision, and supreme awakening,” *opakkamikā ce pi te ... dukkhā ... vedanā vediyanti ... no ce pi te ... opakkamikā dukkhā ... vedanā vediyanti, bhobbā va te ñāṇāya dassanāya anuttarāya sambodhāya* (M:Be 1:308,26: *vedayanti*).

³⁹ Lalv (Lefmann 1902:246,9 or Vaidya 1958b:181,17) and Mvst (Basak 1965:169,10 or Senart 1890:121,1). Another occurrence of these 3 similes can be found in T190 (T3.764c12).

⁴⁰ Fragment 335v7 in Liu 2009:57. See Analayo 2011:236, Table 4.9.

⁴¹ Gnoli 1977:104,20. Although, at this point, the Saṅgha,bheda,vastu has described most of the ascetic practices, it nevertheless follows the 3 similes with a short description of how the Bodhisattva subsisted on a single fruit a day (Gnoli 1977:105,29), so that in its account, too, the similes do not really mark the end of his ascetic practices.

⁴² It should be noted that the prevarications of the 6 sectarian teachers are well known, as noted by king Ajāta,-sattu in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2) esp §§17.2, 26, 32.1, SD 8.10.

“If we remove these portions ... we are left with what may be called the ‘Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra.’ From the beginning this Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra must have contained the episode on meditation without breath and reduced intake of food. This episode itself may or may not have existed before the composition of the Original Mahāsaccaka Sūtra.”

(Bronkhorst, 1993:18).

It is highly questionable whether this is warranted at all. [4.3.3.2]

4.3 SCHOLARLY VIEWS; SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS

4.3.1 Effective sutta study

4.3.1.1 Scholars who work only as disinterested “third-party” analysts and critics of the written text or approach Buddhism merely as a religion, but without practising it, might often try to come up with some “problems” related to the Buddha or his teachings. The more complex or tricky the problem presented, then the more academic mileage the scholar gains. Of course, such exercises need not be bad at all, and can, if they are insightful and sensitive to Buddhism, actually help Buddhist practitioners and scholars understand the ancient texts better. Ironically but truly, too, the next generation of scholars or even contemporaries might debunk such scholars—again, rightly or wrongly.

4.3.1.2 Conversely, it would not be helpful if a monastic sees himself as a scholar first, and only then as a practitioner, if at all. Indeed, a monastic scholar would not be doing this consciously, but the effects of his scholarship can reveal where his heart really lies. Perhaps, such lapses are rather episodic rather than personal. Sometimes, a monastic may think and work *only* as a scholar, simply because he lacks spiritual insight into the Dharma, or is more concerned with a livelihood.

4.3.1.3 In any religious study and practice, we, as believers and practitioners, have to deal with not only religious history, but also hagiology and mythology. We have to process *facts* as well as *tradition* and *imagination*. Although deep faith may allow us to unquestioningly accept fabulous stories and supernatural accounts, we will be sadly deluded if we behave as if we have experienced them directly, when they are merely imagination or wishful thinking.

Even if we think we have experienced those teaching or “truths,” there is no way we can really verify them, or know that they are the result of some medical or psychological condition. Our episodes of lights and visions, for example, could be the result of some hormonal imbalance and neural condition. Or, we may be hearing voices because of early symptoms of schizophrenia, and so on. Often, our meditation teachers would remind us to regard all visions in meditation—no matter how spectacular (especially if they are spectacular)—that they are “mind-made.”⁴³

In simple terms, this would boil down to blind faith, leave a gaping hole in our bowl or pot, so that we are deprived of any spiritual nourishment.

4.3.1.4 A middle way out of this dilemma between religious fiction and spiritual experience is to approach religious scripture—the Pali Canon and related texts—as **literature**. This approach allows us to keep an open mind, even to suspend our judgement for as long as necessary while we put the pieces

⁴³ For some discussion, see SD 17.8c (8.2), on epilepsy and the religious.

together and get an ever bigger picture of the spiritual jigsaw puzzle. Such an approach allows us to understand the nature and levels of language, and the form and figure of words and writing.⁴⁴

In fact, there is much in early Buddhism that can easily be accepted with some personal experience, especially the keeping of the precepts, and meditation training. These are the most practical aspects of early Buddhism. Beyond that, such as the teachings of karma and rebirth, the various non-human realms and disembodied beings, super powers, and fabulous stories, can all be provisionally accepted not as literal truth, but as literary realities.

4.3.1.5 Indeed, as long as we are unawakened, all we have to work with, as we journey towards the path, are views. And our view of the path, the journey and the destination keep changing as we progress on our pilgrimage. We truly progress only by renouncing wrong old views and accepting new sensible and inspiring ones. It's like moving up a ladder—if the step is weak or broken, we need to overstep it—to safely reach the heights; then, we do not even need the ladder any more, at least for the moment.

We can only move upwards by putting one foot firmly on each higher rung, one after the other. Each foot has to give up the old rung and step on a higher one so that we move ever upwards. Even so, we must progress by understanding ourself and refining our views, and even giving them up for better and more correct ones, as we evolve as Dharma-spirited practitioners.

4.3.2 Significance of the location of the parable

4.3.2.1 The salient point of the parable of the 3 fire-sticks [§§17-19] is that they refer to the fact that defilements arise from sense-objects, and they weaken, even hinder, our spiritual efforts, whether we resort to asceticism or not. The crucial idea throughout the 3 similes is the contrast between the “wet” (*sa, sneha*) stick and the “dry” (*sukkha*) stick. There is a wordplay on *sneha*, which can mean “love (especially as infatuation or lust)” and also “viscous liquid, or sap.”

Only when an ascetic is free from sensual defilements, or “sense-object(s) connected with sense-defilement” (*kilesa, kāmēna vatthu, kāmato*)⁴⁵ (MA 2:228,2), is he able to withstand the rigours and pains of self-mortification. The reason is simple enough: a mind “wet” with lust or sensual desire cannot be really focused, what more to say of attaining dhyana. His mind needs to be “dry”—free from sensual lust—in order to attain dhyana. Without dhyana, the mind is still caught up with the body, as it were, and is directly affected by pains, and so suffers.

4.3.2.2 Note the Bodhisattva is already well accomplished in dhyana practice *before* he devotes himself to self-mortification. This sequence is vital to the significance of the whole process. Since he is able to attain dhyana, he should at least temporarily be free from sensual lust. With a “dry” mind, he is able to focus and attain dhyana, as a result of which, he is able to withstand all the ascetic practices mentioned.

However, despite doing so—going as far as the true mind and ready body are able to tolerate the demands of self-mortification—he finds that he is no nearer to awakening. The point is that he *is* capable of withstanding the rigours of self-mortification beyond any other ascetic of his day.

The commentary notes that even though the practice of austerities was not required for the Bodhisattva to reach awakening, he nevertheless undertook these practices to set an example of his energetic striving to others (MA 2:288,17). In a similar vein, the Lalita, vistara suggests that the Bodhisattva undertook austerities in order to humble other ascetics and to confound his adversaries.⁴⁶ But these are

⁴⁴ On Buddhism as literature, see SD 40a.14 (4.1); also SD 10.9 (8.2.3): Other worlds; See also **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11; **Buddhism as myth**, SD 36.2.

⁴⁵ On the 2 kinds of defilements (*kilesa*)—as subject (*kilesa, kāmā*) and object (*vatthu, kāmā*)—see SD 4.7 (1.3).

⁴⁶ Lefmann 1902:250,21 or Vaidya 1958b:184,3.

secondary points. The key point is that he *has* actually practised self-mortification, but finds them to be wanting. Moreover, self-mortification has practically nothing to do with the attaining of right view, the key goal of the Dharma quest.

4.3.3 Resolving the scholars' problems

4.3.3.1 Hence, there is nothing “puzzling,” as Bodhi and Analayo think, that the Bodhisattva goes on to engage in self-mortification *after* he has concluded that such practices are useless, hence unnecessary, for the attainment of awakening [4.2.2.1]. Still, he goes on to practise them to actually see for himself and to show us that self-mortification is indeed inefficacious spiritually, *despite his ability to withstand the rigours of self-mortification*. This is also to put to rest any accusations by other ascetics, as suggested by the Commentary [4.3.3.2], that he has not practised self-mortification like they have done.

4.3.3.2 Bronkhorst’s view [4.2.2], that the episodes of the 3 similes and of the evasiveness of the 6 sectarian teachers have been “interpolated,” is actually uncalled for—although its value as scholarly speculation obviously remains. We can see that the parable of the 3 fire-sticks is not only cogent and helpful to our understanding of the true nature of self-mortification, but also that the parable is perfectly placed in the narrative sequence of the Bodhisattva’s struggle for awakening.

The episode of the prevarication of the 6 sectarian teachers, as pointed out by Saccaka [§§48-54], are well known. Saccaka’s familiarity with the 6 teachers is, in fact, a key factor in his desire to debate with the Buddha on spiritual matters.

Moreover, such an account is also reported elsewhere. **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), for example, records king Ajāta,sattu as stating his disillusionment with the 6 teachers for this reason (amongst others), too.⁴⁷ Such “eel-wriggling” is described as “endless hedging” in **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1) and is a basis for wrong view.⁴⁸

4.3.3.3 Analayo has noted that in a Sanskrit fragment of the Dīrgha Āgama (long sutras) of the Sanskrit tradition, the parable of the 3 fire-sticks is located at the end of the self-mortification episode.⁴⁹ We do not know the actual reason or reasons for such an arrangement, but sectarian variance in textual readings is common. Although variance and vagaries in textual readings can be found even in the Pali texts, the overall size and coherence of the suttas is an invaluable and unparalleled record of early Buddhist teachings and history. Non-Pali and later works are especially useful where they help us better understand the Pali suttas and helpfully fill in the lacunae in the suttas to give us a more complete picture of the greatest events and teachings of our spiritual life.

5 Significance of the Bodhisattva’s self-mortification

5.1 THE BODHISATTVA’S QUEST YEARS

5.1.1 The 7-year quest

5.1.1.1 The suttas that recount the Bodhisattva’s practice of self-mortification⁵⁰ do not mention its duration. For example, in such accounts as **the Bhaya,bherava Sutta** (M 4), **the Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta**

⁴⁷ D 2 esp §§17.2, 26, 32.1, SD 8.10.

⁴⁸ D 1,62-66 (SD 25.2).

⁴⁹ For Analayo’s analysis, see 2011:236 f.

⁵⁰ On the Bodhisattva’s self-mortification, see eg §§44-62 (**Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,44-62/1:77-83), SD 49.1).

(M 12), the **Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), and the **Jātaka Nidāna, kathā** (J 1:67 f), we find only mention of his ascetic practices without any mention of their duration.⁵¹

5.1.1.2 However, we have at least two suttas that mention the Buddha’s quest for awakening as lasting “7 years” (*satta vassa*). First, this period is clearly evident from the title, **the Satta Vassa Sutta** (S 4.24), where it is reported, “Now at that time, Māra the bad one had been pursuing the Blessed One for 7 years, closely watching for any weakness, but found none.”⁵²

Then, there is **the Padhāna Sutta** (Sn 3.2), “the discourse on the striving,” which records the Bodhisattva’s quest for awakening in his last life. The Sutta records Māra as admitting that “For 7 years, I pursued the Blessed One,” but fails to find any opportunity to distract him.⁵³

These 7 years include the first year spent with the two teachers—Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta⁵⁴—and then the remaining 6 years in self-mortification. Interestingly, **the Ghaṭikāra Sutta** (M 81) records that Jotipāla actually reviles Kassapa Buddha a total of 7 times, which would traditionally fit with the 7 years of quest quite perfectly, as far as coincidences or karmic consequences go.⁵⁵

5.1.2 The 6 years of painful asceticism

5.1.2.1 According to **Apadāna**, our Buddha, in his past life as the monk Joti, pāla [5.1.1.2], reviles Kassapa Buddha, claiming that awakening is impossible under a “baldy” such as him. As a karmic consequence, Gotama has to spend 6 painful years of self-mortification.⁵⁶

5.1.2.2 If we take such a story as **prophecy**, then, we have to explain how such a notion is not based on a belief in fatalism or predestination. The early Buddhist teaching is that although we may be able to assume certain future outcomes of present conditions, the future itself, as a rule, is uncertain, simply because it has not yet happened.⁵⁷

5.1.2.3 On the other hand, we need not dismiss or expurgate such a tale—it’s the nature of religion to spin such tales—it’s called **hagiography**—and for some good reason, too. In the spirit of **the Neyyattha Nīt’attha Sutta** (S 2.3.5+ 6), we are advised to take such a story as *a teaching that needs explication*. We need not accept it as being historical, but as an instructive narrative, teaching us even the Bodhisattva is subject to karma, and that the fruits of past karma may still act on the Buddha under the right conditions. Nevertheless, the Buddha, or any arhat, is not mentally affected in any negative way by such events.

5.2 THE BREATHINGLESS MEDITATION

⁵¹ See **Bhaya, bherava S** (M 4,20/1:20 f), SD 44.3, **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12,44-61/1:77-82), SD 49.1, **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,20-30/1:242-246), SD 49.3; also J 1:67 f.

⁵² S 4.24/1:122-124 (SD 36.5).

⁵³ Sn 448, **Padhāna S** (Sn 3.2), SD 51.4.

⁵⁴ On these 2 teachers, see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,16) + SD 1.11 (4).

⁵⁵ M 81,6.5 etc (SD 49.3 (5.1.2)).

⁵⁶ Ap 387.29/1:301 = UA 265 f; ApA 114 f; cf **Ghāṭikāra S** (M 81,6-23/2:46-54), SD 49.3. Most Chin parallels and texts also mention the Bodhisattva’s self-mortification as lasting 6 years: **T3.511b** (普曜經 fasc 5) T3.186.511a18(6) & T3.186.511a20(08); **T3.581c** (方廣大莊嚴經 fasc 7) T3.187.581c05(00); **T3.638b** (過去現在因果經 fasc 3) T3.189.-638b26(03); **T3.769b** (佛本行集經 fasc 25) T3.190.769b04(01); **T4.24b** (佛所行讚 or 佛本行經 fasc 3) T4.192.24b15-(00); **T4.75a** (佛本行經 or 佛本行讚傳 fasc 3) T4.193.75a21(00). See Nakamura 2000: 444 n216, where, however, he misquotes **(Puñña) Mettā S** (A 7.58a), SD 2.11a.

⁵⁷ On the Buddha’s **omniscience**, see **Kaṇṇaka-t, thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8 (2); **Sandaka S** (M 76,21+52), SD 35.7; SD 36.2 (5.1.1.2). On Buddha’s knowledge of the future, see SD 36.2 (5.10.3).

5.2.1 The “breathless meditation” pericope

5.2.1.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta, its Sanskrit fragment version, their Ekōttarika Āgama parallel, the Lalita, vistara, the Mahā, vastu, and the Saṅgha, bheda, vastu agree in relating that the Bodhisattva, in due course, practises the “breathless meditation” or breath control.⁵⁸ The purpose of this meditation is to free the spiritual breath from the vile body. What better way, it seems, to free the breath than to stop the body breathing. The body takes the air from the outside world (the universal soul) but has to give it back.

What if the breath is held within forever? Note how the first simile describes “a loud sound of winds coming out from the ear-holes” [§21.2]. Clearly, the breath cannot be held, not for long anyway—what we take from outside, we have to give it back. That’s the way it is.

5.2.1.2 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta describes this meditation as stopping “my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose” in growing degrees of intensity, so that there is:

- (1) “a loud sound of winds coming out from the ear-holes, just like the loud sound of winds from a smith’s bellows” [§21.2];
- (2) “violent pains in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a strong leather strap around my head as a headband” [§23.2];
- (3) “violent winds carved up my belly, just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox’s belly with a sharp butcher’s knife” [§24.2]; and
- (4) “a violent burning in my body, just as if two men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of burning coal.” [§25.2].

This description of the breathless meditation, along with these 4 stock passages on the nature of the pains that the Bodhisattva feels, forms **the breathless meditation pericope**.

5.2.2 Breathingless meditation as the 4 dhyanas

The Pali terms for “breathless meditation” (literally, “not-breathing dhyana”) is *appāṇaka jhāna* (according to the Burmese Siamese, and Sinhala MSS, and the Commentary) or *appāṇaka jhana* (according to the PTS edition).⁵⁹ CPD says that these two terms are derived from the Sanskrit:

- *alpa* (“little, minute”) + *āṇa* (“breath,” usually “in-breath”)⁶⁰ + *ka* (adjectival prefix), or
- *a* (negative prefix) + *prāṇa*? (“the breath,” usually “out-breath”)⁶¹ + *ka*. (DP)

From the etymology here, we can surmise that there is no fixed meaning to *āṇa* and *prāṇa* (Pali, *āna* and *pāna*), either of which can mean the “in-breath” or the “out-breath.” Earlier on, perhaps during the Vedic period, they may each have a distinct sense, but over time, on account of local and personal usage-

⁵⁸ The breathingless meditation is described in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31/1:246), SD 49.4, **Bodhi Rāja, kumāra S** (M 85/2:93), SD 55.2, and **(Deva) Saṅgārava S** (M 100,28-29/2:147), SD 10.9.

⁵⁹ M 1:243,5 f = 2:212,5 (= *nirassāsakaṃ*, MA 2:289,7); *~jjhānaṃ*, MA 2:11.32, *~jjhān’ādi*, MA 2:387,10-20; J 1:67,14, *appāṇakaṃ jhānaṃ jhāyanato*, “meditating in breathingless dhyana.” In BHS *āsphāṇakaṃ dhyānaṃ*, Mvst 2:124,9 (= M 1:243,3); *sa khalv-aharṃ ... mukhato nāsikā, śrotrehi ca āśvāsa, praśvāsā uparundhi*; Lalv 250,1*; cf Kern, *Manual* 19n; see also *āsphāraṇaka*~, Mahāvīyutpatt (Minayeff) 67,10 (= *a-sphāraṇa*, in the etym Lalv (Lefman) 250,19; cf Skt *vsphāy*? (CPD).

⁶⁰ See SD 7.13 (2.1.1.3).

⁶¹ See SD 7.13 (2.1.1.1).

es, their senses became less distinct. Suffice it to say here that, when the two words are conjoined as a dvandva—as *ānāpāna*—it simply means “the breath.”⁶²

5.2.3 Effects of the breathingless meditation

5.2.3.1 The episode of the breathingless meditation provides us with a number of vital clues on its significance in our understanding of the Bodhisattva’s quest for awakening.

(1) The first clue is the four stages of intensity of his practice of the breathingless meditation.

(2) Then, we have the Pali term itself, that is, *appānaka jhāna* [5.2], where *jhāna* can mean either “meditation” or “dhyana.” Indeed, here both meanings may well apply, but dhyana is of special significance, as will be obvious below.

(3) Then, there is “death-throes pericope” comprising similes illustrating the excruciating pains that the ascetic practices entail.

(4) And finally, the Bodhisattva turns to extreme ascetism of the body [§§27-30].

5.2.3.2 (1) The 4 stages of breathingless meditation are suggestive of a tetrad teaching. Consider the context of the “breathingless meditation,” clearing the number would refer to the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), which the Bodhisattva would have mastered by this time in his quest, to be able to practise something as sophisticated and dangerous as the breathingless meditation.

(2) That the 4 stages should refer to the form dhyanas is further supported by the name of the breathingless meditation itself, that is, *appānaka jhāna*, where, as already stated [5.2.3.1], *jhāna* is best translated as “dhyana.” Such a difficult and life-threatening practice can only be done by someone who is a dhyana-attainer (*jhāna.lābhī*). Once we attain dhyana, we are free from our senses, that is, we transcend the bodily body to the level of transcendental mind, a sort of pure mind-only experience that feels no bodily pain.

(3) However, upon emerging from dhyana, we first return to our “normal consciousness,” that is, that of the 5 bodily senses, when we begin to feel the body again. In such a strenuous meditation as the breathingless dhyana, both the body and mind are tested to their limits. The breath is forcibly stopped, as it were (unlike in the “normal” dhyana, when bodily breathing naturally seems to stop when dhyana is attained).⁶³

(4) After fully experiencing the breathingless dhyana, the Bodhisattva realizes that he has tried out all the meditative means of working with the mind. He has even earlier on attained to the highest of the formless dhyanas, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception [§15.9]. In short, with the stopping of his breath during meditation, he has practically exhausted every aspect of the mind. Only one avenue now remains to be explored to exhaustion, that is, the body.

5.2.3.3 The descriptions here [5.2.1.1] of the nature and severity of the pains of the breathingless meditation—that is, **the “breathingless meditation” pericope** [5.2.1.1]—undertaken by the Bodhisattva is a very familiar one. The last three stock passages are also the last three of the fourfold “**death-throes pericope**,” and except for the first, they recur in the stock descriptions of the throes of a dying person. The death-throes pericope recurs in connection with the dying moments of these 4 persons, that is,⁶⁴

⁶² For further discussion, see SD 7.13 (2).

⁶³ While speech and language stop at the 1st dhyana [SD 8.4 (5.1.3)], the breath, as we know it, disappears with the arising of the meditation-sign (*nimitta*): see SD 19.7 (4.5; 6.1.2). In the attainment of cessation of the Buddha, arhat or non-returner, the breath and heart-beat stop (M 1:301 f): see SD 9 (9.10.5(5)).

⁶⁴ The first pericope in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,21.2) is that of “a loud sound of winds coming out from the ear-holes, just like the loud sound of winds from a smith’s bellows,” whereas its counterpart in the rest of other pericopes is that of “violent winds cutting through my head like a strong man cleaving it open with a sharp sword.”

The brahmin houselord Dhānañjāni	Dhānañjāni Sutta	M 97,29.2-5/2:193	SD 4.9
The houselord Anātha,piṇḍika	Anāthapiṇḍik’ovāda Sutta	M 143,4/3:259	SD 23.9
The monk Channa	Chann’ovāda Sutta	M 144,5/3:264	
	= Channa Sutta	S 35.87,5/4:56	SD 11.12
The monk Phagguṇa	(Gilāna) Phagguṇa S	A 6.56,1.4/3:379 f	SD 23.4 ⁶⁵

Since this is the “death-throes” pericope (including the first stock passage of the “breathless meditation” pericope), clearly, the Bodhisattva, in his breathless meditations, is experiencing life-threatening situations, as he has stopped breathing, and also that he actually fears the dhyanic joy. These are the two factors preventing him from progressing towards self-awakening.

Firstly, it is his fear of dhyanic joy, on account of which, upon emerging from dhyana each time, he reviews the experience in a negative way, that is, regarding the joy as being unwholesome. In other words, he has been practising dhyana with a wrong view.⁶⁶

Secondly, stopping the breath—a self-mortifying process—does not help at all. The reason for this is very simple: it brings on terrible pains, described in the four stock passages of the “breathless meditation” pericope. In the end, his struggles with the excruciating pains of his extreme ascetic practices and his fear of dhyanic joy, simply sapped all his bodily energy, so that he is unable to direct his mental energies, even though unaffected by these bodily pains, he is unable to progress towards self-awakening.

5.2.4 Mental denial before bodily asceticism?

5.2.4.1 We might now ask the question: **Why doesn’t the Bodhisattva practise self-mortification—that is, exhaust his body—well before exhausting his mind?** What if the Bodhisattva had denied his body before denying his mind, that is, practised the bodily asceticism first, and then the mental deprivation, climaxing in the breathless meditation? This is a question wrongly put, as it *assumes* that such a sequence of actions is possible. We should instead ask: Is it possible for his quest to have progressed in this manner?

If he had practised bodily asceticism before cultivating his mind, it is simply unlikely that he would have made any progress at all. Indeed, he would be just like any of the ritualistic or traditional ascetic of his day who has not risen beyond his practices. The point is clear enough: the whole Dharma quest—the Bodhisattva’s is a quest for meaning—is rooted in an understanding of his own mental processes. The best tool for such a quest is surely the mind itself, that is, meditation. The conscious body works closely with the mind; without the mind, the body is simply the 4 elements: earth, water, fire, and wind.⁶⁷

5.2.4.2 Hence, it makes sense that the Bodhisattva begins his Dharma quest by working with his mind on his mind. He is already a precocious meditator, able to attain to the 1st dhyana when very young. Even if we discount this fact,⁶⁸ he still has the best teachers from whom to learn meditation. Either way, he progresses well and fast in attaining, not only the 4 form dhyanas [2.2], but also the 4 formless attainments⁶⁹ [§§14+15].

⁶⁵ Cf (Chakka) Āsava S (A 6.58/3:389), SD 62.1.

⁶⁶ The thesis of my paper, **The Buddha discovered dhyana** (SD 33.1b) is that the Buddha did *not* “discover” dhyana per se, but that he discovered dhyana with right view (SD 33.1b (5.1.6; 5.2)).

⁶⁷ See **Rūpa**, SD 17.2a.

⁶⁸ On the view of scholars that it is puzzling that the Bodhisattva engages in self-mortification *after* concluding that the practices are inefficacious for attaining awakening (as reflected in the parable of the 3 fire-sticks), see M:ÑB 1229 n387 & Analayo 2011:235 f esp n157.

⁶⁹ On the form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,77-84), SD 8.10; also SD 8.4 (5). On the formless attainments, see **Jhāna Pañha S 1** (S 40.1), SD 24.11 (5).

With such mental powers of calm and clarity, he is able to go on to practise bodily asceticism without being mentally affected in any negative way. However, there are limits to how much abuse—here called “asceticism”—that the body can take. It nearly costs him his life. It is meaningless to “die” for the world or even the whole cosmos (if that is ever meaningful), but to live as a liberated and awakened being is truly beneficial for the world.

5.2.4.3 Realizing the value of life and that his quest is still unattained, he then turns from working on his body in the manner well known, to no avail, amongst the ascetics of his day. It is as if he has to cross the final frontier of the spiritual universe as imagined in his day. And cross it he does, abandoning the mirage of self-mortification, returning to his true quest.

Turning back to his quest for the true meaning and purpose of life, he realizes that he needs **joy**—the beauty of the *mind*—in order to appreciate the truth of *reality*. Putting beauty and truth together, the Bodhisattva is then certain, “This is the way!”—the middle way. Essentially, this means respect for the human body as a vehicle for awakening; seeing into the **beauty** of the human mind as the window to let in the light and warmth of liberating wisdom, which leads on to the knowledge and vision of the **truth** that is awakening.

5.2.4.4 The best answer to the question [5.2.4] is surely that *this is the way things have happened*, like a great spiritual experiment by a precocious and perceptive researcher. In the early Buddhist texts, we see the natural evolution of a spiritually perceptive individual who sees the world for what it really is—characterized by impermanence and unsatisfactoriness—and seeks to find the answer to end suffering. Unlike later hagiology and mythology, the Bodhisattva does not have any prescience into what is to come or what he has to do, except to wisely look into the present, considering his acts and their fruits, and what to do next.

5.2.4.5 Even then, putting all this into historical perspective, we see a natural and coherent **sequence of events** in the Bodhisattva’s quest for awakening. He first notices unsatisfactoriness in the world and in himself.⁷⁰ Realizing that the solution must lie outside of worldliness [§12], he leaves home to seek the awakening truth and liberation [§13]. He first approaches the best teachers of the day to master meditation, to which he naturally connects, learning all that can be learned, even qualifying himself to lead the very group he has joined [§§14+15].

Clear of his quest, he then sets out on his own [§16]. He reflects on the greatest dangers to the meditative life that keeps us body-bound—that is, sensual lust—by way of the parable of 3 fire-sticks [§§17-19]. He now thinks that he should free himself even more from his body, and so goes on to practise other meditations that demand great determination [§20], and the breathingless dhyana, so that, as it were, he frees the breath from his body. In the process, he nearly touches death itself [§§21-26].

5.2.4.6 Having exhausted his mind, he turns to exhausting the body (the source of sensual lust itself, as it were) through bodily asceticism, starving himself until he is but skin and bones [§§27-29]. Then, he realizes he is going in the wrong direction, and turns back, recalling the joy of dhyana he has experienced many years before—must be the way to awakening! [§30]

After exhausting all the avenues for the Dharma quest that the mind and body can provide, and almost touching death itself, he realizes the inadequacies of these ways to bring about any kind of awakening. Then, he sees the final clue to his quest: he should not fear the joy of dhyana, a joy that is sense-free and wholesome. By then, he is already an accomplished meditator and wiser in his quest.

⁷⁰ His pre-renunciation reflections are recorded, eg, in **Sukhumāla S** (A 3.38/1:145 f), SD 5.16 (19.4.2), **Mada S** (A 3.39/1:146 f), SD 42.13, and the fullest account in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,13), SD 1.11.

Fuelled by joy, his mind moved on to be still and clear, so that now, as the self-awakened Buddha, he fully sees true reality.

5.3 THE SELF-MORTIFICATION

5.3.1 Why self-mortification does not help

5.3.1.1 The reason for this has actually been answered [5.2.4], but it helps to read it again so that we see the answer in the perspective of this question [5.3.1]. Self-mortification is the practice of bodily denial with the goal of attaining spiritual liberation. The Jains, for example, believe that for eternity, every living being is a soul in a bondage of karmic atoms accumulated through good and bad deeds. The being can free itself of this bondage through self-mortification, even by ritual starving ending in death itself.⁷¹

To liberate the soul from the contamination of karmic matter, one must not only practise extreme asceticism, but must maintain such an effort by showing non-violence to all beings. Ironically, however, Jains view that ritual suicide is the noblest way of attaining liberation. The Buddha, on the other hand, rejects this notion and disallows suicide, or causing or approving of any suicide. In short, in early Buddhism, all forms of life, including that of our own, is sacred and inviolable.

5.3.1.2 Self-mortification invariably entails bodily pain and mental suffering, often agonizing. If we are not mentally trained and prepared for such an exercise, we are likely to harm ourselves at least bodily, perhaps also mentally. In other words, we might become numbed to the pain, and mistake this lack of feeling to be some kind of spiritual attainment. More likely, our mind has been so badly affected by the pains that it ceases to function normally. Or, if we are more fortunate, we might simply give it all up, sensing its futility and dangers.

The Bodhisattva is able to withstand the full rigours of the most extreme asceticism because he is an accomplished meditator, a dhyana-attainer [2.2]. In dhyana meditation, the mind is fully free from the body, that is, the bodily senses. Hence, the body senses neither bodily pleasure nor pain. The mind, however, reaches a state of profound joy. However, this joy cannot be sustained for long once we have emerged from dhyana.

5.3.1.3 Outside of dhyana, even the Bodhisattva will still feel the impact of the pains of asceticism. Even if this experience of bodily pain does not affect him mentally, he is still overwhelmed by the false notion that dhyanic pleasure is bad and unwholesome. Hence, he does not fully benefit from the spiritual potential of the dhyanic experience.

5.3.1.4 Even then, dhyanic experience in itself does not bring awakening. After all, we know that there are at least two famous dhyana masters in the Bodhisattva's times, that is, Ālāra Kālāma and Rāma,putta⁷² [§§14-15], and there must have been many others.⁷³ While such meditators tend to think in terms of some eternal personal essence or external divine soul, the Buddha, understanding the nature of impermanence, realizes that nothing of this world, "with its Brahma [High God] and Māra ... with its gods," is satisfactory.

Since all things are impermanent and becoming other, they must all surely be unsatisfactory. Since everything in this universe is impermanent and changing, surely we have no power even over our own

⁷¹ SD 27.1 (2.1.3).

⁷² See also **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (3).

⁷³ See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (4).

experiences, not to mention things: we cannot really control what we “are” and what we “have.”⁷⁴ Surely, there can be no eternal essence or abiding entity behind anything in this universe. In this sense, they are all **non-self**: the principle of voidness courses through all beings and all things.

5.3.1.5 However, there is a key simple goodness that is within our reach, that is the key, as it were, that opens the dhyanic door to let us into the free space of awakening. That humble key to the joy of dhyana, the highest of spiritual renunciation, the giving up of every sense so that we are fully free from sensual lust. The mind is then fully free and able to see itself in all its beauty and truth. The joys we feel give us the space with which to fully embrace the true reality within us. Then, we recognize that we are fully awakened and liberated.

5.3.2 The “dying” Bodhisattva

5.3.2.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta reports that devas comment on the austere Bodhisattva’s condition, wondering whether he is already dead or about to die⁷⁵ [§26]. At first blush, this passage seems to be out of sequence, since even though breath-control must have been an exhausting practice, a depiction of the Bodhisattva’s body showing him to be near death does not seem to fit here—after all, it is only a kind of *meditation*. It surely fits better after the severe ascetic starving described later.⁷⁶ [§§27-28]

5.3.2.2 Here, the Mahā,vastu gives us a possible clue to the narrative sequence of the Bodhisattva’s spiritual striving as recorded in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta. According to the Mahā,vastu (Mvst 2:208), the Bodhisattva’s father sends some of his men to follow the Bodhisattva and keep the father informed of his son’s efforts and well-being. When the Bodhisattva has taken up the breathingless meditation, these men conclude that he must be dead, since his breathing has stopped.⁷⁷

The same interpretation would also fit the comment made by the devas in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta, who may have thought that he is dead or dying for the same reason. Thus, though the starvation might have brought the Bodhisattva close to death, his practice of breath-control—his not breathing—would surely have given observers the impression that he is dead.

5.3.2.3 According to the Mahā,vastu, the Bodhisattva’s father refuses to believe his messengers, since he is convinced that the Bodhisattva is only in deep concentration.⁷⁸ This would fit well with the

⁷⁴ That is, not if we are still unawakened, and do not understand their true nature and reality.

⁷⁵ No such comment is reported in Skt fragment parallel.

⁷⁶ This suggestion finds support in EĀ 31.8 (T2.671a7), according to which the devas comment on the Bodhisattva’s death-like condition after he has starved himself until he is emaciated and extremely weak. The same EĀ 31.8 (T2.671a12), however, takes up the practice of breath-control only after the devas comment on the Bodhisattva’s state of emaciation, that is, after his fasting. Thus the account in EĀ 31.8 has its own difficulties: with a body weakened by starvation, it would have been difficult to practise breath-control. Mahā,vastu, too, seems to link the starvation to a near-death state. After describing how the Bodhisattva looks as a result of his starvation, the devas comment that he must be dead, as there is no strength left in him: “When four devas saw the hero’s weak body, they said: ‘The sage is dead!’” (*catvāri devatā dṛṣṭvā kāyaṁ vīrasya durbalaṁ, āhansu muni kāla,gato*, Mvst 2:232; Basak 1965:324,7 or Senart 1890:232,17):

⁷⁷ “The prince is dead, he’s not breathing [neither exhaling nor inhaling]!” (*Kāla,gato kumāro’ti, no pi uśvasati na praśvasati*. (Mvst 2:208; Basak 1965:291,2 or Senart 1890:208,4).

⁷⁸ According to the Mahā,vastu, the king replies: “The prince is not dead, he has attained a peaceful concentration” (*na kumāro kāla,gato, śāntaṁ samādhiṁ samāpanno* (Mvst 2:208; Senart 1890:208,19; Basak 1965: 292,3 reads *śāntiṁ*). Comy similarly reports that, when the Bodhisattva engages in asceticism, devas tell his father that the prince has died, but king Suddhodana does not believe them (MA 2:289,17),

devas' reaction in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta, since unlike those devas who thought that the Bodhisattva is dead or dying, other devas believe that his condition is in conformity with an arhat's practice.⁷⁹ This type of comment could stem from a line of reasoning similar to that of the Bodhisattva's father in the Mahā, -vastu.

We find support for this possibility from the two extant Chinese translations of the Udāna-(varga), which contain a brief report of the Bodhisattva's ascetic practices and subsequent awakening. This report indicates that the devas, seeing that he has stopped breathing, conclude that either the Bodhisattva is dead or has reached the final goal.⁸⁰

5.3.3 The gods try to intervene

5.3.3.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta, its Sanskrit fragment parallel, the Ekottarika Āgama version, and the Saṅgha,bheda,vastu, record that the Bodhisattva also thinks of not taking any food at all (that is, starving himself), but then decides to take only a minute amount of a few types of food. According to these versions, the Bodhisattva decides against starving himself because devas have offered to nourish him with divine food, if he should decide to practise starvation.⁸¹ This divine offer prompts the Bodhisattva to give up the plan of starving himself. Thus, to claim practising starvation and to allow devas to infuse him with divine food is simply a false practice.⁸²

5.3.3.2 The Lalita,vistara and the Mahā,vastu also say that the Bodhisattva declines to be fed by the devas, although in their account, this offer is given only after the Bodhisattva has decided to give up asceticism and to take food.⁸³ The Mahā Saccaka Sutta and its parallels agree in describing the emaciated and weakened body of the Bodhisattva.⁸⁴ After taking asceticism to its extremes, the Bodhisattva reflects that he has nevertheless not been able to reach awakening, at which point he recalls the past dhyana experience.

⁷⁹ §26: "The recluse Gotama is neither dead nor dying: he is an arhat, for such is how arhats dwell!" (*na kāla,kato samaṇo gotamo na pi kālam karoti, araham samaṇo gotamo, vihāro tv-eva so arahato eva,rupo hoti*, M:Be I:311,-24: *kāla,kato*, M:Ce 1:580,17: *tv-ev'eso*). However, it should be noted that "arhat" here is simply a common term (not necessarily Buddhist) for any kind of saint.

⁸⁰ T212 (T4.644b13): 觀見菩薩無出入息,或言命終,或言滅度 *guān jiàn pú sà wú chū rù xī, huò yán mìng zhōng, huò yán miè dù*. A similar situation is also described in SĀ 807 (T2.207a26).

⁸¹ §27 (M 1:245,8), frag 334v2 (Liu 2009:55), EĀ 31.8 (T2.670c19), and Gnoli 1977:102. The suggestion by Bronkhorst that, according to EĀ 31.8, "the future Buddha intends to fast to death" (1993:15) cannot be the case, as the passage reads more naturally if we assume the idea to be simply to practise fasting or starvation as a way to reach awakening, without intending to fast to death, as some Jains do.

⁸² Receiving of divine nourishment is a well-known motif in the Digambara ("sky-clad") Jain tradition, as a result of which an accomplished saint no longer needs to consume human food (Jaini 1979:36; Schubring 1962:61).

⁸³ Lalita,vistara (Lefmann 1902:264,4 or Vaidya 1958b:193,13) and Mahā,vastu (Mvst 2:131; Basak 1965:183,4 or Senart 1890:131,2; see also Basak 1965:286,3 and 335,1 or Senart 1890:204,14 and 240,18). Dutoit (1905:68) notes that these Mvst and Lalv passages, prob interpolations, result from the relocation of the starvation episode to the end of the asceticism narrative. On the whole, Mvst 2:131 differs from its own earlier account, when it reports that the Bodhisattva goes on a complete fast for 18 months (*aṣṭa,daśa māśā sarvaśo anāhāratāye pratipannaḥ*), a fast undertaken after having lived for 18 months on a single jujube fruit per day, for another 18 months on a single sesame seed per day, and for yet another 18 months on a single grain of rice per day. (Mvst 2:231; Basak 1965:322,11 or in Senart 1890:231,10)

⁸⁴ See also Bapat 1923. For a comparable description of the condition of a Jain monk after prolonged fasting, see *Aṇuttarovavāiyadasāo* (Barnett 1907:130-133; tr 115-118).

5.4 REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ASCETIC FIGURE

5.4.1 The emaciated Buddha

5.4.1.1 There are at least three well known statues of the Buddha that seem to graphically represent the emaciated Bodhisattva [§28.3]. These are the images found at Sikri [Fig 28], Jamalgarhi, and very likely at Takht-i-Bahi,⁸⁵ too. **Robert L Brown**, in his paper, “The Emaciated Gandhāran Buddha Images: Asceticism, Health and the Body,” argues that although most people think that these images depict the Bodhisattva at the height of his self-mortification, on closer examination of the details on these images, they actually represent the Buddha himself fasting during the 49 days following the great awakening (Brown 1997:106, 112).

5.4.1.2 Brown, however, fails to note perhaps the clearest evidence that it is the Buddha and not the Bodhisattva, who is represented in the Sikri and the Jamalgarhi images (and very likely in the Takht-i-Bahi image, too)—namely, the presence of the halo or aureole behind the image’s head—which Brown acknowledged in a personal communication in 2002. The Buddha as Bodhisattva, and even the arhats, are, as a rule, never depicted with a halo in such images: only the fully awakened Buddha is depicted with a halo.⁸⁶

5.4.2 The supreme extreme of human endurance

5.4.2.1 Historically, the Buddha, during his last few years of his quest and immediately after awakening (especially during the famous first 7 weeks), is an iconic emaciated figure [§28.3]. If the breathingless meditation episode [§§21-25] depicts the Buddha as reaching the climax of human mental endurance, then the graphic depiction of the emaciated starving Bodhisattva represents the extreme of human *bodily* endurance.

5.4.2.2 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta records the Buddha as giving these famous descriptions (echoed in the Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta, M 12):

Because of eating so little,
 my limbs became like the joints of vine stems or bamboo stems;
 my backside became like a camel’s hoof;
 the projections of my spine stood out like corded beads;
 my ribs jutted out like the crazy⁸⁷ rafters of an old broken shed;
 the gleam of my eyes sank deep down into their sockets, looking like the gleam of water gone far down in a deep well;
 my scalp shrivelled and withered like a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun;

⁸⁵ **Jamalgarhi** was an ancient Gandhara site located 13 km from Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northern Pakistan. It was a Buddhist monastery from the 1st-5th cent CE, when Buddhism flourished there. **Takht-i-Bahi** was a Parthian archaeological site also in Mardan. It was at first a Zoroastrian complex but after the arrival of Buddhism was converted into a Buddhist monastic complex.

⁸⁶ The halo (surrounding the head) and the aureola (surrounding the whole figure) have been widely used in Indian art, esp in Buddhist iconography where it has appeared since at least the 1st cent CE; the Kushan **Bimaran casket** in the British Museum is dated 60 CE (at least between 30 BCE and 200 CE).

⁸⁷ *Olugga*, collapsing and fallen down, dilapidated.

my belly skin touched my backbone so that when I touched my belly I felt my backbone and if I touched my backbone I felt my belly skin;
 when I defecated or urinated, I fell over on my face right there;
 when I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hairs, rotted at their roots, fell off from my body as I rubbed—*all because of eating so little*.

(M 36,28 = M 12,52-55), SD 49.1

5.4.2.3 As the result of such protracted self-mortification, the Bodhisattva’s complexion is variously perceived by on-lookers as being black, brown and sallow. The two Suttas present this “emaciated Bodhisattva pericope” [§28.2] in 4 cycles, each time, he is depicted as taking only jujube fruit (*kola*), only bean, only sesame, only rice—taking only their powdered (pulverized) form, their various concoctions, and down to merely a fruit, a seed or a grain a day.

Never in the quest of the human spirit has so much pain been borne by a single person for so long. After six long years, the Bodhisattva sees the futility of self-mortification, of which he rightly declares, “This is the utmost extreme, there is none beyond this!” [§30.1]. Then, he turns to the middle way.

5.4.3 Contrast against sensual indulgence

5.4.3.1 Why is the depiction of the Bodhisattva’s self-mortification so dramatic and given such a prominence in the suttas? It is to contrast against sensual indulgence—the other extreme of bodily experience—it is to advocate the abandonment of bodily pleasure and sexuality. This worldly extreme is not depicted with such drama and detail as that of his self-mortification.

5.4.3.2 This is understandable—as such depictions would be construed (and rightly so) as pornography, and have the undesirable and wrong effects on us. For such lurid details would have no value as psychological reflections or spiritual meditations. But we do have hints of them, especially in the description of the 7 jewels (*satta ratana*) of the wheel-turner (*cakka,vatti*), the universal monarch—the world ruler that Gotama is prophesized to become if he does not renounce the world but lives a home life.

5.4.3.3 The 7 jewels of the wheel-turner, described in such texts as **the Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17), are the wheel jewel, the elephant jewel, the horse jewel, the gem-jewel, the woman jewel, the steward jewel, and the commander jewel⁸⁸—that is, the regalia and hallmarks of the wheel-turner or universal monarch (*cakka,vatti*).⁸⁹

The qualities of **the “woman jewel”** (*itthī, ratana*)—the world monarch’s queen—are sensually described in **the Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129): she is beautiful and graceful, of the best complexion, neither too tall nor too short, neither too thin nor too fat, neither too dark nor too fair, surpassing human beauty, though not reaching the beauty of the gods. Her touch is soft like a tuft of cotton-wool or of kapok (silk-cotton). To the wheel-turner, when it is cool, her limbs are warm; when it is warm, her limbs are cool. Her body exudes the fragrance of sandalwood, and her mouth has the scent of lotuses. She rises before the wheel-turning king and retires after him. She is eager to serve, agreeable in conduct, and sweet in speech. Even in thought, she is never unfaithful to the wheel-turning king, how then could she be unfaithful in terms of her body?⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Respectively, *cakka, ratana*, *hatthi, ratana*, *assa, ratana*, *maṇi, ratana*, *itthī, ratana*, *gaha. pati, ratana*, and *pari-ṇāyaka, ratana*.

⁸⁹ D 17,1.7-17 + SD 36.12 (3); also **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129,33-41), SD 2.22.

⁹⁰ M 129,39/3:174 f (SD 2.22).

5.4.3.4 The classic depiction of sensual and sexual pleasures is found in a secular work, **the Kāma Sūtra** (the discourse on sensuality), compiled probably around the Buddha's time or just after (400-200 BCE), and in its present form is attributed to Vātsyāyana (2nd century CE). Although it is popularly perceived as a "sex manual," only 20% of it actually describes sexual pleasure, while the majority of it discusses a philosophy of love, the nature of desire, how it is triggered and sustained, and when it is good or bad. In short, it is a secular manual on worldly pleasures.

5.4.3.5 There is an early Buddhist text called **the Kāma Sutta** (Sn 4.1), which is the very first sutta in the Aṭṭhaka, vagga, one of the oldest of Buddhist texts. Unlike the Kāma Sūtra, the Buddha's Kāma Sutta warns against the dangers that attend the quest for sensual pleasures.

The short sutta of 6 verses (Sn 766-771) opens by saying, "If it prospers a mortal to desire sensual pleasure, | surely he is joyful hearted in gaining what he wishes" (Sn 766).⁹¹ The phrase "joyful hearted" (*pīti, mano*)⁹² is given in the simple present, reflecting a natural truth, something that will always be the case.

However, sensuality always fusses over what it likes, what it does not, and is caught up with running after the former and running from the latter. Moreover, sensual pleasure only works with a *right* sense-object: it is object-based. The "right" sense-object is what we have been conditioned to like, or what we deem as missing from us. We learn that we have lacks and lusts from measuring ourselves against others. We lust after those things that we think are *lacking* in us.

5.4.3.6 Without the right object in just the right setting, we will not be satisfied. In fact, even with the perfect sensual object, we are only momentarily satiated. Pleasures are only in the present moment. We cannot stretch them beyond this momentary life: we would be like Procrustes and his bed—only that we find ourselves in that bed!

When pleasure weakens or ends, we miss it and want more (Sn 767). For the laity, sense-pleasure is meant to be enjoyed only in the moment, as it does not go beyond that. For the celibate renunciants, who have themselves avowed to eschew sense-pleasures, even meditative joy is only in the moment. When we understand the nature of impermanence, especially in sense-pleasure and mental joy, then we are more likely to feel gratified.

If we are truly satisfied, we will not want when it is gone, or we might even not want it any more. This is because we are mindful of this pleasure: we remember it, as it were, forever. That joy arises at any time when we recall it.

5.4.4 The Buddha at his awakening

5.4.4.1 The historical Buddha, during his great awakening, is the lone intrepid emaciated figure of the Mahā Saccaka Sutta [§36,28]. However, other than the 3 sculptured images mentioned [5.4.1.1], there is no other of the Buddha (or Bodhisattva) depicted in such an austere and grotesque manner. In fact, in Buddhist art, the Buddha is always represented with great beauty or glory. To some extent, we may see hints of sensuality, on account of Greek iconography, the most famous of which are the Gandhara buddha images.⁹³ It is also, as a rule, depicted as an image or embodiment of peace and harmony, as an invitation to meditation or inner peace. [5.4.4.2]

⁹¹ Sn 4.2/766-771/151 (SD 91.11).

⁹² M 1:37, 3:86; S 1.181; A 3:21, 5:3; Sn 766; Nm 3; J 3:411; Vbh 227.

⁹³ For a brief guide to Buddha iconography, esp that of Thailand, see Piyasilo, *The Origin and Meaning of the Image of the Buddha*, Petaling Jaya (Malaysia), 1988a. For technical details, see Ency Bsm: Iconography 5:499-504);

5.4.4.2 In traditional Buddhist iconography, the Buddha is, as a rule, represented in a comfortable posture (*āsana*), that is, usually sitting, or reclining, sometimes standing, and more rarely walking (the 4 human postures). In any of these postures, he is depicted in some kind of gesture or sign (*muddā*; Skt *mudrā*), the better known ones being those of meditation, instructing, and giving safety or a blessing.

The purpose of such a buddha image is not a historical representation, but an image or icon of meditative symmetry and inner peace. The Buddha image is an aid in focusing our minds in compassion and inner peace. Above all, it is a representation of the greatest human struggle of all—this is depicted by the Buddha touching the earth, calling her to witness his past good deeds to debunk Māra’s challenge that he is not worthy of sitting under the Bodhi tree. The Buddha image, then, is a reminder of the capacity for the conquest of suffering and liberation of self is with and within humanity itself.

6 The Bodhisattva’s “first dhyana”

6.1 SOURCES OF THE STORY

6.1.1 The core story

The Bodhisattva’s meditation in the first dhyana is one of the best known and loved stories of the Buddha hagiography. The earliest account of this story is found here in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), where the Buddha tells Saccaka, **“I recall that when my father the Sakya was working, I was seated in the cool shade of a jambul tree.”** [§31.1].

Here, we have no details of what the Bodhisattva’s father is “working” (*kammante*) on. The details come from the Commentaries, especially the Majjhima Commentary on the Mahā Saccaka Sutta (MA 2:290 f), with the essential details repeated in the Jātaka Nidāna (J 1:58 f), and various later sources, that tend to embellish the basic account. [6.1.2]

6.1.2 Commentarial accounts

In essence, the commentarial account of the Bodhisattva’s 1st dhyana goes thus: All kinds of food were prepared. The city’s streets were decorated. All the slaves and labourers were gaily dressed and garlanded and assembled with the royal family.

There were a thousand ploughs, 108 of which were of silver for the courtiers, and one, golden, for the king. The farmers ploughed with the rest. The prince (*kumāra*, also “boy”; that is, the Bodhisattva) was placed on a couch within a screen beneath a jambul tree.

The king started ploughing from the near side to the far side, and back. In the excitement, the nurses left the prince to watch the king ploughing. The prince, seeing no one around, sat cross-legged and attained the first dhyana. The nurses helped themselves to some food and tarried in returning. The shades of the trees had moved away, but the shade of the jambul tree remained in a circle around the prince.

The nurses, recalling their duty, rushed back, only to see a wondrous sight. They at once informed the king, who hurried to the tree and saw the tree’s shadow in a circle over the prince. He worshipped his son, saying, “This is the second time,⁹⁴ dear, I pay homage to you!” (MA 2:290 f; J 1:58 f)⁹⁵

Iconometry (5:504-508); Image, Buddha (5:516-534). See also Routledge Ency of Bsm: Art, Buddhist (45-50), Art, Buddhist presence in (52-54).

⁹⁴ The first time the father worshipped the child was at the naming ceremony, when the old sage Asita worshipped the child himself. (J 1:54)

6.1.3 Later sources

6.1.3.1 According to the Mahā Saccaka Sutta, its Sanskrit fragment parallel, the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, the Mahā, vastu, and the Saṅgha, bheda, vastu, the Bodhisattva remembers how he attains the 1st dhyana *before* going forth.⁹⁶ The Madhyama Āgama discourses, the Buddha, carita, the Divyāvadāna, and several Chinese biographies of the Buddha agree with the Mahā Saccaka Sutta that the Bodhisattva only attains the 1st dhyana *before* the awakening.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Milinda, pañha, the Ekōttarika Āgama version (EĀ 31.8) and the Lalita, vistara, say that the Bodhisattva had attained not only the first.⁹⁸

6.1.3.2 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta and its Sanskrit fragment parallel report the 1st dhyana incident as occurring when his father was engaged in work and the Bodhisattva was seated under a jambul tree [§31.1], without specifying his age.

The Pali Commentaries seem to suggest that at this time the Bodhisattva was still an infant, with the Milindapañha suggesting that he was only one month old.⁹⁹ In the Mahāvastu version, however, the Bodhisattva is already a young man.¹⁰⁰ According to the sequence of events in **the Buddha, carita** and **the Saṅgha, bheda, vastu**, the 1st dhyana experience happened just before he went forth.¹⁰¹

6.2 SOME VARIATIONS IN NARRATIVE

6.2.1 The Bodhisattva's age during the 1st dhyana

6.2.1.1 Most sources depict the Bodhisattva's 1st dhyana as occurring when he is already grown up. Furthermore, ancient Indian art often depicts the Bodhisattva attaining the 1st dhyana as **an adult**, not

⁹⁵ For tr of J 1:58 f: see Jayawickrama (tr), *The Story of the Gotama Buddha*, PTS, 1990:76 f. For a summary of accounts from various sources, see Thomas 1949:44-46.

⁹⁶ §31 (M 2:246,31), Skt fragment 336v6 (Liu 2009:58), Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (T1428 (T22.781a5) (tr in Bareau 1963:48), Mahā, vastu (Basak 1965:182,12; Senart 1890:130,16; cf. also Basak 1965:64,13; Senart 1890: 45,14), and Saṅgha, bheda, vastu (Gnoli 1977:108,1, cf 190,17).

⁹⁷ MA 32 (T1.470c19) and MĀ 117 (T1.608a3), Buddhacarita 5.10 (Johnston 1936:46; cf T192 (T4.8c16), Divyāvādāna (Cowell 1886:391,16 or Vaidya 1999:250,1), T184 (T3.467b24), T186 (T3.499b9), and T190 (T3.706a20).

⁹⁸ EĀ 31.8 (T2.671b11), Lefmann 1902:263,17 or Vaidya 1958b:193,7, cf T187 (T3.560b17), Miln 290,1, cf T189 (T3.629a27), T193 (T4.66b18), and Bu ston's *History of Buddhism* (Obermiller 1932:15). According to Durt, this is an absurd exaggeration that weakened the event's premonitory sense ("exagération absurde, qui fait perdre à l'événement une partie de son sens préfiguratif," 1982:116); cf Foucher 1949:93. To attribute all 4 dhyanas to the Bodhisattva at this juncture would be simply premature, as if he is able to cultivate the 3 higher knowledges.

⁹⁹ Comy relates that his father went to the ploughing festival holding his son's hand (*puttaṃ gahetvā agamāsi*), and says that a "couch" (*sayana*), was prepared for him. Then his "wet nurses" (*dhātī*), left him alone under the jambul tree (MA 2:290,25+27). This suggests that he must have been an infant or very young boy, with nurses to look after him, perhaps unable to walk on his own. (Cf **Jātaka Nidāna** which says that he could walk and talk as soon as he was born, J 1:53b f.) **Milinda, pañha** says that he was only one month old (*eka, māsiko sāmāno*, Miln 289,26).

¹⁰⁰ **Mahāvastu** says that before the 1st dhyana experience, the Bodhisattva strolled in the garden (*bodhisatvo udyāna, bhūmiye anucaṃkramanto*), and then sat down under a jambul tree on his own (Basak 1965:64,4; Senart 1890: 45,4). It adds that the Bodhisattva's dhyana experience worried his father because the Bodhisattva might go forth. To prevent this, the father got women to sing and dance for him (Basak 1965:202,4; Senart 1890:144,6). These details suggest that in Mvst account, he is already a young man, perhaps adolescent or older.

¹⁰¹ Buddha, carita and Saṅgha, bheda, vastu place the Bodhisattva's 1st dhyana experience after his encounters with the 4 signs of an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and a renunciant: Buc 5.10 (Johnston 1936:46) and Saṅgha-bhedavastu (Gnoli 1977: 76,24), with its Chin counterpart, T1450 (T24.114a19); cf T191 (T3.944b26) and its Tib counterpart (D (1) 'dul ba, nga 6b5 or Q (1030) ce 6a3).

as a small child.¹⁰² This, according to Analayo, would better fit the general sequence of events, since a dhyana experience “just before going forth could be seen as a powerful incentive for the Bodhisatta to take the decisive step and embark on a spiritual life.”¹⁰³ (2011:241)

6.2.1.2 On the other hand, a dhyana experienced as **an infant** would not be directly related to his decision to go forth. To decrease the age at which this 1st dhyana was attained, however, clearly enhances the event as a marvellous wonder.¹⁰⁴ Thus, suggests Analayo, “perhaps the tendency of enhancing the marvels and wondrous feats of the bodhisatta was responsible for the way the Pali commentaries and the Milindapañha present the first jhana experience of the bodhisatta.”¹⁰⁵ (2011:241)

6.2.2 The timing of 1st dhyana episode

6.2.2.1 The part-parallel of the Mahā Saccaka Sutta in **the individual Chinese translation** differs from the other sources in placing the 1st dhyana event *after* the Bodhisattva had gone forth.¹⁰⁶ Such a sequence, argues Analayo, would fit well with the main thrust of the Buddha’s autobiographical account in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta, whose purpose is to highlight this episode so that from the time of his renunciation, neither pleasant nor painful feelings had ever overwhelmed him.¹⁰⁷

From this perspective, it would be more natural for the Buddha to bring up a dhyana experience that he experienced after going forth, instead of a dhyana experience that happened before he went forth. Most of the sources, however, agree that the 1st dhyana experience happened before he went forth. (2011:241)

6.2.2.2 The Bodhisattva’s memory of the 1st dhyana experience is also significant since, according to the traditional accounts, found, for example, in both **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26)¹⁰⁸ and **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), he attains the base of nothingness under Ālāra Kālāma [§14.9+n] and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception under Uddaka Rāmaputta [§15.9+n]. There is no reason to surmise that these events are not historical.

6.2.2.3 Psychologically, it is understandable to see the Bodhisattva, as a spiritually precocious child, naturally contemplative, and taking to deep meditation when the conditions are right. The life of sensual

¹⁰² Noted by, eg, Foucher 1903:279 and Schlingloff 1987:123; for representations of this event, see, eg, Foucher 1905:340-348, figs 175+176, id 1918:217, fig 413, Huntington 2001:141, Karetzky 1992:236, figs 27+28, Pal 1986: 205, Luczanits 2008b:25 pl 8, Quagliotti 2000:1128-1139, Sivaramamurti 1942:249-250, Stache-Weiske 1990:110, Takata 1967:33 fig 41; on the cultic significance of such images, see also Schopen 2002: 367 and id 2005:128-137.

¹⁰³ Durt concludes that a central element of this episode is the transforming effect that this experience had on the Bodhisattva (1982:115).

¹⁰⁴ Horsch notes that to increase the age at which this experience occurred would diminish its marvel (1964:152). Foucher, however, thinks that the representations of the 1st dhyana may have inspired a tendency to increase the Bodhisattva’s age in the textual traditions (1905:346-347).

¹⁰⁵ Klimkeit suggests that another contributing factor could have been the idea that for the Bodhisattva as a young man to be meditating when his father is engaged in a ceremonial ploughing seemed unacceptable behaviour. However, the problem is resolved when he is known to have been too young to be able to help his father (1990:73).

¹⁰⁶ T757 (T27.599a14): 初出家後 *chū chū jiā hòu*.

¹⁰⁷ §10.3: “since I have ... gone forth ... it has indeed not been possible at all for any arisen pleasant feeling to overwhelm my mind and remain, nor for any arisen painful feeling to overwhelm my mind and remain” (*yato kho ahaṃ ... pabbajito, taṃ vata me uppannā vā sukhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya ṭhassati, uppannā vā dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya ṭhassatīti, n’etaṃ ṭhanam vijjati* (M 1:240,8; M:Ce 1:566,7: *n’ etaṃ kho ṭhanam*).

¹⁰⁸ M 26,15.9+16.9 (SD 1.11).

pleasures that the Bodhisattva's father has in store for him only floods him with all that an ordinary adolescent may naturally desire after. Or, deprived of it, he may spend his adult life in quest of them.

But overwhelmed by it, he surfeits and tires of it. Too much of a pleasure kills it. This must have only intensified his spiritual inclination. Such an experience at puberty or adolescence would effectively mould his adult pursuits, fruiting in what even all the world's pleasure cannot give—awakening and liberation.¹⁰⁹

6.2.3 The Bodhisattva's mastery of the dhyanas

6.2.3.1 According to the suttas, a mastery of the 4 dhyanas is a precondition for the cultivating of any of the formless attainments.¹¹⁰ This further implies that, for the Bodhisattva to be able to attain these two formless attainments, he must have cultivated all 4 dhyanas at some earlier time in his quest for awakening, such as during his tutelage with Āḷāra Kālāma, in which case, we might wonder why he should now recall only a 1st dhyana experience.¹¹¹

6.2.3.2 This problem is easily solved. Even when young, the Bodhisattva is by nature spiritually precocious [6.2.2.3]. After all, he is capable of attaining the 1st dhyana at a very young age. To be able to do so at such a tender age is a great spiritual feat, even by early Buddhist standards, and more so by the standards of our own times. It means that the meditator is able to rise beyond the sphere of the bodily senses and experience the pure mind.¹¹²

The Buddha lives in a time when religious ideas and meditation have reached an unprecedented height. There are accomplished meditation teachers in his times, and he learned from the best of them. In short, he is always a ready student and a quick learner whose mind is set in his quest for meaning.

6.2.4 The breakthrough into awakening

6.2.4.1 A close study of the relevant passages in the Mahā Saccaka Sutta will show that the problem is not with the 1st dhyana as such. The real issue is that the Bodhisattva, in his last life, accepts that the dhyanic joy should not be feared, since it has nothing to do with sensual pleasure.¹¹³ From this perspective, it will be less important whether the dhyana he recalls occurred before or after he went forth. In fact, recalling a dhyana experience *before* his going-forth would be a fitting motivation for him to change tack in his quest for awakening, as this experience occurs spontaneously and without a teacher.

6.2.4.2 On the other hand, any dhyana practice learned under the guidance of Āḷāra Kālāma would presumably have been experienced from a particular perspective and philosophy. After all, even though Āḷāra was a recluse (*samaṇa*), he was not awakened.

¹⁰⁹ I thank Tom Anderson of Canada for suggesting the idea behind this paragraph (28 Jan 2016).

¹¹⁰ See eg. **Saṅgīti S** (D 33/3:265,18), which presents the 4 dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments as part of a set of “9 progressive abidings” (*nava anupubba, vihāra*), an expression that indicates that these levels of mental concentration are to be attained in progressive succession.

¹¹¹ This problem is raised by Ireland 1998:195.

¹¹² See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (6). The dhyana-factors.

¹¹³ **§32.2**: “I do not fear the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome states!” (*na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatt' eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi*, M:Ee 1:247,3; M:Ce 1: 584,4 and M:Se 1:458,5: *yantaṃ*, after which Se continues directly with *aññatr'eva*, omitting *sukhaṃ*).

Another point to consider is that dhyana here is seen merely **a bridge to the formless attainments**. From such a perspective, the joy of the 1st dhyana would have been seen as somewhat relatively coarse that we should transcend, so we will progress towards the formless attainments.

6.2.4.3 The Bodhisattva’s insight into the nature of dhyanic joy would fit well with such an attitude, and reflect well his earlier view that freedom from suffering cannot be reached by way of sensual pleasure.¹¹⁴ The turning-point then rests on the Bodhisattva’s realization that there is a wholesome type of pleasure that conduces to awakening.¹¹⁵

6.2.4.4 This new insight reveals the vital distinction between **what is wholesome and what is unwholesome**, a central theme pervading the early texts. Based on this new insight, the Bodhisattva would then have used the dhyanas that he had earlier experienced as the basis for cultivating the formless attainments, or dhyana as a basis for cultivating the 3 higher knowledges. [§40]

7 Related suttas

7.1 AN EARLY LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

7.1.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36) has one of the most comprehensive canonical accounts of the Buddha’s life from the great renunciation to the great awakening [§§12-44], all of which are found, in parts, elsewhere in the Canon, as shown in Table 7.

7.1.2 This table effectively gives us an overview of a pattern of passages on the canonical life of the Buddha, from his childhood through his renunciation, up to his full awakening and the formation of the earliest sangha with the group of 5 monks. Technically, we can say that this is all we can put together from the earliest materials we have of the Buddha.

That the Mahā Saccaka Sutta contains so many details found scattered in many other texts probably shows that the Sutta is later than the shorter texts. Often, those suttas with shorter versions of the same or related stories are likely to be older than those with more complete and continuous stories. This is, of course, only a rule of thumb, but it gives us some helpful idea of the sequence of texts and narratives for an understanding of the evolution of the Buddha biography.

7.1.3 Here is a table of the canonical accounts of the Buddha’s life from the great renunciation to the great awakening, all of which are found, in parts, elsewhere in the Canon, as shown in Table 7 (the numbers refer to sections, §§).

¹¹⁴ **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 85): “ ... before my self-awakening ... it occurred to me, ‘Happiness [Pleasure] is not be found [understood] through pleasure; happiness is to be found through pain” (ie, through practices involving physical pain) (*mayhaṃ ... pubbe va sambodhā ... etad ahoṣi, na kho sukkena sukhaṃ adhiḡantabbāṃ, dukkhena kho sukhaṃ adhiḡantabbāṃ’ti*, M 85,10/2:93,15), SD 55.2.

¹¹⁵ See eg, **Laṭukikōpama S** (M 66), SD 28.11, and its parallel MĀ 192, which qualify dhyanic joy to be the “joy of self-awakening” (M:Ee 1:454,23 *sambodha,sukha*; M:Se 2:190,7: *sambodhi,sukha*), or, the “joy that leads to complete awakening,” 正覺之樂, MĀ 192 (T1.743a15).

	<u>M 12</u>	<u>M 26</u>	<u>M 36</u>	<u>M 85</u>	<u>M 100</u>	<u>D 2</u>
1 The Bodhisattva's disillusionment with the household life and subsequent renunciation of the world	-	13-14	12-13	-	9-10	-
2 The renunciation up to Uruvelā [4]	-	14-17	-	11-14	10-13	-
3 Āḷara Kālāma	-	15	14	-	11	-
4 Uddaka Rāmaputta	-	16	15	-	12	-
5 "An agreeable spot" at Senānigama near Uruvelā	-	17	16	-	13	-
6 The 3 fire-sticks up to the 3 knowledges [12]	-	-	17-44	15-42	-	-
7 The parable [6] up to emaciation: takes food	-	-	17-33	-	14-30	-
8 Similes of the fire-sticks	-	-	17-19	-	14-16	-
9 Self-mortification and breathingless meditation	-	-	20-25	18-33 ¹¹⁶	17-22 ¹¹⁷	-
10 The Bodhisattva's self-mortification	44-56	-	20-31	-	17-27	-
11 Recalling the 1 st dhyana while father is "working"	-	-	31	-	28	-
12 Wholesome pleasure: the 4 dhyanas	-	-	32-37	-	29-34	-
13 The great awakening	-	-	34-44	-	31-41	-
14 (The knowledge of the destruction of the influxes)	-	-	42-44	-	39-41 ¹¹⁸	99 ¹¹⁹
15 "Hesitation" to teach; Brahma; ¹²⁰ the 5 monks	-	19-29	-	45-53	-	-

M 12	Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta	SD 49.1:	the Bodhisattva's purification through food.
M 26	Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta	SD 1.11:	the earliest records of the great striving.
M 36	Mahā Saccaka Sutta	SD 49.4:	detailed and graphic account of the self-mortification.
M 85	Bodhi Rāja,kumāra Sutta	SD 55.2:	renunciation, self-mortification and decision to teach.
M 100	(Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta	SD 10.9:	the great striving.
D 2	Sāmañña,phala Sutta	SD 8.10:	the great awakening.

Table 7 The Buddha's early-life sutta parallels

7.2 OTHER PARALLELS THE MAHĀ SACCAKA SUTTA

7.2.1 The Mahā Saccaka Sutta has a parallel preserved in Sanskrit fragments, entitled "cultivation of the body" (*kāya,bhāvanā*) (DĀ² 20). A version to the whole Sutta is found in the fragments 329r4-340r2 of the newly found Dīrgha,āgama manuscript (Liu 2009:48-63).

7.2.2 Other relevant fragments are found in the ancient manuscripts from Turfan (SHT).¹²¹ SHT III 931 parallels the 3rd simile on the dry fire-stick [§19] and the Bodhisattva's realization that the dhyanic joy should not be feared [§32], followed by his decision to give up asceticism and take food [§33]. The Hoernle and Pelliot fragments parallel parts of the Buddha's exposition on the implication of

¹¹⁶ Omits the refrains, "But such <painful | pleasant> feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain."

¹¹⁷ Omits the refrain, "But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain."

¹¹⁸ Omits the refrains, "But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain."

¹¹⁹ Omits the para beginning, "This ... was the third knowledge ..."

¹²⁰ See also Vipassī's "hesitation" in **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,3.1-3.11), SD 49.8.

¹²¹ SHT III 931 (pp 186-187), SHT III 997A (pp 258-259, identified SHT VII p 273), fragment bleu 18,4 + 81 of the Pelliot collection, ed as no 148 in Hartmann 1991:262, fragment SI B/14I in Bongard-Levin 1989:509, and fragment Or 15003/24 from the Hoernle collection, ed in Wille 2006:72.

development of body and mind [§§7-9]. SHT III 997A and fragment SI B/14I correspond to the closing section [§§55-56].

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Mahā Saccaka Sutta

The Greater Discourse to Saccaka

M 36

1 Thus have I heard.

Saccaka and Ānanda

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest at Vesālī.

2 Now at that time, early in the morning, the Blessed One, fully dressed,¹²² taking his bowl and robe, wanted to enter Vesālī for alms.¹²³

3 Then, Saccaka,¹²⁴ the young nirgrantha,¹²⁵ walking about, here and there, to stretch his legs,¹²⁶ approached¹²⁷ the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.

3.2 The venerable Ānanda saw Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, coming from afar. Seeing him, he said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, [299] this Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, is coming. He is a debater and a learned speaker, regarded as a saint by many.¹²⁸

¹²² “Fully dressed,” *sunivattho hoti*. Comy: He has dressed himself in a dyed double-cloth (*ratta, du, patta*), tied up his girdle, and put on his rag-robe over one shoulder (MA 2:284). It only remains for him to put on the outer robe just before entering Vesālī. On “a dyed double-cloth,” see J 4:379; VvA 4.

¹²³ *Tena kho pana samayena bhagavā pubbaṅha, samayaṃ sunivattho hoti patta, cīvaram ādāya vesālīm piṇḍāya pavisitū, kāmo* [Ce *pubbaṅha, samayaṃ nivāsetvā patta, cīvaram ādāya... pavisitukāmo hoti*].

¹²⁴ Skt *sātyaki* (DĀ mss frg 329r4-340r2, ed Liu 2009:48-63). On *Saccaka Aggivessana*, see SD 26.8 (1).

¹²⁵ “Young nirgrantha,” *nigaṅṭha, putta*, lit “nirgrantha son.” I take *-putta* here as meaning “young.” A nirgrantha (*nigaṅṭha*), “one with knots (of ignorance),” or “bondless one.” The term nirgrantha is not used today. Male Jain ascetics are known as *sādhu* (“good”) and female as *sādhvī* (fem of *sādhu*). The Dīgambaras use the term *āryikā*. See Dundas 2002:48, 152,

¹²⁶ “Walking ... legs,” *jaṅghā, vihāraṃ anucaṅkamamāno anuvicaramāno*, lit “wandering on foot, up and down, and here and there.” Also said of the Buddha himself, ie, walking about for the sake of easing up the legs’ tightness (*jaṅghā, kilamatha, vinodaṇ’attham jaṅghā, cāraṃ*, MA 2:151) or, going for a stroll, as in the case of Daṇḍa, pānī (MA 2:72) in **Madhu, piṇḍika S**, (M 18/1:108,21+109,11), SD 6.14; or for sight-seeing, “For the sake of seeing parks, woods, mountains” (MA 2:73). Also in: **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35/1:227,30), SD 26.5; **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36/1:237,10), SD 49.3; (**Gahapati**) **Potaliya S** (M 54/1:359,13), SD 43.8; **Māgandiya S** (M 75/1:502,1+503,8), SD 31.5; **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89/2:118,17), SD 64.10; **Sela S** (M 92/2:146 = Sn 3.7/p105,7), SD 45.7a; **Ghoṭa, mukha S** (M 94/2:158,1), SD 96.7; **Danta, bhūmi S** (M 125/3:128,11), SD 46.3; **Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 136/3:207,5), SD 4.16; (**Hatthaka**) **Āḷavaka S** (A 3.34/1:136,22), SD 4.8; **Meghiya S** (A 9.3/4:355,24+356,14 = U 4.1/34,14+27), SD 34.2. Cf Miln 22; J 2:240, 272. See **Tevijja S** (D 13,3/1:234) :: D:RD 1:301n. See MA 2:270 (Assaji, Sāriputta’s teacher); PvA 73. For a detailed treatment on the phrase, see SnA 447 f. See also M 18,2 n (SD 6.14).

¹²⁷ Comy: Saccaka approaches the Buddha intending to refute him, having failed to do so earlier (**Cūḷa Saccaka S**, M 35). This time, he comes alone, thinking that should he suffer defeat, no one would know about it. He intends to refute the Buddha by asking him about sleeping in the day, which he does not ask until nearly at the end [§45.5]. (MA 2:284)

He, bhante, wants to find fault with the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. It would be good, bhante, if the Blessed One were to sit down for a moment out of compassion.”¹²⁹

Saccaka’s question

3.3 The Blessed One sat down on an appointed seat.

Then, Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, sat down at one side. Sitting thus as one side, Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, said this to the Blessed One:

4 (1) “There are, master Gotama, certain recluses and brahmins who dwell devoted to **bodily cultivation** but not to mental cultivation.¹³⁰

For, master Gotama, painful feeling touch their body.¹³¹

4.2 In the past, master Gotama, when one is touched by bodily painful feeling, there would be leg cramps,¹³² the heart would burst and hot blood gush out from the mouth, or one would go mad, lose the mind.¹³³

4.3 This, master Gotama, is so for one whose body follows the mind, and falls under the power of the mind.

4.4 What is the reason for this? It is because of not cultivating the body.

4.5 But, master Gotama, there are certain recluses and brahmins who dwell devoted to the practice of **mental cultivation**, but not bodily cultivation.

And they, too, master Gotama, are touched by mental painful feeling.

4.6 (2) In the past, master Gotama, when one is touched by mental painful feeling, *there would be leg cramps, the heart would burst and hot blood gush out from the mouth, or one would go mad, lose the mind*.

This, master Gotama, is so for one whose mind follows the body, and falls under the power of the body.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ *Bhassa-p, pavādako paṇḍita, vādo sādhu, sammato bahu, janassa*. As at **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35,2/1:227), SD 26.5.

¹²⁹ Comy: Ānanda says this out of compassion for Saccaka, thinking that if he hears the Dharma, it would be for his lasting benefit (MA 2:284).

¹³⁰ *Santi, bho gotama, eke samaṇa, brāhmaṇā kāya, bhāvanā’ nuyogam anuyuttā viharanti, no citta, bhāvanam*. It is clear from §5 that Saccaka identifies “bodily cultivation” (*kāya, bhāvanā*) with self-mortification. Not seeing the monks practising self-mortification, he concludes that they do not engage in bodily cultivation. The Buddha, however, understands “bodily cultivation” to be the practice of insight (*vipassanā*) and “mental cultivation” as calmness (*samatha*) (MA 2:285,1).

¹³¹ *Phusanti hi te, bho gotama, sārīrikam dukkham vedanam*. Alt tr “They are touched by bodily painful feeling.” However, the usual word for “body” in the Sutta is *kāya*. But here it is *sārīrika*, adj of *sārīra*, which refers to the bodily frame of the body. The above tr is based on the teaching of the 2 pains (bodily and mental): here the Buddha is referring to only “bodily pain” or “physical pain.”

¹³² “Leg cramps,” *ūru-k, khambha*, lit “stiffening or paralysis of the thighs” (M 1:237,37; J 5:23,18; C 2.9.4). *Ūru* is that part of the leg above the knee, the lap.

¹³³ *Bhūta, pubbam, bho gotama, sārīrikāya dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭhassa sato ūru-k, khambho’pi nāma bhavisati, hadayam pi nāma phalissati, uṇham pi lohitaṃ mukhato uggamissati, ummādam pi pāpuṇissati* [Ke Se pāpuṇissanti] *citta-k, kheparā*. “Lose the mind,” *citta-k, khepa*, lit “the mind thrown about, mind-tossing,” also distraction, mental derangement (M 1:238,7; S 1:126,1; A 3:119,10, 219,6; Dh 138; Pug 69,30; Vism 429,8).

¹³⁴ *Tassa kho etaṃ bho gotama kāy’ anvayaṃ cittaṃ hoti, kāyassa vasena vattati*.

4.7 What is the reason for this? [238] It is because of not cultivating the mind.

4.8 Master Gotama, this occurs to me:

‘Surely, master Gotama’s disciples dwell devoted to the practice of mental cultivation, but not of bodily cultivation.’”

Saccaka on bodily cultivation

5 “But, Aggi, vessaṇa,¹³⁵ what have you learned [heard] about **bodily cultivation**?”

5.2 “There are, master Gotama, those such as these, that is to say, Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Saṅkicca, and Makkhali Gosāla.¹³⁶

5.3 THE SHORTER SELF-MORTIFICATION PERICOPE.¹³⁷

They are **naked ascetics**,¹³⁸ of loose habits [flouting conventions],¹³⁹ licking their hands;¹⁴⁰

not coming when invited, not stopping when invited;

not accepting food that is brought, nor food specially prepared, nor a meal invitation;

accepting nothing from a pot, from a bowl,

from across a threshold, among the firewood, from among the rice-pounders,

from two eating together, from a pregnant woman,¹⁴¹ from a woman giving suck,

from a woman gone to a man,¹⁴² from a food-distribution centre,

¹³⁵ The Buddha addresses him by his clan or gotra name, Skt *agni, veśyāyana*, Amg *aggi, veāyana*: see **SD 26.5 (1)**.

¹³⁶ These are the three key liberators (*niyyātāro*, “(samsara) leavers,” M 76/1:524,3) of the Ājīvikas, the naked ascetics. Comy: They were said to be the “heads” of defiled asceticism (*te kira kilīṭṭha, tapānaṃ matthaka-p, pattā ahesuṃ*, MA 2:285). They are said to be of the “purest white class” (*parama, sukkhābhijāti*), the highest class of beings: see **Cha-Ī-ābhijāti S** (S 6.57), SD 23.10. While Gosāla is the Buddha’s contemporary, the other two are obscure legendary figures. On Makkhali Gosāla’s view, see **Sandaka S** (M 76,13), SD 35.7; also SD 35.5 (2.2.3). On the Ājīvikas, see **Cha-Ī-ā bhijāti S** (A 6.57), SD 23.5 (1.1) n.

¹³⁷ This shorter self-mortification pericope [§5.2-5] is mutatis mutandis at **Kassapa Sīha, nāda S** (D 8,14/1:165-167), SD 77.1) = **Udumbarikā Sīha, nāda S** (D 25,8.2/3:41), SD 1.4), both of which have an “extended self-mortification pericope” with a extra set of 6 observances, not found in the shorter pericope or in the otherwise identical “medium self-mortification pericope” found mutatis mutandis in **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12,45/1:77 f), SD 49.1 = **Kandaraka S** (M 51,8/1:342 f), SD 32.9 = **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,36/1:412), SD 35.5, with 6 additional observances = **Ghoṭa, mukha S** (M 94,10/2:161), SD 77.2 = **Acelaka Paṭipadā S 1** (A 3.151/1:295), SD 78.13 = **Atta, daṇḍa Sutta Nd** (Nm 15/416 f). All these practices are those of the Ājīvikas, the naked ascetics [SD 23.5 (1.1) n]. Parallel in Skt frag 330r1-2 in Liu 2009:49 only describes the fasts.

¹³⁸ “Naked ascetic” (**acelaka**), *a-celaka = acela*, “unclothed”: (m) V 4:92,14; J 5:18,25; M 1:281,33, DhA 1:309,3, 400,13, 4:489,17; J 3:246,18, 6:229,7; (adj) M 1:307,23 = 342,25 = 412,4 = 2:161,26 = D 1:166,2 = 3:40,27 = A 1:295,8 = 2:206,7; (pl) M 1:238,15 (cf A 3:384,5); (titles) ~**vagga** A 1:295-299 (SD 72.4), V 4:91-108, 5:19-21, 39 f; ~*laddhi* 3:246,19, 39 f; ~*sāvaka* (m pl) A 3:384,2; ~*sikkhāpada* = Pāc 41 (V 4:91 f).

¹³⁹ **Mutt’ācāro**. Comy ad **Kassapa Sīha, nāda S** (D 8,14): Of distinct habits in terms of defecating and so on, unlike the conduct of those of good family. He urinates and defecates while standing, and even takes his meal while doing so! (**Mutt’ācāro**’ti *visaṭṭh’ācāro, uccāra, kamm’ādīsu lokiya, kula, putt’ācārena virahito ṭhitako’va uccāraṃ karoti, passāvaṃ karoti, khādati bhuñjati ca*, DA 2:354).

¹⁴⁰ **Hatthāpalekhano**. Comy ad **Kassapa Sīha, nāda S** (D 8,14) adds that he also uses his hand as a dipstick wiping himself “clean,” after his toilet! (DA 2:354). Cf Sekh 52 (V 4:98) which proscribes hand-licking; D 1:166, 3:40; M 1:77, 238, 307; A 1:295; Pug 55.

¹⁴¹ “From a pregnant woman ... gone to a man” (*gabbhinī pāyamanā puris’antara, gatā*), which is stock (M 1:77 = A 1:295; M 1:238, 307, 342 = 2:162 = Pug 55; A 2:206). On the last, see foll n.

¹⁴² “A woman gone to a man,” **puris’antara, gata**, ie a woman having sex with a man. Comys gloss ~ as *rati anta-rāyo hotīti na gaṇhati*, “so that he does not face danger on account of lust” (DA 2:355; MA 2:44; AA 2:384; NmA

from where a dog is waiting, from where flies are swarming, accepting neither fish nor meat, drinking neither strong drinks nor brew nor sour gruel.¹⁴³

They keep themselves to one house, to one morsel [when collecting alms]; he keeps himself to two houses, to two morsels ... keep to seven houses, to seven morsels;

They live on one small serving (of food) a day; on two small servings a day ... on seven small servings a day;¹⁴⁴

They take food once a day; once every two days...once every seven days—thus even up to a fortnight, they dwell pursuing the practice of taking of food at such regular intervals.”¹⁴⁵

The Buddha's questions

6 “What now, Aggivessana, do they actually live on so little?”¹⁴⁶

“No, master Gotama. Sometimes, master Gotama, they take various fine hard food, sometimes various fine soft food, sometimes they taste various fine tastes, sometimes they drink various fine drinks. In this way, they gain bodily strength, develop their bodies, and become fat.”¹⁴⁷

6.2 “But what, Aggivessana, they have abandoned earlier, they then later accumulate again. Thus, there is growth and decay for this body.”¹⁴⁸

6.3 But what have you learned about **mental cultivation?**” [239]

But Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, on being questioned by the Blessed One regarding mental cultivation, was unable to answer.

Saccaka listens to the Buddha

7 Then, the Blessed One said to Saccaka, the young nirgrantha:

2:430; PugA 231), ie in interrupting the act; cf *pumam gata*, “gone to a man” (J 5:154). This is contextual: for, Old Comy glosses it more generally as “married” (*gihi,gata*, “gone to a householder,” V 4:322,10), and other Comys, simply as a “adult woman” (*itthi*) (DA 1:79 = *itthi*, “woman,” as opp *kumārikā*, “girl”; MA 2:209).

¹⁴³ *Na suram, na merayam, na thus'odakam pivati*. “Sour gruel,” **thus'odaka** (Skt *tuṣodaka*, “rice chaff”) “sour rice- or barley-gruel” (SED, sv *tuṣāmbu*). Comys: “a drink called *Soviraka* made from (the husk of) all kinds of grain” (*ṣabba,sassa,sambhārehi kataṃ sovīrakam*, DA 2:355 = NmA 431 = PugA 232; *ṣabba,sassa,sambhārehi kataṃ loṇa,sovīrakam*, MA 2:44); *ṣabba,sassa,sambhārehi kata,sovīrakam*, AA 2:385: all add that *thus'odaka* is a strong drink and as such blamable (*ettha ca surā,pānam eva sāvajjam*). On “salted *Soviraka* (sour gruel)” (*loṇa,sovīraka*); see Vinaya, where it is mentioned as a cure for stomach wind, and allowed as a beverage, if mixed with water (Mv 6.16.3 @ V 1:210); mentioned in a list of drinks given to monks (Vv 177/2.2.6/23). **Suśruta Saṃhita** describes preparation of *tuṣodaka* as a medicine (SuśSaṃ 44, 40cd-44ab). It is said to be sour gruel prepared with unhusked cereals; in SuśSaṃ it refers to “fermented liquors of barley with husks” used as a purgative (G J Meulenbeld (tr), *Mādhvanidāna*, Leiden, 1974:408 f). When boiled with pulse and barley, it becomes an acetous fermentation called *tuṣāmbu*. D:RD 3:38, “gruel”; M:ÑB 1:104 “rice gruel.” See D:RD 1:229 n2, D:W n196. The tr here is contextual which suggests some kind of fermented drink.

¹⁴⁴ “Small serving,” *datti* (from *dadāti + ti*), lit “gift” (M 1:78,2 f = Nm 416,23 f; D 1:166,12 f; M 1:342; A 1:295, 2:206; Pug 55). Comy says that a *datti* is a small bowl (*khuddaka,pāti*) with which they take a serving of the main almsfood (MA 2:45,1).

¹⁴⁵ While the Sutta here gives a long list of ascetic practices, the Skt fragment 330r1-2 describes only their fasts (Liu 2009:49).

¹⁴⁶ *Kiṃ pana te aggivessana tāvataken'eva yāpenti*.

¹⁴⁷ *Te imam kāyam balaṃ gāhenti nāma, brūhenti nāma, medenti nāmāti*.

¹⁴⁸ The last sentence: *evam imassa kāyassa ācayāpacayo hoti*. Cf **Assutava S 1** (S 12.61), where growth and decline refers to this body comprising of the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, wind) (S 12.61/2:94), SD 20.2.

“Aggivessana, what you have earlier spoken of as being the bodily cultivation in the discipline of the noble ones is not the bodily cultivation that is Dharma-based in accordance with the discipline of the noble ones.¹⁴⁹

7.2 Now, you, Aggivessana, do not even know about bodily cultivation, what more to say about mental cultivation?

And so, Aggivessana, regarding **how one is bodily uncultivated and mentally uncultivated, and how one is bodily cultivated and mentally cultivated**¹⁵⁰—listen now, pay close attention. I will speak.”¹⁵¹

“Yes, master Gotama,” Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, replied in assent to the Blessed One.

Uncultivated in both body and mind

The Blessed One said this:

8 “And how, Aggivessana, is one uncultivated in body and uncultivated in mind?”

Here, Aggivessana, a pleasant feeling arises in **an uninstructed ordinary disciple**.

8.2 When touched by that *pleasant feeling*,

he is infatuated with pleasure and *goes on* being infatuated with pleasure.¹⁵²

Then, that pleasant feeling *ends* for him.

With the ending of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises.

8.3 When touched by **painful feeling**,

he sorrows, grieves, laments, weeps, beats his breast, and falls into confusion.

8.4 For him, Aggivessana, the arisen pleasant feeling *overwhelms* his mind and remains—because of his **uncultivated body**,

and the arisen painful feeling, too, *overwhelms* his mind and remains,

because of his **uncultivated mind**.

8.5 ¹⁵³In whomever, Aggivessana, there are such twin aspects—
that arisen pleasant feeling *overwhelms* his mind and remains,

because of his uncultivated body,

and that arisen painful feeling, too, *overwhelms* his mind and remains,

because of his uncultivated mind—

he, Aggivessana, is thus uncultivated in body and uncultivated in mind.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ *Yāpi kho te esā aggivessana purimā kāya, bhāvanā bhāsītā sāpi ariyassa vinaye no dhammikā kāya, bhāvanā.*

¹⁵⁰ The pair of terms, *bhāvita, kāya + bhāvita, citta*, and their opposites, appears as a set only here. Elsewhere, they appear as a quartet, ie, *bhāvita, kāya bhāvita, sīla bhāvita, citta bhāvita, paññā* (that is, as cultivated in body, in moral conduct, in mind, and in wisdom, respectively): (**Piṇḍola**) **Bhāra, dvāja S** (S 35.127, 7/4:111), SD 27.6a(2.4); **Loṇaka, palla S** (A 3.99, 2/1:249, 4/1:250, 5.3/251×2, 8.2/253), SD 3.5; **Mahā Cunda S** (A 10.24/5:42, 43×2, 44, 45), SD 72.12. See above (1.2.3).

¹⁵¹ *Api ca aggi, vessana yathā abhāvtia, kāyo ca hoti abhāvita, citto ca, bhāvita, kāyo ca bhāvita, citto ca, tam sunāhi sādhuḥkaṃ manasikarohi, bhāsissāmīti.*

¹⁵² *So sukhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno sukha, sārāgī ca hoti sukha, sārāgitañ ca āpajjati.*

¹⁵³ **§8.4:** *Yassa kassaci aggivessana evaṃ ubhato, pakkhaṃ uppannāpi sukhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya tiṭṭhati abhāvitattā kāyassa, uppannāpi dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya tiṭṭhati abhāvitattā cittassa, evaṃ kho aggivessana abhāvita, kāyo ca hoti abhāvita, citto ca.* The parallels in Skt fragments distinguish between bodily and mental feelings, showing that the worldling is overwhelmed by them because he lacks both kinds of cultivation: *vasya kasyacid agniveśyāyana evaṃ ubhayāṃgenōtpannā kāyikā d[u]khā vedanā cittaṃ paryādāya tiṣṭhati, utpannā kāyikī sukhā vedanā, utpannā caitasikī duḥkhā vedanā, utpannā caitasikī su[khā] vedanā cittaṃ paryādāya tiṣṭhati, tam aham abhāvita, kāyaṃ vadamy abhāvita, cittaṃ ca.* See frag 330r8-v2 (Liu 2009:49).

¹⁵⁴ *Evaṃ kho aggivessana abhāvita, kāyo ca hoti abhāvita, citto ca.*

Cultivated in both body and mind

9 “And how, Aggivessana, is one cultivated in body and cultivated in mind?”

Here, Aggivessana, a pleasant feeling arises in an instructed noble disciple.

9.2 When touched by that *pleasant feeling*,

he is neither infatuated with pleasure *nor* goes on being infatuated with pleasure.

Then, that pleasant feeling *ends* for him.

With the ending of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises.

9.3 When touched by **painful feeling**,

he neither sorrows, nor grieves, nor laments, nor weeps, nor beats his breast, nor falls into confusion.

9.4 For him, Aggivessana, the arisen pleasant feeling does *not* overwhelm his mind and remain—because of his **cultivated body**,

and the arisen painful feeling, too, does *not* overwhelm his mind and remain, because of his **cultivated mind**.

9.5 In whomever, Aggivessana, there are such twin aspects—

that arisen pleasant feeling [240] does not overwhelm his mind and remain,

because of his cultivated body,¹⁵⁵

and that arisen painful feeling, too, does not overwhelm his mind and remain,

because of his cultivated mind¹⁵⁶—

he, Aggivessana, is thus cultivated in body and cultivated in mind.”¹⁵⁷

The Buddha admonishes Saccaka

10 “Now I believe in master Gotama! For, **master Gotama is cultivated both in body and mind**.”¹⁵⁸

10.2 “Surely, Aggivessana, these words you have spoken are rather personal and bold.¹⁵⁹ I shall nevertheless explain it to you.

10.3 Aggivessana, since I have shaven my hair and beard, worn the yellow robe, and gone forth from the house into homelessness,¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ *Yassa kassaci, aggivessana, evaṃ ubhato, pakkhaṃ uppannā’pi sukhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhati bhāvitattā kāyassa*: see §8.4+n. The Sutta here relates pleasant feelings to bodily cultivation and painful feelings to mental cultivation [§8.4]. Comy then glosses “bodily cultivation” as insight and “mental cultivation” as concentration. See (2.1.1.4; 2.3.2).

¹⁵⁶ *Uppannā’pi dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhati bhāvitattā cittaṃ*. Essentially, §§8+9 are saying that the Buddha (and his disciples, too) are able to maintain natural inner calm even when painful feelings arise in the body (in terms of bodily actions and speech) or the mind (in terms of thoughts): see (1.2.4).

¹⁵⁷ In the Skt counterpart, Saccaka simply asks if the monks cultivate both body and mind. When the Buddha answers yes, he asks if the Buddha himself also cultivates both body and mind. The Buddha replies that if anyone were to speak rightly he would say that the Buddha has cultivated both body and mind. The Pali and Skt versions agree that Saccaka asks if the Buddha has ever experienced pleasant or painful feelings that overwhelm his mind. The Buddha responds with a detailed account of his ascetic practices as a Bodhisattva. On *bhāvita, kāya + bhāvita, -citta*, see (1.2.3).

¹⁵⁸ *Evaṃ pasanno ahaṃ bhoto gotamassa*.

¹⁵⁹ *Te ... āsajja upanīya vācā bhāsītā*. The meaning here, I think, is that the interlocutor is attempting to speak for the Buddha right before the Buddha himself, but without any personal experience himself. Saccaka (Aggivessana) presumptuously declares that the Buddha “is cultivated in body and mind,” without having himself cultivated his own body and mind. See (3).

¹⁶⁰ *Yato kho ahaṃ aggivessana kesa, massuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādetvā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajito*.

it has indeed not been possible at all for any arisen pleasant feeling to overwhelm my mind and remain, nor for any arisen painful feeling to overwhelm my mind and remain.”¹⁶¹

11 AGGIVESSANA’S QUESTIONS

(1) “Has there ever arisen in master Gotama a feeling that is so pleasant that it could overwhelm the mind and remain?”¹⁶²

(2) Has there ever arisen in master Gotama a feeling that is so painful that it could overwhelm the mind and remain?”

“Why not, Aggivessana?”¹⁶³

THE BODHISATTVA’S QUEST

(§§12.2-19.5)

Home life and renunciation

12 Here, Aggivessana, before my awakening, when I was still only an unawakened Bodhisattva,¹⁶⁴ it occurred to me,

12.2 ¹⁶⁵“The household life is stifling, a dusty path.”¹⁶⁶ The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy, while living in a house, to practise the holy life fully, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell.

What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

13 RENUNCIATION¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁸After some time, Aggivessana, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life,

though my mother¹⁶⁹ and father wished otherwise, and wept with tearful faces,

¹⁶¹ *Tam vata me uppannā vā sukhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya ṭhassati, uppannā vā dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya ṭhassatīti, n’etaṃ thanaṃ vijjati.* On feeling as suffering, see SD 17.3 (5). On arhats and feelings, see SD 17.3 (7). On the nature of feelings, see **Vedanā**, SD 17.3.

¹⁶² *Na hanūna* [all except *Be na hi nūna*] *bhoto gotamassa uppajjati tathā, rūpā sukhā vedanā yathā, rūpā uppannā sukhā vedanā cittaṃ pariyādāya tiṭṭheyya.* This question on profound pleasure is answered in §§34-47.

¹⁶³ Here follows the Buddha’s answers to Saccaka’s question: first, on the extremely painful self-mortification [§§12.2-33] in answer to his second question; then, the profoundly pleasant meditative experiences leading up to his awakening [§§34-47], in answer to this first question.

¹⁶⁴ “Before ... Bodhisattva,” *pubb’eva sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass’eva sato.* This phrase is stock: **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4,3/1:17), SD 44.3, **Cūḷa Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 14,5/1:92), SD 4.7, **Dvedhā Vitakka S** (M 19,2/1:114), SD 61.1, **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,12/1:230), SD 49.3. On the historicity of this passage, see Thomas 1949:58.

¹⁶⁵ This whole section as at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,41.2), SD 8.10.

¹⁶⁶ *Sambādho gharavāso rajā, patho.* There is a wordplay on *sambādha*, “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” which also refers to the sexual organ, male (V 1:216, 2:134) or female (V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260). *Rajā, -patha*, “a dusty path,” here refers to “the dust of passion,” and to “the path of returning” (*āgamana, patha*), ie rebirth (DA 1:180,17 = MA 2:179,20; UA 237,27).

¹⁶⁷ As in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,14), SD 1.11.

¹⁶⁸ §§13-16 = **M 26,14-17** (SD 1.11).

¹⁶⁹ This is Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, Mahā Māyā’s sister and the Buddha’s foster mother. The Buddha’s uterine mother Mahā Māyā (**Mahā’padāna S**, D 2:7, 52, 53; ApA 18; J 1:15; DhA 4:89; ThaA 2:225; CA 39) has passed away a week after the Buddha’s birth (Tha 534 f; DA 2:431). See Analayo 2012:23-26.

I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robe, and went forth from the household life into the homeless life.¹⁷⁰

THE 2 TEACHERS¹⁷¹

Ālāra Kālāma¹⁷²

14 Having gone forth in this way, Aggivessana, in quest of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace,¹⁷³

I approached **Ālāra Kālāma**¹⁷⁴ and said to him:

‘Avuso¹⁷⁵ Kālāma, I want to lead the holy life in this Dharma-Vinaya [Dharma and Discipline].’

14.2 Aggivessana, when this was spoken, Ālāra Kālāma said this to me:

‘The venerable one may stay here. This Dharma is such that a wise man [1:164] can soon attain and dwell in it, realizing for himself through his own direct knowledge his own teacher’s doctrine.’

(1) MASTERING THE TEXTS.¹⁷⁶ Aggivessana, I soon quickly learned that Dharma [ancient lore]. Aggivessana, as far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal¹⁷⁷ of his teaching went, I spoke with the word of knowing and with the word of an elder,¹⁷⁸ and I claimed, ‘I know and see,’ and there were others who did likewise.

14.3 Aggivessana, I thought thus:

‘It is not through mere faith alone that Ālāra Kālāma declares: “By realizing through his own direct knowledge, I attain and dwell in this Dharma.” Certainly Ālāra Kālāma dwells knowing and seeing this Dharma.’

¹⁷⁰ This same statement is made mutatis mutandis by Soṇa,daṇḍa (**Soṇa,daṇḍa S**, D 4,6/1:115), SD 30.5, by Kūṭa,danta (**Kūṭa,danta S**, D 5,7(4)/1:131), SD 22.8(7a), and by Caṅkī (**Caṅkī S**, M 95,9/2:167), SD 21.15, all of which say that he is “from a high family” (*uccā kulā*). A stock passage speaks of the Buddha as “the recluse Gotama, a Sakya son who went forth from the Sakya clan” (*samaṇo ... gotamo sakya,putto sakya,kulā pabbajito*): **Mv 22.2/V 1:35; D 4,2/1:111, 13,7/1:236; M 41,2/1:285; S 55,7.2/5:352; A 3.63,1/1:180; Sn p103.**

¹⁷¹ Here, the Sutta abridges the account of the meetings with Ālāra Kālāma and with Uddaka Rāmaputta, as they are already found in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,15-16), SD 1.11+(4), while the Skt fragment reports them in full: see Analayo 2011: 175.

¹⁷² As in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,15), SD 1.11.

¹⁷³ *So evaṃ pabbajito bhikkhave kim,kusala,gavesī anuttaram santi,vara,padam pariyesamāno.*

¹⁷⁴ Buddhaghosa says that **Ālāra** was also called Dīgha,piṅgala; **Kālāma** was his family name (DA 2:569 = MA 2:-171). The story of the Bodhisattva’s first two teachers [§§14-15] is found in several places in the early Canons: **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36/1:240; **Saṅgarāva S** (M 100/2:212); **Madhyam’āgama** of the Sarvāstivāda (T26.776b5-777a4); **Vinaya** of the Dharmaguptakas (T1428.780bt-c19); cf J 1:66; DhA 1:85; ApA 71; BA 6; DhsA 34; MahvSṭ 66. Bronkhorst has some doubt about the “two teacher” episode: “No word is said about the Buddha’s relationship to these two people, nor indeed do we hear what these men had been or done. This would be hard to explain if the training of the Bodhisattva under them had been related at that time a few pages earlier as it is now.” (1993:85 f; see n to §§22-23 on “The first listeners” below).

¹⁷⁵ *Avuso*, anglicized as “avuso,” meaning, “Friend, sir,” is a mode of address amongst equals, or not to seniors. See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,6.2), SD 19.

¹⁷⁶ On this section (1) and the following two (§§2-3), see SD 1.11 (5): The 3 trainings.

¹⁷⁷ “Mere lip-reciting and rehearsal,” *oṭṭha,pahata,mattena lapita,lāpana,mattena*, “merely moving the lips and reciting what had been recited” (Thomas 1949:62)

¹⁷⁸ “I spoke with the word of knowing and with the word of an elder,” *ñāṇa,vādañ ca therā,vādañ ca*. Here, *theravāda*, “the word of an elder,” is used in a non-technical sense. The term “Theravāda,” used in ref to a school, is a late post-canonical term.

14.4 Then, Aggivessana, I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and asked him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, in what way do you declare that by realizing for yourself through your own direct knowledge you attain and dwell in this Dharma?’

Aggivessana, he declared that it was **the base of nothingness**.¹⁷⁹

(2) THE 5 SPIRITUAL FACULTIES. Aggivessana, I thought thus:

‘Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has <u>faith</u> , I, too, have	faith.
Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has <u>energy</u> , I, too, have	energy.
Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has <u>mindfulness</u> , I, too, have	mindfulness.
Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has <u>concentration</u> , I, too, have	concentration.
Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has <u>wisdom</u> , I, too, have	wisdom. ¹⁸⁰

14.5 What now if I endeavour to realize the Dharma that Āḷāra Kālāma declares he dwells in, having attained and realized direct knowledge for himself?’

Aggivessana, I too, in no long time, having quickly realized direct knowledge for myself, attained and dwelt in that Dharma.

14.6 Then, I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and asked him:

‘Avuso Kālāma, is it in this way that you declare for yourself that you, realizing direct knowledge for yourself, have attained this Dharma?’

‘That is the way, avuso, that I declare for myself that I, realizing direct knowledge for myself, have attained this Dharma.’

‘That is the way, avuso, that I, too, realizing direct knowledge for myself, have attained and dwell in this Dharma.’

14.7 ‘It is a great gain for us, avuso, that we see¹⁸¹ such a venerable one as a fellow brahmachari¹⁸² [as a companion in the holy life].¹⁸³

The Dharma that I proclaim I have attained through realizing direct knowledge for myself, you yourself dwell in that Dharma, having attained it through realizing direct knowledge for yourself.

The [1:165] Dharma that you dwell in, having yourself attained realizing direct knowledge for yourself, I too proclaim it, having attained it through realizing direct knowledge for myself.

14.8 Thus, the Dharma that I know, you too know that same Dharma; the Dharma that you know, I too know that same Dharma.

Thus, as I am, so you are; as you are, so am I.¹⁸⁴

Come now, avuso, let the two of us lead this community!¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ “The base of nothingness,” *ākiñcaññ’āyatana*. This is the 4th dhyana of the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*), ie, a formless attainment (*arūpa,samāpatti*), a quasi-conscious state where the mind is focused on a perception of “nothingness.” See §14.9 m.

¹⁸⁰ On these 5 faculties, see SD 1.11 (5), in the Sujato quote.

¹⁸¹ *Passāma*.

¹⁸² “Brahmachari” (OED) is an anglicization of *brahma,cārī*. “one living a holy life of celibacy.” The practice is called *brahma,cariya* (Skt *brahma,carya*), sometimes anglicized as “brahmacharya” (OED).

¹⁸³ From here until “as you are, so am I”: *iti yāhaṃ dhammaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja pavedemi, taṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharasi; yaṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharasi, tam ahaṃ dhammaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja pavedemi. Iti yāhaṃ dhammaṃ jānāmi, taṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ jānāsi; yaṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ jānāsi, tam ahaṃ dhammaṃ jānāmi. Iti yādiso ahaṃ, tādiso tvaṃ; yādiso tvaṃ, tādiso ahaṃ.*

¹⁸⁴ *Iti yādiso ahaṃ, tādiso tvaṃ; yādiso tvaṃ, tādiso ahaṃ*. Cf similar sentence at §15.3 in connection with Rāma.

¹⁸⁵ See §15.4 below on the leadership of the community.

(3) MASTERING THE MIND. Thus, Aggivessana, Ālāra Kālāma, my teacher, placed me, his pupil, on an equal footing with himself and accorded me the highest honour.

14.9 But it occurred to me: 'This Dharma does not lead to revulsion (with the world), to cessation (of suffering), to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana, but only to rebirth¹⁸⁶ in the base of nothingness.'¹⁸⁷

Aggivessana, dissatisfied with that Dharma, revulsed with it, I left.

Uddaka Rāma,putta¹⁸⁸

15 Aggivessana, as one in quest of what is wholesome, still seeking the supreme state of sublime peace,¹⁸⁹

I went to **Uddaka Rāma,putta** and said to him:

'Avuso,¹⁹⁰ I want to lead the holy life in this Dharma-Vinaya [Dharma and Discipline].'

15.2 Aggivessana, when this was spoken, Uddaka Rāma,putta said this to me:

'The venerable one may stay here. This Dharma is such that a wise man can soon attain and dwell in it, realizing for himself through his own direct knowledge his own teacher's doctrine.'

(1) MASTERING THE TEXTS.¹⁹¹ Aggivessana, as far as lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went I spoke with the word of knowing and with the word of an elder,¹⁹² and I claimed, 'I know and see,' and there were others who did likewise.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ §14.9 (= M 26,15.9/1:165,12): The Bodhisattva's reflection here indicates that what Ālāra Kālāma teaches is the full-fledged attainment of the base of nothingness, as this attainment is specified to lead to rebirth in the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññ'āyatanaūpapatti*). Ālāra's ability to attain profound levels of concentration is confirmed in the Mahāparinibbāna S (D 16), according to which he was able to enter such deep concentration that he did not even notice 500 carts passing by close to him (D 16/2:130,11), SD 9, and its parallels DĀ 2 (T1.19a12), T5 (T1.168b3), T6 (T1.183c15), T7 (T1.197c13, only 50 chariots), and the Skt version (S 360 folio 190V2 in Waldschmidt 1950: 27); not all Chin versions, however, clearly identify him as Ālāra Kālāma.

¹⁸⁷ "The base of nothingness," *ākiñcaññ'āyatana*. Comy: Ālāra taught him the 7 attainments (of calmness meditation) ending with the base of nothingness, the 3rd of the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*). Though these states are spiritually exalted, they are still mundane and do not in themselves lead to nirvana, but merely to rebirth in the realm of nothingness (*ākiñcaññ'āyatana*). The lifespan there is 60,000 aeons (world-cycles) but at the end of which one returns to a lower world. As such, one is still caught in Death's trap (MA 2:172). However, see (4.1). Note here that "realm" (*āyatana*) is a cosmological or ontological term (a place of rebirth); but when *āyatana* is used in a meditative sense, it is rendered as "base." See SID: āyatana. On the interesting point that this is not dhyana, see SD 1.11 (4.1).

¹⁸⁸ As in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,16), SD 1.11.

¹⁸⁹ *So kho ahaṃ bhikkhave kiṃ,kusala,gavesī anuttaraṃ santi,vara,padaṃ pariyesamāno.*

¹⁹⁰ Be adds this n: *āvuso rāma* (Ce Ke Se) *mahā,satto rāma,puttam eva avoca, na rāmaṃ, rāmo hi tattha gaṇ'ācariyo bhaveyya, tadā ca kālaṅkato asanto. Ten'ev'ettha rāmāyattāni kriya,padāni atīta,kāla,vasena āgatani, uddako ca rāma,putto mahā,sattassa sa,brahma,cāritv-eva vutto, na ācariyo ti. Tīkāyaṃ ca "Pāliyaṃ rāmass'eva samāpatti,lābhitā āgatā, na uddakassā ti ādi pacchā,bhāge pakāsītā* [D:Be 1:221]: The Great Being said, "Friend Rāma," but Rāma,putta replied, "I'm not Rāma. Rāma was the community teacher (*gaṇ'ācariya*), but he has passed on and is no more. For this reason, sentences relating to Rāma are in the past tense, and so Rāma,putta was a co-religionist with the Great Being, not his teacher. Similarly, the Tīkā (Sub-Comy) notes that in the text (Pāli), the formless attainments are made in ref to Rāma, not to his son, Uddaka.

¹⁹¹ On this section (1) and the following two (2-3), see SD 1.11 (5): The 3 trainings.

¹⁹² "I spoke with the word of knowing and with the word of an elder," *ñāṇa,vādaṃ ca therā,vādaṃ ca*. Here, *therā,vāda* is used in a non-technical sense. The term Theravāda, used in ref to a school, is a late post-canonical term.

¹⁹³ *So kho ahaṃ bhikkhave tāvataken'eva oṭṭha,pahata,mattena lapita,lāpana,mattena ñāṇa,vādaṃ ca vadāmi theravādaṃ ca. Jānāmi, passāmi ti ca paṭijānāmi ahaṃ c'eva aññe ca.*

15.3 Aggivessana, I thought thus:

‘It is not through mere faith alone that **Rāma** declared: “By realizing through his own direct knowledge I entered upon and dwelt in this Dharma.” Certainly Rāma dwelt knowing and seeing this Dharma.’

15.4 Then, Aggivessana, I went to Uddaka Rāma,putta and asked him:

‘Avuso, in what way did Rāma declare that by realizing for himself through his own direct knowledge he entered upon and dwelt in this Dharma?’

Aggivessana, Uddaka Rāma,putta declared that it was **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**.¹⁹⁴

(2) THE 5 SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

Aggivessana, I thought thus:

‘Not only Rāma had faith, [1:166] I, too, have faith.

Not only Rāma had energy, I, too, have energy.

Not only Rāma had mindfulness, I, too, have mindfulness.

Not only Rāma had concentration, I, too, have concentration.

Not only Rāma had wisdom, I, too, have wisdom.

15.5 What now if I endeavour to realize the Dharma that Rāma declared he dwelt in, having attained and realized direct knowledge for himself?’

Aggivessana, I too, in no long time, having quickly realized direct knowledge for myself, attained and dwelt in that Dharma.

15.6 Then I went to Uddaka Rāma,putta and asked him:

‘Avuso, was it in this way that Rāma declared for himself that he, realizing direct knowledge for himself, had attained this Dharma?’

‘That was the way, avuso, that Rāma declared for himself that he, realizing direct knowledge for himself, had attained this Dharma.’

‘That is the way, avuso, that I, too, realizing direct knowledge for myself, have attained and dwell in this Dharma.’

15.7 ‘It is a great gain for us, avuso, that we see¹⁹⁵ such a venerable one as a fellow brahmachari [as our companion in the holy life].

The Dharma that Rāma proclaimed to have attained through realizing direct knowledge for himself, you yourself, too, dwell in that Dharma, having realized direct knowledge for yourself.

The Dharma that you dwell in, having yourself attained it through realizing direct knowledge for yourself, Rāma, too, proclaimed it, having attained it through realizing direct knowledge for himself.

15.8 Thus, the Dharma that Rāma knew, you too know that same Dharma; the Dharma that you know, Rāma too knew that same Dharma.

Thus, as Rāma was, so you are; as you are, so Rāma was.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ “The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,” *n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana*. This is the 4th dhyana of the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*), ie, a formless attainment (*arūpa,samāpatti*), a quasi-conscious state that is surpassed only by the state of complete suspension of consciousness called or the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*): see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,42) n, SD 1.11. See (1.2.5) Remark 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Passāma*.

¹⁹⁶ *Iti yaṃ dhammaṃ rāmo aññasi taṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ jānāsi, yaṃ tvaṃ dhammaṃ jānāsi taṃ dhammaṃ rāmo aññasi. Iti yādiso rāmo ahoṣi tādiso tuvaṃ, yādiso tuvaṃ tādiso rāmo ahoṣi*: cf similar sentence in ref to Ālāra above at §14.3. These sentences are crucial in showing that “**Rāma**,” ie Uddaka’s father, is referred to, and *not* Uddaka himself. Note further the past tense *ahoṣi* used in connection with Rāma. Bodhi: “Both Horner in [*Middle Length Sayings*] and Ñ[āṇamoli] in MS err in their translations of the account of Bodhisatta’s meeting with Uddaka Rāma,putta by assuming that Uddaka is identical with Rāma. However, as his name indicates, Uddaka was the son (*putta*) of Rāma, who must have already passed away before the Bodhisatta arrived on the scene. It should be

Come now, avuso, lead this community!¹⁹⁷

(3) MASTERING THE MIND. Thus, Aggivessana, Uddaka Rāma,putta, my companion in the holy life, placed me in the position of a teacher and accorded me the highest honour.

15.9 But, Aggivessana, it occurred to me: ‘This Dharma does not lead to revulsion (with the world), to cessation (of suffering), to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana, but only to rebirth in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.’¹⁹⁸

Aggivessana, dissatisfied with that Dharma, revulsed with the Dharma, I left.¹⁹⁹

Uruvelā²⁰⁰

16 Aggivessana, still in quest of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senā, nigama near Uru,velā. [1:167]

There I saw a pleasant spot, a delightful forest grove where a river flowed through a pleasant ford, with smooth banks of white sand, and villages all around for alms-resort.²⁰¹

16.2 Aggivessana, I thought:

‘This is a pleasant spot, a delightful forest grove where a river flows through a pleasant ford, with smooth banks of white sand, and villages all around for alms-resort.

This will indeed serve well for a clansman’s striving with meaningful effort.’²⁰²

I sat down there, Aggivessana, thinking: ‘This is sufficiently conducive to striving.’²⁰³

REFLECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE

The parable²⁰⁴ of the fire-sticks²⁰⁵

17 ²⁰⁶And then, Aggivessana, **3 similes**, unheard before, spontaneously occurred to me.²⁰⁷

noted that all references to Rāma are in the past tense and the third person, and that Uddaka in the end places the Bodhisatta in the position of teacher. Though the text does not allow for definite conclusions, this suggests that he himself had not yet reached the fourth immaterial attainment.” (M:ÑB 1217 n303). See SD 1.11 (4.2).

¹⁹⁷ *Ehi dāni āvuso, tvaṃ imaṃ gaṇaṃ pariharāti.* Note here Uddaka is asking the Bodhisattva to *himself* lead the community. Cf §14.3 where Ājāra invites the Bodhisattva, “Let the two of us lead this community!” (*Ubho va santā imaṃ gaṇaṃ pariharāmi ti*).

¹⁹⁸ “The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception,” *n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana*, ie, the 4th formless attainment (*arūpa,samāpatti*): see **M 26,16.9n** (SD 1.11). On why Rāma could not gain awakening through this attainment, see **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52), SD 41.1 (3.2.3). On the interesting point that this is *not* dhyana, see SD 1.11 (4.1). The fact that the Bodhisattva is able to reach either this formless attainment or the 3rd one [§§14.4+9] implies that he has mastered the 4 dhyanas, but still lacks the right view regarding their significance: see (1.2.5) Remark.

¹⁹⁹ For the Bodhisattva’s conclusion that dhyana is a pleasure “not to be feared,” which leads to his subsequent meditation and full awakening, see §§31-32.

²⁰⁰ As in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,17), SD 1.11.

²⁰¹ *Tatth’addasaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ bhūmi,bhāgaṃ pāsādikañ ca vana,saṇḍaṃ nadiñ ca sandantiṃ setakaṃ supatitthaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ samantā ca gocara,gāmaṃ.*

²⁰² *Alaṃ vat’idaṃ kula,puttassa padhān’atthikassa padhānāyāti.*

²⁰³ *So kho ahaṃ bhikkhave tatth’eva nisīdiṃ, alaṃ idaṃ padhānāyāti.*

²⁰⁴ A parable is a short narrative (usually a terse story) that shows a tacit but detailed analogy between or amongst its components and the intended thesis or lesson. Here, the parable of the fire-sticks comprises 3 similes. A simile is a figure of speech in which one thing is said to be “like” another, by way of comparing a familiar quality (“wet sticks will not burn”) to an intended idea (“one with sensual desires cannot awaken”).

²⁰⁵ On the significance of the parable of the fire-sticks, and its natural narrative location preceding the Bodhisattva’s self-mortification (pace Bodhi), see (4).

(1) THE STICK WET WITH SAP IN WATER.

17.2 Suppose, Aggivessana, there were a **stick wet with sap left in water**,²⁰⁸ and then a man were to come holding an upper fire-stick,²⁰⁹ thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

17.3 What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man, holding an upper fire-stick and rubbing against the stick wet with sap left in the water, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“No, master Gotama.

17.4 Why is that so?

Master Gotama, it is because *the stick wet with sap, [241] and it is left in water*. If he went on trying, he would only meet with weariness and disappointment.”

17.5 “Even so, Aggivessana, whichever recluses or brahmins who neither bodily nor mentally²¹⁰ dwell aloof from sense-pleasures,²¹¹

and for whom sensual desire in sensual pleasures, love for sensual pleasures, infatuation with sensual pleasures, thirst for sensual pleasures, fever for sensual pleasures, have neither been fully abandoned nor well appeased internally,²¹²

17.6 even if these good recluses and brahmins were to *feel* painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *incapable* of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening,²¹³

and even if these good recluses and brahmins were *not* to feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are *still* incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.²¹⁴

This, Aggivessana, was **the 1st simile**, unheard before, that naturally occurred to me.²¹⁵

(2) THE STICK WET WITH SAP ON DRY GROUND

18 Furthermore, Aggivessana, **the 2nd simile**, unheard before, naturally occurred to me.

18.2 Suppose, Aggivessana, there were a **stick wet with sap left on dry ground, far away from water**,²¹⁶ and then a man were to come along holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

18.3 What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man, holding an upper fire-stick and rubbing against *the stick wet with sap left on dry ground, far away from water*, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“No, master Gotama.

²⁰⁶ From here on until §44, as at **(Deva) Saṅgārava S** (M 100,14-41), SD 10.9. For collation table, see SD 10.9 (3.2).

²⁰⁷ *Api-ssu maṃ aggivessana tisso upamā paṭibhaṃsu anacchariyā pubbe assuta,pubbā.*

²⁰⁸ *Allaṃ kaṭṭhaṃ sasnehaṃ udake nikkhattaṃ.*

²⁰⁹ “Upper fire-stick” (*uttarāraṇī*, ts) (M 1:140,34, 2:93,23 repeat of passage, 152,4, 3:95,5, 142,1, 143,34; Miln 53,29); opp, “lower fire-stick” (*adharāraṇī*, ts): MA 2:91,9; SA 3:241,21; Vism 489,20.

²¹⁰ “Bodily,” *kāyena* (Ce Ee Se throughout), but only Be has “Neither bodily nor mentally,” *kāyena c’eva cittena ca ... (avūpakaṭṭha)*, which fits the context better here [§18.4 n ad loc]. See also §19.4..

²¹¹ *Evam eva kho aggivessana ye hi keci samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā kāyena c’eva cittena ca kāmehi avūpakaṭṭhā viharanti*. This sentence, which underlies each of the 3 similes mutatis mutandis, is crucial to their import, ie, we need to be “free from sense-objects connected with sense-defilement” (*kilesa,kāmena vatthu,kāmato nissaṭa,puggalā*) (MA 2:288.2).

²¹² *Yo ca nesaṃ kāmesu kāma-c, chando kāma, sneho kāma, mucchā kāma, pipāsā kāma, pariḷāho so ca ajjhattaṃ na suppahīno hoti na suppaṭippassaddho.*

²¹³ *Opakkamikā cepi te bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā dukkhā tikkhā kharā kaṭukā vedanā vedayanti, abhabbāva te ñāṇāya dassanāya anuttarāya sambodhāya.*

²¹⁴ Cf **Sāḷha S** (A 4.196), where the Buddha declares that “those recluses and brahmins whose bodily, verbal and mental conduct are impure, and whose livelihood is impure, are incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening (A 4.196/2:200), SD 65.17.

²¹⁵ *Ayaṃ kho maṃ, bhāradvāja, paṭhamā upamā paṭibhāsi anacchariyā pubbe assuta,pubbā.*

²¹⁶ *Allaṃ kaṭṭhaṃ sasnehaṃ ārakā udakā thale nikkhattaṃ.*

18.4 Why is that so?

Master Gotama, it is because, although the stick is left on dry ground, *it is still wet with sap*. If he went on trying, he would only meet with weariness and disappointment.”

18.5 “Even so, Aggivessana, whichever recluses or brahmins who do not **bodily**²¹⁷ dwell aloof from sense-pleasures,²¹⁸

and for whom sensual desire in sensual pleasures, love for sensual pleasures, infatuation with sensual pleasures, thirst for sensual pleasures, fever for sensual pleasures, have neither been fully abandoned nor well appeased internally,

18.6 *even if these good recluses and brahmins were to feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening,*

and even if these good recluses and brahmins were not to feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are still incapable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

This, Aggivessana, was **the 2nd simile**, unheard before, that naturally occurred to me.

(3) THE DRY, SAPLESS STICK ON DRY GROUND²¹⁹

19 Furthermore, Aggivessana, **the 3rd simile**, unheard before, naturally occurred to me. [242]

19.2 Suppose, Aggivessana, there were **a dry, sapless stick, lying on dry ground far away from water,**²²⁰ and then a man were to come along holding an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I will start a fire. I will make some heat.’

19.3 What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man, holding an upper fire-stick and rubbing against *the dry, sapless stick, lying on dry ground far away from water*, start a fire, or make any heat?”

“Yes, master Gotama.

19.4 Why is that so? Master Gotama, it is because *the stick, dry and sapless, is left on the dry ground, far away from water.*”

19.5 “Even so, Aggivessana, whichever recluses or brahmins who **both bodily and mentally**²²¹ dwell aloof from sense-pleasures,

and for whom sensual desire in sensual pleasures, love for sensual pleasures, infatuation with sensual pleasures, thirst for sensual pleasures, fever for sensual pleasures have been fully abandoned and well appeased internally,

19.6 *even if these good recluses and brahmins were to feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening;*

and even if these good recluses and brahmins were not to feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are still capable of knowledge, vision and supreme awakening.

This, Aggivessana, was **the 3rd simile**, unheard before, that naturally occurred to me.

²¹⁷ “Bodily,” *kāyena* (Ce Ee Se throughout), but only M:Be1:308,21 has “Neither bodily nor mentally,” *kāyena c’eva cittena ca ... (avūpakaṭṭha)*, which would not fit the second simile here; see also Dutoit 1905:32. The corresponding passage in fragment 336r5 (Liu 2009:57), in fact, reads *kāyena vyapakṛṣṭ(ā) viharanti [na] vi[tt[(e)[n](a)]*; (cf Liu 2009:110 n1+3), although then frag 336v1 in Liu 2009:58 repeats the same formulation for the 3rd simile, where, says Analayo, judging from the context, we would expect the reading *na vyapakṛṣṭā viharanti cittena ca* (2011:235). See §§18.4+19.4. See also (2.1).

²¹⁸ *Evam eva kho aggivessana ye hi keci samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā kāyena c’eva kāmehi vūpakaṭṭhā viharanti* (Be Ce Se so). Ee wrongly reads *avūpakaṭṭhā* (as at §17.4), as noted by Trenckner (M ed 1888:550,21), Bodhi (M:ÑB 1995:1229 n386, & Analayo (2011:235 n152).

²¹⁹ Skt parallel of §§19-33 (M 1:242,1-247,1) found in SHT 3.931. **§§19.1-3 simile of the dry, sapless stick** recurs in **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,24/3:95). **Khīra Rukkha S** (S 35.190) compares tree-sap to lust (S 35.190/4:161), SD 84.17.

²²⁰ *Sukkhāṃ kaṭṭhāṃ koḷāpaṃ ārakā udakā thale nikkhattāṃ.*

²²¹ “Bodily,” *kāyena* (Ce Ee Se throughout), but only M:Be1:308,21 has “Neither bodily nor mentally,” *kāyena c’eva cittena ca ... (avūpakaṭṭha)*, which would not fit the context here. See §§17.4+18.4.

These, Aggivessana, are the 3 similes, unheard before, that naturally occurred to me.

THE BODHISATTVĀ'S SELF-MORTIFICATION²²²

(§§20-33)

Clenched teeth, tongue pressed against the palate

20 Aggivessana, it occurred to me,

'Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down, hold back, and crush the mind with mind.'²²³

20.2 So, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down, held back, crushed the mind with mind. While I did so, sweat ran from my armpits.

20.3 It was just as if a strong man, holding a weaker man by the head or shoulders, were to restrain, subdue, and attack him;

20.4 even so, *with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against my palate, I beat down, held back, and crushed the mind with mind, and sweat ran down my armpits.*

20.5 But although I exerted tireless energy, and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained [243] and lacking calm,²²⁴ because I was exhausted by the painful striving.²²⁵

20.6 But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.²²⁶

Breathless meditation²²⁷

21 (1) Aggivessana, it occurred to me, 'Suppose I practise **the breathless meditation**.'²²⁸

²²² Here, the Buddha begins the account of his self-mortification [§§20-33], that of his extreme pains—highlighting its pain and uselessness, which is then contrasted with the foll section on his profound joy [§§34-47], leading to his full awakening. We may surmise that the Bodhisattva turns to self-mortification after his tutelage with the 2 teachers because he is then left with no more religious options except for the ascetic (tāpasa) tradition of self-denial.

²²³ *Yan nūnāham dantebhi dantamādhāya, jivhāya tālum āhacca, cetasā cittaṃ abhiniggaṇheyyaṃ abhinippīleyaṃ abhisantāpeyyaṃ'ti.* Cf **Vitakka Saṅghāna S** (M 20), where this is given as the last method of overcoming a distracted mind (M 20,7/1:120 f), SD 1.6. In **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,20/1:242), SD 49.4, **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 85,19-/2:93), SD 55.2, **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,17/2:212), and **Jātaka,nidāna** (J 1:67), it forms the initial practice of the Bodhisattva's self-mortification, and as it is the *least* severe of them, it is recommended as the *last* of the 5 methods: see J Bronkhorst, "Self and meditation in Indian Buddhism," 1998:12. **Purisa Thāma S** (A 2.1.5/1:50) teaches us not to be content with wholesome mental states, and to be unremitting in our "personal effort" to win the spiritual goal. See **Vitakka Saṅghāna S** (M 20), SD 1.6 (1).

²²⁴ "Over strained and lacking calm," *sāradhho...appaṭipassaddho.*

²²⁵ *Āradham kho pana me aggivessana vīriyaṃ hoti asallīnam, upaṭṭhitā sati asammutṭhā, sāradhho ca pana me kāyo hoti appaṭipassaddho ten'eva dukkha-p, padhānena padhānābhitunnassa sato.* One of the sutta students, an erstwhile inner-circle member of the Maharishi Mahesh cult, commented that these symptoms described by the Buddha reminded him of the bizarre mental breakdowns he personally saw amongst Mahesh's disciples practising TM (Transcendental Meditation), and they were "not even straining themselves" like the Bodhisattva!

²²⁶ *Eva, rūpā pi kho me aggi, vessana uppannā dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādāya ti!!hati.* This refrain found at the end of every para in this section [§§20.6, 21.4, 22.4, 23.4, 24.4, 25.4], marks the answer to the second of Sakka's two questions [§11]. This refrain [§§20-25] is not found in **Saṅgārava S** (M 100,17-20), SD 10.9 parallels. Apparently, the earliest canonical example of the 2 kinds of pain (bodily and mental) are noted in **Sall'atthana S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), wherein the saint experiences only bodily pain but not mental pain. See SD 1.12.

²²⁷ The 4 stages of breathless meditation here prob refer to an early attempt at attaining the 4 dhyanas, but then he "fears" the attending joy, and hence the bodily pains that he experiences: see (5.2, esp 5.2.2.1). This is *not* the normal dhyana: see SD 8.4 (3.1.4).

21.2 So I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose.

While I did so, there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear-holes, just like the loud sound of winds from a smith's bellows.²²⁹

21.3 *But although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and lacking calm, because I was exhausted by the painful striving.*

21.4 *But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*²³⁰

22 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.'
So I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears.

PARABLE OF THE STRONG MAN (1)²³¹

22.2 While I did so, violent winds cut through **my head**, just as if a strong man were splitting my head open with a sharp sword.²³²

22.3 *But although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and lacking calm, because I was exhausted by the painful striving.*

22.4 *But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

23 (2) Aggivessana, it occurred to me, 'Suppose I practise **further the breathingless meditation**.'
So I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears.

PARABLE OF THE STRONG MAN (2)

23.2 While I did so, there were violent pains in my head, just as if a strong man [244] were tightening a strong leather strap around my head as a headband.²³³

23.3 *But although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and lacking calm, because I was exhausted by the painful striving.*

23.4 *But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

24 (3) Aggivessana, it occurred to me, 'Suppose I practise **further the breathingless meditation**.'
So I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears.

PARABLE OF THE BUTCHER

24.2 While I did so, violent winds carved up **my belly**,²³⁴ just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox's belly with a sharp butcher's knife.

²²⁸ "Breathingless meditation" ((all MSS: *appānakam ... jhānam*): See (5.2).

²²⁹ The figure of the smith's bellows recurs in Māra's context in **Sappa S** (S 4.6/1:106), SD 61.14.

²³⁰ A close disciple of Maharishi Mahesh told me that once he did so much *bhastrikā prāṇāyāma* (a rapid and forceful inhalation and exhalation induced by the diaphragm's movements), that it put him in such great physical pain, that he could hardly move or walk!

²³¹ The pains of the Bodhisattva's asceticism are described in the stock passages in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,22.2 +23.2+24.2+25.2); the brahmin Dhānañjāni, **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97,29.2-5/2:193), SD 4.9; the houselord Anātha, piṇḍika, **Anāthapiṇḍik'ovāda S** (M 143,4/3:259), SD 23.9; the monk Channa, **Chann'ovāda S** (M 144,5/3:264) = **Channa S** (S 35.87,5/4:56), SD 11.12; the monk Phagguna, **Phagguna S** (A 6.56/3:379 f); cf (**Chakka**) **Āsava S** (A 6.5683:389), SD 62.1.

²³² This is clearly a description of very bad migraine brought on by the practice of forceful breath meditation or a prolonged sitting without any wholesome results.

²³³ *Seyyathā'pi aggivessana balavā puriso daḷhena varatta-k, khaṇḍena* [Ce *varattaka, bandhanena*] *sīse sīsa, veṭṭham dadeyya*. "Violent pains in the head" (*daḷhena ... sīse sīsa, vedanam*), lit "strong head-pains in the head."

²³⁴ According to Agniveśa's *Caraka Saṃhitā*, Sūtra,sthāna 20.11 (p113), headache (*śīroruj*) [21-23] and belly (*udarāveṣṭaḥ*) [24]: the Ayurvedic commentator Cakrapānidatta explains: *udarasāveṣṭanam ivodarāveṣṭaḥ* are caused by wind (*vāta*). Heat (*dāha*), on the other hand, is caused by bile (*pitta*): see Sūtra,sthāna 20.14 (p114). See Bronkhorst 1993:20 f & n29.

24.3 *But although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and lacking calm, because I was exhausted by the painful striving.*

24.4 *But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

25 (4) Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise **further the breathingless meditation.**’
So I stopped my in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose and ears.

PARABLE OF THE TWO MEN

25.2 While I did so, there was a violent burning in my body, just as if two men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of burning coal.

25.3 *But although I exerted tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness was established in me, my body was overstrained and lacking calm, because I was exhausted by the painful striving.*

25.4 *But, Aggivessana, such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

26 Now, Aggivessana, when [245] the devas saw me, some said: ‘The recluse Gotama is dead!’

Other devas said: ‘The recluse Gotama is not dead but dying!’

Still others said: ‘The recluse Gotama is neither dead nor dying: he is an arhat;²³⁵ such is how arhats dwell!’

The starvation austerity

27 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I practise **cutting off food entirely.**’

27.2 Then devas came to me and said, ‘Good sir, do not do so. If you do so, we shall infuse divine essence²³⁶ through the pores of your skin and you will live on like that.’

27.3 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘If I claim to be completely fasting while these devas infuse divine essence through the pores of my skin and I live on that, then I shall be lying.’

27.4 So I said. ‘There’s no need!’²³⁷ and dismissed the devas.

28 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, perhaps of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch²³⁸ soup or pea soup.’

THE EMACIATED BODHISATTVA²³⁹

28.2 When I did so, my body reached a state of **extreme emaciation.**

28.3 Because of eating so little,

my limbs became like the joints of vine stems or bamboo stems;

my backside became like a camel’s hoof;

the projections of my spine stood out like corded beads;

my ribs jutted out like the crazy²⁴⁰ rafters of an old broken shed;

the gleam of my eyes sank deep down into their sockets, looking like the gleam of water gone far down in a deep well;

²³⁵ Here, either the gods are mistaken, or the term is used in its popular pre-Buddhist sense, as a generic name for a “holy saint”: see J 1:67.

²³⁶ “Divine essence,” *oja*, ambrosia.

²³⁷ *Tā devatā paccācikkhāmi halan’ti vadāmi.* This incident is recounted at J 1:67.

²³⁸ A beanlike climbing plant.

²³⁹ §28.3 as in *Mahā Sīhanāda S* (M 12), where the “emaciated Bodhisattva pepicope” goes through 4 cycles, each time, taking respectively only jujube fruit (*kola*), only bean, only sesame, only rice—taking only their powdered (pulverized) form, their various concoctions, and down to merely a fruit, seed or grain a day (M 12,52-55/1:80), SD 49.1. See (5.4.2.1).

²⁴⁰ *Olugga*, collapsing and fallen down, dilapidated.

my scalp shrivelled and withered like [246] a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun;
 my belly skin touched my backbone, so that when I touched my belly I felt my backbone; and if I touched my backbone, I felt my belly skin;
 when I defecated or urinated, I fell over on my face right there;
 when I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hairs, rotted at their roots, fell off from my body as I rubbed—all because of eating so little.²⁴¹

29 When people saw me, some said, ‘The recluse Gotama is black!.’

Others said, ‘The recluse Gotama is not black, he is brown!’

Still others said, ‘The recluse Gotama is neither; he is sallow!’²⁴²

29.2 So much had the clear, bright colour of my skin deteriorated through eating so little.

30 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘In the past, recluses and brahmins have experienced painful, racking, piercing pains;

in the future, recluses and brahmins will experience painful, racking, piercing pains;

at present, recluses and brahmins are experiencing painful, racking, piercing pains—but this is the utmost extreme—there is none beyond this!

30.2 But by these painful austerities, I did not attain any superhuman state, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.

30.3 Could there be another path to awakening?²⁴³



Fig 28. Image of the emaciated Buddha from Sikri, now in the Lahore Museum, Pakistan. (2nd century CE)

²⁴¹ The Bodhisattva’s self-mortification: see (5).

²⁴² *Maṅgura-c, chav*: of an archer, **Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 63,5.2/1:429), SD 5.8; of the country’s beauty, **Cūḷa Sakul’udāyī S** (M 79,10/2:33), SD 91.4 = **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,35/1:193) = **Te,vijja S** (D 13,19/1:242); Vism 6.36/184 (Vism:Ñ: “yellow-skinned”). Poss related or syn of *maṅgula*, “sallow”; *maṅgulī*, “a woman of sallow complexion” (S 2:260 = V 3:107; V 3:100). SED, *maṅgura*: “a kind of fish” = Andersen (*A Pāli Glossary*), who adds: “yellow?” BHS has *madgura* (sv), *madguru*, *madgula*: “a certain fish ... something like ‘sallow(-complexioned), unhealthy (in aspect)’; (of Gautama) *madgura, chavi* (Lalv 2:555,5; Mvst 2:256,8); *madgula, chavī* (Mvst 2:126,11, 127,15), Jones: “the sallow colour of a *madgura*” (eg Mvst:J 2:122 ff; of a wheel-turner’s woman jewel (*strī, ratna*) (Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (Dutt, 1982) 1:36,17). “Golden-coloured” (PED) certainly cannot be the case here. See JRAS 1903:186.

²⁴³ See SD 51.11 (3.2.1.4).

THE MIDDLE WAY

Wholesome pleasure

31 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘I recall that when my father the Sakya was working,²⁴⁴ I was seated in the cool shade of a jambul tree,²⁴⁵

31.2 quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and dwelt in **the 1st dhyana** that is accompanied by initial application and sustained application, zest and joy born of seclusion.²⁴⁶

31.3 Could that be the path to awakening?’

31.4 Then, following on that mindfulness [memory],²⁴⁷ I realized, ‘That *is* the path to awakening!’

32 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘Why **[247]** do I fear the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome states?’²⁴⁸

32.2 Aggivessana, it occurred to me,

‘I fear not the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome states!’²⁴⁹

Ending the austerities

33 Aggivessana, it occurred to me, ‘It is not easy to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food—some boiled rice and gruel.’

33.2 And I ate some solid food.

33.3 Now, at that time, **the 5 monks**²⁵⁰ were waiting upon me, thinking, ‘If our recluse Gotama were to have attained some state, he will inform us.’²⁵¹

33.4 But when I ate the boiled rice and gruel, the 5 monks were disgusted and left me, thinking, ‘The recluse Gotama now lives luxuriously. He has given up the quest and reverted to luxury!’

²⁴⁴ *Abhijānāmi kho panāhaṃ pitu sakkassa kammante*. That is, occupied with the ploughing festival (*vappa, maṅgala*, “blessed sowing”), ie, the ritual sowing (MA 2:290; J 1:57). See (6.1.2). See also Horner, *Early Buddhism and the Taking of Life*, B C Law Volume, pt 1.

²⁴⁵ *Sītāya jambu-c, chāyāya nisinno*. Following this, Nakamura, adds “on a path between the fields” (2000: 91,11), which is unattested in the Pali. Wujastyk (2004) says that *jambu* here is not the “rose-apple” (of Malacca and SE Asia) which was not found in India; it is properly the jambul or black plum.

²⁴⁶ On the significance of the Bodhisattva’s “1st dhyana,” see (6.2).

²⁴⁷ *Satānusāri viññāṇaṃ ahoṣi*. Comy says that “mindfulness” (*sati* or *sata*) here is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breaths (MA 2:291). Anyway, it may well simply be “remembered” (*sata*) (PED: *sata*²).

²⁴⁸ *Kiṃ nu kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññat’eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi?*

²⁴⁹ *Na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññat’eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi* (M:Ee 1:247,3; M:Ce 1: 584,4 and M:Se 1:458,5: *yantaṃ*, after which Se continues directly with *aññat’eva*, omitting *sukhaṃ*). On the 2 kinds of pleasures—sensual pleasure and the pleasure of renunciation—see **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9.3/3:233), SD 7.8. On pleasure felt by the awakened mind, see **Uṇṇābha S** (S 51.15), SD 10.10.

²⁵⁰ The group of 5 monks (*pañca, vaggiya*) comprise Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assaji. It is said that the Buddha gives his first discourse to them on the night of the full moon day of Āsāḷha (June-July), following the Great Awakening. This becomes a festival still celebrated today amongst Theravāda Buddhists as Āsāḷha Pūjā (**Mv 1.6.10-47 @ V 1:8-14; M 26,24-42/1:171-175; S 56.11/5:420-424; Mvst 3:330 f; Lalv 540(416) f**). As a result of this event, the first sangha comprising the 5 monks and the Buddha is born. See SD 1.3 (3); SD 1.11 (6).

²⁵¹ *Yan no samaṇo gotamo dhammaṃ adhiḡamissati tan no ārocassatīti*.

THE FULL AWAKENING PERICOPE

(§§34-44)²⁵²

THE BUDDHA'S PROFOUND JOY

(§§34-47)

The 4 dhyanas

34 Now, Aggivessana, when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then

34.2 ²⁵³quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states,

I entered upon and dwelt in **the 1st dhyana**,

accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and

with zest and joy born of solitude.²⁵⁴

34.3 But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.²⁵⁵

35 With the stilling of initial application and sustained application,

I entered upon and dwelt in **the 2nd dhyana**,

free from initial application and sustained application,

with zest and joy born of stillness [samadhi].²⁵⁶

35.2 *But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

36 And with the fading away of zest,

I remained equanimous, mindful and clearly knowing, and

felt joy with the body.²⁵⁷

I attained and dwelt in **the 3rd dhyana**,

of which the noble ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.'

36.2 *But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

²⁵² This whole section (§§34-44)—the full awakening pericope—is at **Bhaya, bherava S** (M 4,27-33), SD 44.3 = **Dvedha Vitakka S** (M 19,18-24), SD 61.1; **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,34-44), SD 49.4. This stock recurs in **Mahā Assa-pura S** (M 39,19-21), 10.13, with similes for the 4 dhyanas, as the fuller awakening pericope. The same stock recurs in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,76-100)—with more details and similes, and a unique passage on “knowledge of the mind-made body” (D 2,87-88)—and called the comprehensive awakening pericope (D 2,93-98), SD 8.10.

²⁵³ The description of the 4 dhyanas here as at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,81-84), SD 8.10.

²⁵⁴ “Born of solitude,” *viveka, ja*; ie it is the result of abandoning the hindrances: on the 3 kinds of solitude, see **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (1.5). On the omission of “one-pointedness of mind” (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) and “stillness” (*samādhi*) here, see **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5.

²⁵⁵ This refrain [§§34.3, 35.2, 36.2, 37.2, 39.2] marks the answer to the first of Saccaka’s 2 questions [§11]. Cf §20.6 n.

²⁵⁶ The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṅhī, bhāva*) because within it initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, *vitakka, vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī, saikhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie either discuss Dharma or meditate). See **Jhāna Pañha S 2** (S 40.2/4:263 f), SD 24.12.

²⁵⁷ On this point, see **The Buddha discovers dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.4.1) On coming out of dhyana.

- 37** And with the abandoning of joy and pain,²⁵⁸
 and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,
 I attained and dwelled in **the 4th dhyana**
 that was neither painful nor pleasant, and
 with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.²⁵⁹
 37.2 *But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

The great awakening: the 3 knowledges²⁶⁰

- 38** (1) When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to unshakable steadiness,²⁶¹ **[248]**
 38.2 I directed it to **the knowledge of the recollection of past lives**.²⁶²
 38.3 I recollected my manifold past lives, that is,
 1 birth, 2 births, 3 births, 4, 5,
 10, 20, 30, 40, 50,
 100, 1,000, 100,000,
 many aeons of cosmic contractions, many aeons of cosmic expansions,
 many aeons of cosmic contractions and expansions, (recollecting),
 38.4 ‘There I had such a name,
 belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance.
 Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain,
 such the end of my life.
 Passing away from that state, I re-arose there.
 There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance.
 Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span.
 Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’²⁶³
39 This, Aggivessana, was **the 1st true knowledge** won by me in the first watch of the night.
 Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose,
 as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.
 39.2 *But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

²⁵⁸ “Joy and pain,” *sukha-dukkha*: this refers to the bodily feelings. The next phrase—“pleasure and displeasure,” *domanassa-somanassa*—refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended (let go of) earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome or let go of first so that the mind is not distracted by itself, as it were. Then, all the other feelings (arising from the bodily sense-contacts) are transcended: on its significance, see **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.

²⁵⁹ Here, **Vibhaṅga** gives 3 factors of the 4th dhyana—equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*)—according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), and 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164; Vism 4.183/165). See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5.4).

²⁶⁰ The term “one with the threefold knowledge” (*te,vijja*) refers to an arhat with these 3 realizations in counterpoint to the masters of the 3 Vedas: see **Te,vijja S** (D 8), SD 1.8. This whole section—the 3-knowledge pericope—is stock: see §34 header, “The full awakening pericope” n.

²⁶¹ *So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu,bhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñ-ja-p,patte.*

²⁶² *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati,ñāṇa*, detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

²⁶³ As at **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4.27/1:22), SD 44.3. Be & Se abbreviate: “Even so, Aggi,vessana, with my mind thus concentrated, I recollect my manifold past lives ... in their modes and details.”

40 (2) When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness,

40.2 I directed it to the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings.²⁶⁴

40.3 By means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],²⁶⁵ purified and surpassing the human—
I see beings passing away and re-appearing, and

know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate,
faring in accordance with their karma:

40.4 ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who reviled the noble ones,

held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
after death, when the body has broken up,

have re-appeared in a plane of misery, a bad destiny, a lower realm, in hell.

40.5 But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who did not revile the noble ones,

who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views —
after death, when the body has broken up,

have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

40.6 Thus, by means of the divine eye,

I see beings passing away and re-appearing, and

*know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate,
faring in accordance with their karma:*

40.7 ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who reviled the noble ones,

*held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
after death, when the body has broken up,*

have re-appeared in a plane of misery, a bad destiny, a lower realm, in hell.

40.8 *But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who did not revile the noble ones,*

*who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views —
after death, when the body has broken up,*

have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

41 This, Aggivessana, **was the 2nd true knowledge** won by me in the second watch of the night.

41.2 Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.

41.3 *But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*

[249]

42 (3) When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness,

42.2 I directed it to the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes.²⁶⁶ I directly knew as it really is:

²⁶⁴ *Sattānaṃ cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*, detailed at Vism 13.72-101/423-429.

²⁶⁵ *dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §102).

²⁶⁶ *Āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) has been variously translated as taints, corrupt-tions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*ditth’ā-sava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as

‘This is suffering;
This is the arising of suffering;
This is the ending of suffering;
This is the path leading to the ending of suffering.’²⁶⁷

These are the influxes;
This is the arising of the influxes;
This is the ending of the influxes;
This is the path leading to the ending of the influxes.’²⁶⁸

43 When I knew and saw thus, my mind was
freed from the influx of sensual desire,
freed from the influx of existence, and
freed from the influx of ignorance.

43.2 When the mind was **freed**, there arose the knowledge: *cittaṃ vimuccittha*
‘Freed!’²⁶⁹ I directly knew: *vimuttasmim vimuttan’ti iti ñāṇaṃ ahoṣi*
‘Destroyed is birth. *khīṇā jāti*
The holy life has been lived. *vusitaṃ brahma,cariyaṃ*
What needs to be done has been done. *kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ*
There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.’ *nāparaṃ itthattāyāti*
abbhaññāsīm

44 This, Aggivessana, was the 3rd true knowledge won by me in the third watch of the night.

44.2 Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who dwells diligent, ardent and resolute.

44.3 *But, Aggivessana, such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.*²⁷⁰

The Buddha’s mental state

45 Now, Aggivessana, I recall teaching the Dharma to an assembly of many hundreds, and even then, each person thinks,

‘The recluse Gotama teaches the Dharma thinking of me!’²⁷¹

45.2 But, Aggivessana, it should not be seen thus. The Tathagata teaches the Dharma to others only for the sake of making things clear.²⁷²

45.3 At the end of the talk, Aggivessana, I steady the mind internally, unify it, and concentrate it again on the very same concentration sign²⁷³ as before, in which I constantly dwell.²⁷⁴

“floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33.1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). See BDict under *āsava*.

²⁶⁷ These 4 statements on suffering pose an interesting problem: they are not called noble truths here (and in **Sāmañña,phala S**, 2.97/1:83). Norman remarks that “since they appear to be subordinate to the four statements about the *āsavas*, it is possible that the statements about misery are a later addition, which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of 4 statements being evolved about the *āsavas*, to provide symmetry. See Schmithausen 1981: 205 & Norman 1982: 377-91, 1990:130.

²⁶⁸ As in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.97/1:83 f).

²⁶⁹ Lit, “frees in freedom,” *vimuttasmim vimuttaṃ*.

²⁷⁰ On this sentence, see end of §20 n above.

²⁷¹ *Mam’ev’ārabbha samaṇo gotamo dhammaṃ desetīti*.

²⁷² *Yāvad eva viññāpan’atthāya tathāgato paresaṃ dhammaṃ deseti*.

45.4 “This is to be believed of master Gotama, for he is worthy [the arhat], fully self-awakened one.”²⁷⁵

Day-rest and delusion

45.5 But, does master Gotama recall sleeping in the day?²⁷⁶

46 “I recall, Aggivessana, in the last month of the hot season, on returning from the almsround, after my meal,²⁷⁷

having spread out my upper robe [saṅghāṭi], folded in four, I lay down on my right side on it, sleeping mindfully and fully comprehending.”²⁷⁸

46.2 “Master Gotama, some recluses and brahmins call that **[250]** ‘dwelling in delusion’.”²⁷⁹

That, Aggivessana, is not the way one is deluded or not deluded. But, Aggivessama, regarding how one is deluded or not deluded, listen now, pay close attention, I will speak.”

“Yes, master Gotama,” Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, replied to the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

47 “For whomever, Aggivessana, has *not* abandoned the mental influxes that defile, bring about rebirth, laden with pain, ripen in suffering, lead to further birth, decay and death²⁸⁰—him I call deluded. For, it is when the influxes are unabandoned that one is deluded.

For whomever, Aggivessana, *has* abandoned the mental influxes *that defile, bring about rebirth, laden with pain, ripen in suffering, lead to further birth, decay and death*—him I call undeluded. For, it is when the influxes are abandoned that one is undeluded.²⁸¹

47.2 For the Tathagata, Aggivessana, abandoned are the influxes *that defile, bring about rebirth, laden with pain, ripen in suffering, lead to further birth, decay and death*—cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, done away with so that it is not subject to further growth.

47.3 Aggivessana, just as a palm tree whose crown has been cut off is incapanble of further growth, even so, Aggivessana, *for the Tathagata, Aggivessana, abandoned are the influxes that defile, bring about rebirth, laden with pain, ripen in suffering, lead to further birth, decay and death*.”

²⁷³ Comy explains the “concentration sign” (*samādhi, nimitta*) here as the fruition attainment of emptiness (*suññatā, phala, samāpatti*) (MA 2:292). See also **Māhā Suññata S** (M 122,6)+n, SD 11.4.

²⁷⁴ *So kho ahaṃ aggivessana tassāy’eva kathāya pariyosāne, tasmim’-yeva purimasmim’ samādhi, nimitte ajjhatam eva cittaṃ saṅghapemi sannisādemī ekodim’ karomī samādahāmi, yena sudaṃ nicca, kappam’ viharāmiti.* Comy explains the “sign of concentration” (*samādhi, nimitta*) here as the fruition attainment of emptiness (*suññata, phala, samāpatti*). In **Māhā Suññata S** (M 122), the Buddha describes how he abides “in voidness internally by giving no attention to all signs” and how he responds to visitors (M 122,6), SD 11.4.

²⁷⁵ *Okappaniyam etaṃ bho gotamassa yathā taṃ arahato sammā, sambuddhassa.*

²⁷⁶ This is the question Saccaka originally intends to refute the Buddha with: see §3 n at “approached.” Comy explains that though arhats have abandoned all sloth and torpor (on a mental level), they still need to sleep in order to dispel bodily tiredness that naturally occurs with the body. (MA 2:292 f)

²⁷⁷ *Abhijānāma ahaṃ aggivessana gimhānaṃ pacchime māse pacchā, bhataṃ piṇḍa, pāta, paṭikkanto.*

²⁷⁸ *Catu-g, guṇaṃ saṅghāṭim’ paññāpetvā dakkhiṇena passena sato sampajāno niddaṃ okkamitā’ti.*

²⁷⁹ *Etaṃ kho bho gotama eke samaṇa, brāhmaṇā sammoha, viharasmim’ vadantīti.*

²⁸⁰ Cf where this is said in connection with the Buddha himself: **Naḷaka, pāna S** (M 68), (M 68,7/1:464), SD 37.4; no guarantee that this will not produce its fruit, eg it is not guaranteed that it will decay will not decay, and so on: **Pāṭibhoga S** (A 4.182/2:172), SD 108.13.

²⁸¹ The whole para: *Yassa kassaci aggivessana ye āsavā saṅkilesikā ponobbhavikā sadarā dukkha, vipākā āyatim’ jāti, jarā, maraṇiyā pahīnā, tam ahaṃ asammūḷho’ti vadāmi. Āsavānañhi aggivessana pahānā asammūḷho hoti.*

Saccaka praises the Buddha

48 When this was said, Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, said to the Blessed One:

“It is marvellous, master Gotama! It is wonderful, master Gotama!

48.2 No matter how so rudely that master Gotama is being spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,²⁸²

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.²⁸³

49 (1) I recall, master Gotama, engaging **Pūraṇa Kassapa** in debate, and while engaged so with me, he would avoid the issue by bringing up another, going off the topic,²⁸⁴ and showed anger and hate and discontent.²⁸⁵

49.2 But when *master Gotama is being so rudely spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,*

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.

50 (2) I recall, master Gotama, engaging **Makkhalī Gosāla** in debate, and while engaged so with me, he would avoid the issue by bringing up another, going off the topic, and showed anger and hate and discontent.

50.2 But when *master Gotama is being so rudely spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,*

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.

51 (3) I recall, master Gotama, engaging **Ajita Kesa,kambala** in debate, and while engaged so with me, he would avoid the issue by bringing up another, going off the topic, and showed anger and hate and discontent.

51.2 But when *master Gotama is being so rudely spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,*

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.

52 (4) I recall, master Gotama, engaging **Pakudha Kaccāyana** in debate, and while engaged so with me, he would avoid the issue by bringing up another, going off the topic, and showed anger and hate and discontent.

52.2 But when *master Gotama is being so rudely spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,*

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.

²⁸² *Yāvañ c’idaṃ bhoto gotamassa evaṃ āsajja āsajja vuccamānassa.* On *āsajja*, see §10.2.

²⁸³ *Upanītehi vacana-p,pathehi samudācariyamānassa, chavi,vaṇṇo c’eva pariyodāyati, mukha,vaṇṇo ca vipposādati, yathā taṃ arahato sammā,sambuddhassa.* See (1.2.12).

²⁸⁴ *So’pi mayā vādena vādaṃ samāradhho aññenaññāraṃ paṭicari, bahiddhā katharaṃ apanāmesi.* According to K N Jayatilleke, this debating fault is identical with the *nigraha,sthāna* (“occasion for censure”) of *arthāntaram* (“shifting the topic”) (*Nyāya Sūtra*, SBH ed, 5.2.1): see *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:219, 238.

²⁸⁵ *Kopaṇ ca dosaṇ ca appaccayaṇ ca pātvākāsi.* In **Bhaddalī S** (M 65), the expression applies to the reactions of a monk who constantly breaks the rules and is corrected (M 65,23/1:442), SD 56.2.

53 (5) I recall, master Gotama, engaging **Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta** in debate, and while engaged so with me, he would avoid the issue by bringing up another, going off the topic, and showed anger and hate and discontent.

53.2 But when master Gotama is being so rudely spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.

54 (6) I recall, master Gotama, engaging **Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta** in debate, and while engaged so with me, he would avoid the issue by bringing up another, [251] going off the topic, and showed anger and hate and discontent.

54.2 But when master Gotama is being so rudely spoken to, no matter how personal is the manner of speech that is directed to him,

his golden skin simply glows, and his countenance becomes radiant, just like that of the worthy [arhat], fully self-awakened one.²⁸⁶

Saccaka departs

55 Well, then, master Gotama, we now depart. We have much work, many duties."²⁸⁷

55.2 "Aggivessana, do as you deem fit."

56 Then, Saccaka, the young nirgrantha, being satisfied, rejoiced in the Blessed One's word, rose from his seat and departed.²⁸⁸

— evaṃ —

[For **Bibliography**, see the end of SD 49]

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²⁸⁶ Here, in the Sutta, Saccaka refers to each of the 6 teachers. The Skt fragment, however, depicts him only as referring to recluses and brahmins in general (Skt frag 339v1 in Liu 2009:62).

²⁸⁷ In the Skt fragment, Saccaka gives a set of similes to illustrate his defeat. The fragment also records his gaining faith in the Buddha: *tasmin khalu dharmapa[ryā]ye bhāṣyamāṇe sātyakir nirgranthī,putro buddhe'bhīprasanno dharma,saṅghe'bhīprasannaḥ* (Skt frag 339v7 in Liu 2009:62).

²⁸⁸ Comy explains that although Saccaka does not gain any spiritual attainment, or even become established in the 3 refuges, the Buddha teaches two long suttas to place in him a karmic impression (*vāsanā*) that would mature in the future. For, says Buddhaghosa, he foresees that, in due course, after the teaching is established in Sri Lanka, Saccaka would be reborn there, would go forth, master the Tipiṭaka, cultivate insight (*vipassanā*), and attain arhat-hood as the great arhat, Kāḷa Buddha, rakkhita Thera. His story is then given in some detail. (MA 293-295)