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## Sakka Vatthu

The Story of Sakra | DhA 15.8

Ee **Sakk'upaṭṭhāna Vatthu** The Story of Sakra's Ministering

Theme: Sakra's last meeting with the Buddha

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2019

### 1 Sutta summary

**The Sakka Vatthu**, the story of Sakra (DhA 15.8), is a commentarial account of the humility, service and love of Sakra, the lord of the devas, towards the ailing 80-year-old Buddha [2.1.1].<sup>1</sup> The Story comprises the following sections:

- (1) how Sakra ministers to the Buddha who is ill with dysentery during his last days [§§1-6];
- (2) how Sakra first meets the Buddha [§§7-11]; and
- (3) related teachings from the Dhammapada [§§12-15].

A survey of the significance of these sections follows [2].

### 2 Sutta significance

#### **2.1 SAKRA'S MINISTERING TO THE SICK BUDDHA [§§1-6]**

##### **2.1.1 Humility, service, love**

**2.1.1.1 The Sakka Vatthu** opens with an account of how Sakra, learning that the 80-year-old Buddha is ill with dysentery, leaves the glory and comfort of his heaven to personally minister to him [§§2-3]. Sakra insists on ministering to the Buddha *all by himself* despite the Buddha's protestation [§§4-5], and only departs after the Buddha has recovered [§6].

**2.1.1.2 The Sakka Vatthu** is a story of the lord of the devas, Sakra's **love** and **respect** for the Buddha. The reason for this is given by the Buddha as being that he removed the fear of death<sup>2</sup> in Sakra, and by instructing him Dharma, created the right conditions for Sakra's attaining streamwinning [2.2.2.2]. A **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*), it is well known, has great faith—which includes wholesome love—in the 3 jewels.<sup>3</sup> **The Sakka Vatthu**, then, is an account of Sakra's active love for the Buddha.

**2.1.1.3** Of special interest is the Buddha's remark to Sakra that **"to the devas the smell of humans smells from even a hundred yojanas is like that of carrion tied to the neck"** (*manussa, gandho joyana, - satato paṭṭhāya gale baddha, kuṇaparāṇ viya hoti*) [§5]. This is a metaphor of repulsion and avoidance as in the parable of "the well-dressed" in **the Vitakka Saṅṭhāna Sutta** (M 20) which illustrates one of the techniques of dispelling mental distraction by the metaphor of a young person, "well-dressed and fond of ornaments, would feel troubled, ashamed, disgusted<sup>4</sup> by a carcass of a snake, a dog, or a human [120] hung around his or her neck."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A summary of **Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) is also found at SD 54.8 (6.2.3).

<sup>2</sup> On Sakra's fear of death, see SD 54.8 (2.2.3.1).

<sup>3</sup> On the 4 qualities of a streamwinner, see **Ogadha S** (S 55.2), SD 3.3(4.1.4).

<sup>4</sup> *Aṭṭiyāti harāyati jigucchati*: see **Nibbidā**, SD 20.1 (2.3).

**2.1.1.4** Sakra replies that he has come to minister to the Buddha on account of the Buddha's supreme moral virtue, whose fragrance spread over a great distance ("84,000 yojanas"), that is, it reaches him in Tāvātimsa. Sakra's response reminds us of the sentiment of **the Dhammapada** verse that says:

<i>Na puppha,gandho paṭivātam eti na candanaṃ tagara,mallikā ca satañ ca gandho paṭivātam eti sabbā disā sappuriso pavāti</i>	The scent of flowers goes not against the wind, nor the scent of sandalwood, tagara <sup>6</sup> and jasmine. But the fragrance of the good goes against the wind; the true person pervades all the quarters. (Dh 54) <sup>7</sup>
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**2.1.1.5** There is another reason—even the key one—for Sakra's enthusiasm for meeting and ministering to the ill and aged Buddha. This will be **the last time** that he is able to meet the Buddha, since he will very soon pass away. Hence, Sakra does not mind having to bear with the foul human smell! We must imagine that his enthusiasm is also tinged with a deep sadness—after all, he is only a streamwinner. [2.2.2.3]

Sakra is like a celestial son who comes to perform his final duties to his spiritual parent, as a gesture of love, respect and gratitude.<sup>8</sup> This sentiment is strongly reflected in the closing verses, **the Dhammapada** verses on which the Sakka Vatthu is based [2.3]

## 2.1.2 Sutta source

**2.1.2.1** The 1<sup>st</sup> part of the Sakka Vatthu [§§1-6] is based on **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 9) account of the Buddha's being afflicted with dysentery (SD 16). The Sutta, however, records the Buddha as being attacked by **dysentery** on 2 occasions:

- (1) The 1<sup>st</sup> attack: Beḷuva,gāma (D 9,2.20-24);
- (2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> attack: Pāvā (D 9,4,20).

The Sakka Vatthu opens with stating that the Buddha is staying in "**the village of Beḷuva**" (*beḷuva.-gāma*), at a time "when the Tathagata's life-formation (*āyu,saṅkhāra*) was at an end" [§2]. Hence, it is clear that this refers to the Buddha's **1<sup>st</sup> attack of dysentery**, as related in Chapter 2 of the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta.

**2.1.2.2** The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta, however, makes no reference to Sakra's ministrations of the Buddha during his 1<sup>st</sup> dysentery attack. The Sutta only reports the following:

Then, it occurred to the Blessed One:

"It is not fitting that I should attain parinirvana without addressing my supporters and taking leave of the order of monks. I must make an effort to ward off this illness and dwell, having determined my life-force."

Then, the Blessed One made an effort to ward off the illness and dwelled, having determined his life-force. Then, the Blessed One's illness abated. (D 9,2.23), SD 9

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<sup>5</sup> *Seyyathā'pi bhikkhave itthī vā puriso vā daharo yuvā maṇḍanaka,jātiko ahi,kuṇapena vā kukkura,kuṇapena vā manussa,kuṇapena vā kaṅṭhe āsattena aṭṭiyeyya harāyeyya jiquccheyya (M 20,4.2). SD 1.6.* Cf the parable of the young person who loves grooming himself: **Parihāna S** (A 10.55,6.1), SD 43.5.

<sup>6</sup> *Tagara* is the shrub *Tabernaemontana coronaria*.

<sup>7</sup> Qu at J 3:291,14\*; Miln 333,19\*.

<sup>8</sup> See also SD 54.8 (6.2.3.3).

When we weave together the two narratives—that of the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 9) and the Dhammapāda Commentary (DhA 15.8) —we can see that while Sakka ministers to the Buddha *externally* (DhA 15.8), the Buddha himself works *internally*, using his meditation to endure his pains until he recovers (D 9). In fact, this is exactly what the Buddha does during his 2<sup>nd</sup> attack of dysentery, too [2.1.2.3].

**2.1.2.3** The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta recounts the Buddha’s 2<sup>nd</sup> attack of dysentery. After taking the meal-offering by Cunda the smith, “a serious illness arose in him [the Buddha], **severe pains with bloody diarrhoea**, with sharp pains as if he were about to die.<sup>9</sup> But he endured all this mindfully and fully aware, and without complaint.” (D 9,4.20/2:127 f). On recovering, he proceeds with the monks to Kusināra. Sakka does not appear here at all.

## 2.2 SAKKA’S 1<sup>ST</sup> MEETING WITH THE BUDDHA [§§7-11]

**2.2.1 Sakka’s love for the Buddha.** When the monks spoke admiringly of Sakka’s love and devotion to the Buddha, he explains Sakka’s wholesome attitude, thus:

- (1) On account of the Buddha’s teaching him, Sakka is able to attain **streamwinning**, even as he listens to him [§8].
- (2) Sakka first meets the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave through the intercession of Pañca,sikha, the celestial minstrel [§9].

Both these events are recorded in full in **the Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21). Interestingly, the Buddha mentions the spiritual event *first*, followed by the social event, that is, Sakka *first* meets the Buddha, and *then*, attains streamwinning and a new rebirth. [2.2.2]

### 2.2.2 Sakka’s 1<sup>st</sup> meeting and last meeting with the Buddha

**2.2.2.1 The Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 31) details the first meeting between Sakka and the Buddha in the Inda,sāla cave [§9], where the Buddha is meditating. Sakka, fearing that the Buddha may not want to meet with him, gets his minstrel, Pañca,sikha (one of the Buddha’s favourite attendants) [§9] to intercede on his behalf. When Sakka meets the Buddha, Sakka relates to him how he has been keeping up his Dharma practice.

The Buddha is impressed and invites Sakka to ask him any questions he wishes. The Buddha teaches and Sakka listens attentively—just then, **Sakka’s lifespan ends**: he is at once reborn into a new lease of his Sakka-state. It is unlikely that anyone notices this, but clearly the Buddha would have known.<sup>10</sup>

**2.2.2.2 The Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 31) gives the following chronology regarding Sakka’s spiritual growth and rebirth:<sup>11</sup>

**The Sakka,pañha Sutta** (D 21) on Sakka’s streamwinning and rebirth:

§2.7.10 Sakka declares himself a streamwinner (the 1<sup>st</sup> time): this is his streamwinning path-attainment (not mentioned so in the Sutta). [§8]

<sup>9</sup> This is the second attack of dysentery. The first attack mentioned at §2.23. On whether the Buddha was *poisoned*, see (13.1).

<sup>10</sup> See **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.7.10, 2.8.2, 2.10.4).

<sup>11</sup> On Sakka’s streamwinning, see SD 54.8 (1.2.4).

§2.8.2 Sakra's death and immediate rebirth as Sakra again. [§8]

§2.10.4 Sakra declares himself a streamwinner (the 2<sup>nd</sup> time): this is his streamwinning fruition [§10].

Interestingly, **the Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) actually mentions all these 3 events, and states that the 3<sup>rd</sup> (D 21,2.10.4) is his streamwinning fruition. As such, the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of streamwinning clearly refers to his streamwinning path-attainment. In between, Sakra dies a streamwinner and does not fall into a lower realm, but is reborn at once as Sakra again.

In the case of most other devas who have *not* attained the path (at least being streamwinners), they would be troubled by the foreknowledge and visions of their impending death. On account of their unwholesome last thought, they would fall into a subhuman realm, even hell itself, as stated in **the (Catukka) Puggalā Sutta 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

**2.2.2.3 The Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) is important because it records **the last meeting** between the Buddha and Sakra. As already noted, Sakra's key reason for his great enthusiasm in ministering to the ill and aged Buddha is simply because this will be *the last time* he is able to see the Buddha [2.1.1.4]. At the very moment of the Blessed One's passing into parinirvana, Sakra—says **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 9)—Sakra utters this stanza:<sup>12</sup>

*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā  
uppāda,vaya,dhammino  
uppajjitvā nirujjhanti  
tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho*

Impermanent, alas, are formations!  
It is their nature to rise and fall:  
having arisen, they cease to be—  
happy it is when they are stilled!

This famous verse, spoken by **Sakra**, is an ancient remnant from the teaching of the Buddha just before ours, that is, Kassapa. It is said that only Sakra remembers it, and now he transmits to us this verse that is the heart of the Buddha Dhamma, a reflection on **impermanence** in the manner of the 4 noble truths. On this account, this verse is famously recited by Buddhists as the highlight of the last rites for the dead.

## 2.3 RELATED TEACHINGS [§12-15]

### 2.3.1 The foolish and the wise

**2.3.1.1** At the root of **the Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) are 3 Dhammapada verses: **Dh 206-208**.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, these verses have a common theme of associating with the wise, which reminds us of the very first 2 supreme blessings (*maṅgala uttama*), that is, not associating with the foolish (*asevanā ca bālānaṃ*), and associating with the wise (*paṇḍitānaṃ ca sevanā*).<sup>14</sup> These are the nascent steps to an effective training.

**2.3.1.2 The wise** (*dhīra, pañña*)—according to **Dh 206**—are the noble saints (*ariya*), that is, the streamwinner, the once-returned, the non-returned and the arhat. They are “wise” in the sense that they understand the nature of true reality at various liberating levels, and that they are liberated at various

<sup>12</sup> D 16,6.10/2:157 = D 17,2.17/2:199 = S 21\*/1.11/1:6, S 609\*/6.15/1:158, S 776\*/9.6/1:200 = S 15.20/2:193 (Buddha) = J 95/1:392 = Thā 1159 = DhA 1.6/1:71; DA 3:748; MA 1:235. This famous stanza concludes **Mahā Suddassana S** (D 17,2.17.4/2:199), SD 36.12.

<sup>13</sup> On where **Dh 206-208** were spoken, see SD 54.8 (6.2.3.5).

<sup>14</sup> Khp 5,6 = Sn 2.4 (Sn 258), SD 101.5.

levels. Associating with them will inspire and prepare us to reach and win the path of awakening ourself, as Sakra himself has done.

**The foolish** (*bāla*) are, conversely, those who have not attained the path at all, the outsiders (*bāhira*) who are still worldlings (*puthujjana*). They are “**outsiders**” in the sense that they have no vision of true reality at all, and are, as such, really “**blind**” (*andha*), fallen into ignorance and craving, fettered to views.

They are “worldlings” in the sense they are caught up with the crowd, with *manyness*—those whose worth is *measured* by the size of their crowd and the crowdedness of their lives. Fettered to craving, they run after *numbers* and *clinging* to self and others—because they find no real satisfaction in whatever they think, say or do. They are hollow persons (*mogha, purisa*), unable to hold anything good.

### 2.3.2 “Just like meeting relatives”

**2.3.2.1** If we are to select a line pointing to the essence of the closing Dhammapada verses, it would be the last line of **Dh 207**: “just like meeting with relatives” (*ñātīnaṃ va samāgamo*, Dh 207f). This line characterizes the interconnection between the Buddha and Sakra—or the Buddha and any disciple—they are like relatives; indeed, they are *more* than relatives: their friendship is in the Dharma, immeasurable in its truth and beauty. In short, this is **spiritual friendship** (*kalyāṇa mittatā*).<sup>15</sup>

**The truth** is that Sakra benefitted greatly from associating with the Buddha, especially listening to his teachings. The Buddha explains that Sakra respects him—seeing him as he truly is—because it is on the Buddha’s account that Sakra, “having attained streamwinning, gave up his old Sakra-state and gained his young Sakra-state” [§8]. Sakra’s **faith** in the Buddha brings him to the start of the path of awakening and a new life in his Sakra-state as the lord of the Tāvātimsa devas and Dharma exemplar to others.

**The beauty** of this connection is that Sakra, in his gratitude and devotion to the Buddha, is like a celestial son who comes to perform his final filial duties to his spiritual parent, out of love, respect and gratitude.<sup>16</sup> This, then, is his faith expressed in wholesome action.

In short, this is a beautiful example of when kindness is acknowledged and joyfully reciprocated (*kataññū kata, veditā*). The acknowledged kindness done is the “truth” of the connection; the joyful reciprocation is the “beauty” of it all. Sakra is one who knows the Buddha’s kindness and joyfully reciprocates it: he is one who is *kataññū kata, vedī*.<sup>17</sup>

**2.3.2.2** The wise (*dhīra*) and happy (*sukha*)<sup>18</sup>—those who see and live the Buddha Dharma—are like **relatives** to one another. Indeed, the Buddha points out this universal biological or existential reality: we have journeyed in samsara (*saṃsāra*) (this cycle of births and deaths, rebirths and redeaths) for so long that “it is difficult to find a being ... who has not before been your **mother** ... your **father** ... your **brother** ... your **sister** ... your **son** ... your **daughter**.”<sup>19</sup> These are our common natural bonds in life, but we often forget this, even those to whom we are immediately close, here and now, our own mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter.<sup>20</sup>

When we understand the Dharma and learn to let go of a narcissistic self-notion, an “I” dependent on others, feeding on their attention and approval. We begin to see how we are all like *islands* in the floods of existence, the ocean of samsara. But when these waters are drained away, we see that we are

<sup>15</sup> See **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1.

<sup>16</sup> See also SD 54.8 (6.2.3.3).

<sup>17</sup> **Kataññū Kata, vedī S** (A 2.11.2), SD 3.1(1.4.4).

<sup>18</sup> The wise (*dhīra*) (Dh 207e); the happy (*sukha*) (Dh 206b).

<sup>19</sup> See respectively: **Mātā S** (S 15.14), SD 57.2; **Pitā S** (S 15.15), SD 57.3; **Bhātā S** (S 15.16), SD 57.4; **Bhaginī S** (S 15.17), SD 57.5; **Putta S** (S 15.18), SD 57.6; **Dhītā S** (S 15.19), SD 57.7.

<sup>20</sup> See SD 54.3c (3.3.2.2).

all **peaks** of a single earth. Yet, even flooded over by the waters, we are still peaks connected together by a common ground. The Buddha Dharma helps us see this fundamental and natural interbeing of all sentient life. This is the essence and spirit of Buddhist **ecology**.

**2.3.2.3** The Dhammapada saying “**Trust is the best of relatives**” (*vissāsa, paramā ñātī*, Dh 204c) gives an excellent overview of our social and spiritual interbeing and connection with one another, especially when we stand in the same Buddha Dharma. On a simple daily level, we can say that *vissāsa* is a *social* manifestation of respect (*gāraṇa*) for and faith (*saddhā*) in one another—accepting ourselves as we are and happily associating by way of learning and wisdom. To live, then, is to love; to love is to learn; to learn is to be wise; to be wise is to be truly free.<sup>21</sup>

We can now see how *vissāsa* (usually translated as “trust”) has the twin aspects of respect and love. Proper **respect** for someone means *accepting* another as he is and doing so with lovingkindness, that is, wishing him well and happy, too. When this respect is expressed in *action*—especially through personal service or acts of charity—that benefit the other in wholesome ways—this is **love**. This English word is used here in a broad sense of both worldly love (*pema*) and spiritual lovingkindness (*mettā*).

In this sense, it is said: “**Trust is the best of relatives**” (Dh 204c). In other words, the connection is not or not merely *biological* but broader, treating others as being part of a single universal spiritual family like the monastic sangha.<sup>22</sup>

**2.3.2.4** The Sutta’s closing section comprises **Dh 206-207** [§§14-15] which are “instructive” verses. Having explained the goodness and benefits of associating with the wise, the Buddha concludes this by exhorting us to be “**steady and wise**” (*dhīrañ ca paññañ ca*) [Dh 208a]. Both the Pali adjectives *dhīra* and *pañña* have the meaning of “(being) wise.” *Dhīra* also has the meaning “firm” in the sense of being “self-reliant,” that is, mentally focused and ready for wisdom; in short, this is mental diligence. *Pañña* is an adjective with a broad sense of wisdom arising from Dharma training and this is *liberating*.

In fact, the last Dhammapada verse is just that: the Buddha’s call that we at once take to the path of training. We should ourselves be “**learned, wise and steady**” [Dh 208a], that is, to search the suttas, understand them to better our meditation so that our mind is steady and our heart radiant. Underlying all this is our practice of **moral virtue**, knowing what to *do* and *not* to do (“**dutiful**”), and doing what is right: we can then be said to be “**noble**” like the arhats and saints [Dh 208b]. We should then each aspire to be a “**true noble individual**” [Dh 208c], that is, one who keeps to the path of awakening.

If that is difficult at the moment, then we should—like **the moon keeping to its celestial orbit**—follow such noble individuals to learn about the path; or, better, by aspiring ourselves to be a streamwinner in this life itself. [Dh 208d]

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<sup>21</sup> On trust and the family, see SD 38.4 (4.2).

<sup>22</sup> See also SD 54.8 (2.1.2.2).

# Sakka Vatthu

## The Story of Sakra

DhA 15.8

1 *Sādhū dassanan'ti*. The Teacher gave this teaching while he was staying at the village of **Beḷuva**<sup>23</sup> with reference to **Sakra**. [269]

### Sakra ministers to the Buddha

2 For, when **the Tathagata's life-formation**<sup>24</sup> was at an end and he was suffering from an attack of **dysentery**, Sakra, the king of the devas,<sup>25</sup> became aware of it and thought, "I must go before the Teacher to do my duties in ministering to him in his sickness!"

3 Then, he left his own body, measuring 2 gavutas (three-quarters of a yojana) high, approached the Teacher, saluted him, and with his own hands massaged the Teacher's feet.

4 When the teacher asked, "Who is this?" he replied, "Bhante, it is I, Sakra."

"Why have you come here?"

"To minister to you in your sickness, bhante."

5 "Sakra, to the devas the smell of humans even from a hundred yojanas<sup>26</sup> is like that of carrion tied to the throat.<sup>27</sup> [270] Go now! I have monks who will minister to me in my sickness."

5.2 Bhante, from a distance of 84,000 yojanas, I smelt the fragrance of your virtue, and so I have come here. I alone will minister to you in your sickness."

6 Sakra allowed no one else even so much as to touch **the chamber-pot** containing the excrement from the Teacher's body. He himself carried the chamber-pot out on his own head, taking it without the slightest sign of wincing his face,<sup>28</sup> acting as though he were holding a vessel of fragrance.<sup>29</sup> This was how Sakra ministered to the Teacher, departing only when the Teacher had recovered.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Beḷuva (*gāmaka* or *gamaka* means "hamlet"; *pāda,gāma*, SA 3:201,28) was located south of Vesālī (MA 3:12,-24, spelt *beluva*), just outside her city-gates (SA 3:201,27-28). It is likely that it is also called Veḷuva, where Anurudha died (Tha 919).

<sup>24</sup> "Life-formation," *āyu,saṅkhāra*, SD 9 (9.2.3). Here, however, it simply refers to the Buddha's life; but see the details [2.1.2].

<sup>25</sup> "Sakra, king of the devas," *sakko deva,rājā*, instead of the usual "Sakra, lord of the devas" (*sakko devānaṃ indo*).

<sup>26</sup> A *yojana* or league is about 11.25 km or 7 m. Hence, 100 yojanas is about 1,125 km or 700 mi.

<sup>27</sup> See (2.1.1.3).

<sup>28</sup> "Without the slightest sign of wincing his face," *mukha,saṅkocana,mattarṃ pi na akasi*.

<sup>29</sup> The pious may read such noble accounts as an inspiration for serving monastics in the humblest way, but the real message is that we should care for the sick (incl our parents and others) to the best of our ability and the noblest of ways. Ministering to worthy monastics is, of course, twin blessing: the good renunciant deserves such care, and we accumulate great good karma doing so.

<sup>30</sup> "Had recovered," *phāsuka,kāle*.

## Sakra's love and gratitude

7 The monks began this talk:

“Oh, what love Sakra has for the Teacher! To think that Sakra should leave behind his celestial glory to carry on his own head the Teacher's chamber-pot containing the excrement from the Teacher's body, without the slightest sign of wincing his face, acting as though he were holding a vessel of fragrance!”

8 The Teacher, hearing their talk, said,

“What are you saying, monks? It isn't strange at all that **Sakra**, the king of the devas, should show me such love. For, it was on my account that this Sakra, king of the devas, having attained **streamwinning**, gave up his old Sakra-state and gained his young Sakra-state.<sup>31</sup>

## Sakra's 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with the Buddha

9 For, Sakra, terrified with the fear of death, had come to me, preceded by the celestial musician, **Pañca,sikha**,<sup>32</sup> and sat down in the midst of the devas in **the Inda,sāla cave**.<sup>33</sup>

I removed his suffering, saying to him:<sup>34</sup>

*Puccha vāsava maṃ pañhaṃ  
yaṃ kiñci manas'icchasi  
tassa tass'eva pañhassa  
ahaṃ antaṃ karomi te'ti.*

Question me, Vāsava, [ask me a question],<sup>35</sup>  
whatever your heart desires.  
To that and every question, too,  
I will make an end of it!<sup>36</sup>

10 Having dispelled his suffering, I taught him the Dharma. At the conclusion of the teaching, 14 crores<sup>37</sup> of beings attained breakthrough into the Dharma,<sup>38</sup> and Sakra himself, even as he sat there, gained **the fruition of streamwinning**, and became **the young Sakra**.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ayaṃ sakko hi deva,rājā maṃ nissāya jara,sakka,bhāvaṃ hitvā sotāpanno hutvā taruṇa,sakka,bhāvaṃ patto.* Translating the absolutes (*hitvā ... hutvā*) first—but in reverse sequence—then the past part (*patto*). He first attains the path of streamwinning. On reversal of Pali verbal phrases in translation, see (Ceto,vimutti) **Anuruddha S** (M 127,8.1), SD 54.10; SD 54.12 (2.2.1); SD 54.13 (3.1.9.2); SD 54.8 (1.2.1 Chapter 2). For his attaining the fruition of streamwinning, see §10.

<sup>32</sup> On Pañca,sikha, see SD 54.8 (4.1).

<sup>33</sup> This is a ref to **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21), SD 54.8. On the Inda,sāla cave, see SD 54.8 (1.5.1).

<sup>34</sup> This refers to **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21/2:263-289); this verse is **§48\***, which closes the Sutta's 1<sup>st</sup> recital (ch 1), SD 54.8.

<sup>35</sup> We may tr this Pali line *literally*, “Ask me a question, Vāsava!” We can then take “question” (*pañha*) as an accountable noun, so that this is “The discourse on Sakka's question (or questioning).” Cf Malay for “question,” *per-tanyaan*, which can be singular or an abstract noun.

<sup>36</sup> This verse is **§48\*** in **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,1.13.2), SD 54.8.

<sup>37</sup> 14 crores (*cuddasannaṃ pāṇa,koṭīnaṃ*) (DhA 3:270,23). A crore (*koṭī*) is 10,000,000. Hence, the total is some 140 M! But **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.10.15), referring to the same event, mentions only “80,0 deities.” The huge number above refers to “beings” (*pāna*), ie, deities and others.

<sup>38</sup> “Breakthrough into Dharma” (*dhammābhisamaya*), as used here, then, has a broader sense, referring to any of the 4 stages of sainthood, and incl those who have understood the truths but did not attain any of the stages. Hence, the huge figure.

<sup>39</sup> The “young Sakra” (*taruṇa sakka*) refers to his new birth (his present life): this moment of rebirth is recorded in **§49** of **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.8.2/2:285), SD 54.8. Further, this para also qu D 21: respectively, §2.10.15 (conclusion) & §2.10.4: see also SD 54.8 (1.2.4.1).



11 Thus I was of great help to him, and it isn't strange at all that Sakra, the king of the devas, should show me such love.

### The Buddha's closing verses

12 For, bhikshus, happy it is to see the noble ones,<sup>40</sup> [271] happy it is, too, to live with them in the same place. However, it is suffering indeed to be with fools!  
Having said this, he uttered these verses:<sup>41</sup>

13 *Sādhu dassanaṃ ariyānaṃ  
sannivāso sadā sukhā  
adassanena bālanāṃ  
niccam eva sukhī siyā* Good is the seeing of the noble saints,  
ever happy it is associating with them.  
Not seeing the foolish,  
one would always be happy. (Dh 206)

14 *Bāla,saṅgata,cārī hi  
dīgham addhāna socati  
dukkho bālehi saṃvāso  
amitten'eva sabbadā  
dhīro ca sukha,samvāso<sup>42</sup>  
ñātīnaṃ va samāgamo.* For, one who moves in the company of fools  
grieves for a long time.  
Painful is living with [being close to] the foolish,  
truly like being with an enemy always.  
But it is happiness to live with [being close to] the wise,  
just like meeting with relatives. (Dh 207)

15 Therefore,

*dhīraṇ ca paññaṇ ca bahussutaṇ ca  
dhorayha,sīlaṇ vata,vantaṇ āriyaṇ  
taṇ tādisaṇ sappurisaṇ sumedhaṇ  
bhajetha nakkhatta,pathaṇ'va candimā* being learned, wise and steady,<sup>43</sup>  
engaged in moral virtue, dutiful, noble—  
such a one is a true individual, wise,  
let one follow as the moon keeps to its starry path.  
(Dh 208)

[Commentary has been omitted.]

At the end of the teaching, many attained the fruition of streamwinning.

— evaṃ —

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<sup>40</sup> The noble individuals are the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats.

<sup>41</sup> These verses are also at SD 24.6b (5.5).

<sup>42</sup> As suggested by V Lesný, it is possible that *dhīro* stands for *dhīre* as in Skt *dhīraiḥ* ("A new reading of Dhammapada 207," JPTS 1924-1927:235-36); cf *bāle*, "the foolish" (pl) (Dh 61). Uv 30.26 reads *dhīrais tu sukha,samvāso*, "There is happiness being close to the wise." See O H de A Wijesekera (*Syntax of the Cases in the Pāli Nikāyas*, 1993:11) & Dh:N 113 n207.

<sup>43</sup> There is poetic licence here in reversing the sequence of these 3 qualities. The tr keeps to the normal sequence for easy reading to the modern eye. On reversal of Pali verbal phrases in translation, see §8 n at the end.