

# 10a

## Sārandada Sutta

The Discourse at Sārandada | A 7.19 (A:Be 7.21)

or (Satta) Saṅgha Aparihāniya, dhamma Sutta

The (Sevens) Discourse on the Conditions for Non-decline

Theme: The 7 conditions for social progress

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2019

### 1 Sutta summary and significance

#### 1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

##### 1.1.1 The 7 conditions for non-decline

The **Sārandada Sutta** (A 7.19) is a short record of the Buddha's instruction to the Licchavis on how the Vajji clan will "not decline" (*aparihāniya*), that is, will prosper—exactly, how they will *not* be conquered by Ajāta,sattu.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha lists 7 conditions which will correct their weaknesses and enhance their strengths.

##### 1.1.2 The Kaliṅgāra Sutta

United in fellowship, they were strong, but when an external influence (by way of Vassa,kāra) [1.2.2] infiltrated their community, they would slowly weaken. **The Kaliṅgāra Sutta** (S 20.8) mentions signs of this moral weakening amongst the Vajjis. They were diligent and determined, using wooden blocks as pillows and rising before the sun. Then, they slackened, sleeping on cotton-filled pillows, and rising after the sun.<sup>2</sup> In time, they lost all the conditions for non-decline, becoming indolent and disunited. This is when they would be subjugated by an outside force, that is, Ajāta,sattu. [1.2.2.3]

##### 1.1.3 The Buddha as oracle

**1.1.3.1** This same teaching—on the 7 conditions for non-decline—is alluded to *twice* in the opening narrative of **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), which opens with the sutta narrator informing us:

"Now at that time, the rajah Ajāta,sattu Vedehi,putta of Magadha, wished to wage war against the Vajjis."<sup>3</sup>

Ajāta,sattu then instructed his chief minister, Vassa,kāra, to consult the Buddha by informing him of Ajāta,sattu's plans, adding:

"And whatever the Blessed One should answer you, bear it well in mind and report to me—for the Tathāgatas [thus come ones] do not speak falsely."<sup>4</sup>

**1.1.3.2** We should read **Ajāta,sattu's perception of the Buddha**—that he "does not speak falsely" [1.1.3.1]—in the light of the Buddha's own declarations such as, thus: "As he speaks, so he does; as he does, so he speaks" (*yathā,vādī tathā,kārī, yathā,kārī tathā,vadī*).<sup>5</sup> The Buddha always speaks the truth; otherwise, he would be silent. He would never lie, even when speaking in parables.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.4/2:74 f), SD 9.

<sup>2</sup> S 20.8/2:267 f.

<sup>3</sup> D 16,1.2/2:72 (SD 9).

<sup>4</sup> D 16,1.2.2/2:72 (SD 9).

It is not difficult to understand that Ajāta,sattu was indirectly consulting the Buddha to learn about the strength of the Vajjīs, since the Buddha was himself a kshatriya (from the warrior clan) and knew the Vajjīs very well. Furthermore, he sent his crafty Machiavellian chief minister, Vassakāra<sup>7</sup> [3], to consult the Buddha with just this aim in mind.<sup>8</sup> [1.2.2.2]

## 1.2 THE BUDDHA’S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE VAJJĪS

### 1.2.1 A nation’s solidarity

**1.2.1.1 The Sārandada Sutta** (A 7.19) is clearly the provenance (source) for the same teaching that recurs in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16).<sup>9</sup> The former was probably given not too long before the latter as part of the Buddha’s final instructions in the months before his final passing away. This was also uncertain political times, since Ajātasattu was planning to invade and conquer Vajjī country. It was a time when the ancient outlying republics were weakening and being absorbed into the growing kingdoms, which would grow into the first Indian empire.

**1.2.1.2** Ajāta,sattu, after letting his own father, Bimbisāra, die slowly and painfully in prison, desired to expand Magadha. He resolved to conquer the Vajjī republic. One of his reasons for conquering the Vajjīs, it seemed, was his fear of his foster-brother Abhaya<sup>10</sup> who had Licchavī blood. The real reason or palpable cause for his belligerent ambition is explained by Buddhaghosa.

Buddhaghosa, in his commentary to the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 16) tells us of a port-village on the Gaṅges, extending over one yojana (about 11.25 km = 7 miles).<sup>11</sup> Half of the territory belonged to Ajātasattu, and the other half to the Licchavīs. Nearby was a mountain, from which much fragrant substance (*gandha,bhaṇḍa*) flowed out of the cliff’s foot.

While Ajātasattu was making preparations to claim his portion of this material, the Licchavīs would go before him and remove it all. This happened on several occasions, and the frustrated Ajātasattu vowed vengeance.

### 1.2.2 Ajāta,sattu’s Trojan horse

**1.2.2.1** Ajāta,sattu decided to exploit the Buddha’s knowledge as a strategy to ensure his chances of success. Making no secret of his plans, he sent his minister **Vassakāra** to consult the Buddha on this matter. This dramatic meeting, in fact, opens **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16). After the opening greetings, Vassa,kāra tells the Buddha (who is nearly 80 years old then):

<sup>5</sup> D 19,11/2:224, 26/2:229, 29,29/3:135; A 4.23/2:24; It 4.13/122; Sn 357 (Nigrodha,kappa); J 326/3:89; MA 1:51. See also SD 29.6a (7.3.2); SD 55.2 (2.2.2.4).

<sup>6</sup> In Mahāyāna and later Buddhism, lying seems to be justified when it is used to good ends (the end justifies the means) (such as in the parable of the burning house in the polemical work, Saddharma,pūṇḍarīka Sūtra). The Buddha rejects such an exception as deviating from the truth; hence, immoral: SD 30.8 (5.3); SD 10.16 (3.5.3); SD 43.6 (2.3.4).

<sup>7</sup> DA:A 4 n5.

<sup>8</sup> See DA:A 16 n3, 17 n4. On Ajāta,sattu’s reason for conquering the Vajjīs, see SD 33.5 (1.2.2).

<sup>9</sup> D 16,1.2.2/2:72 f (SD 9).

<sup>10</sup> Abhaya Rāja,kumara is sometimes confused with Licchavī Abhaya. Abhaya Rāja,kumara (the royal prince) was Bimbisāra’s son by Paduma,vatī of Ujjenī, while Licchavī Abhaya is from Vesālī, and is influenced by Nigaṇṭha Nāta,-putta’s teaching: see **(Tika) Nigaṇṭha S** (A 3.74/1:220 f).

<sup>11</sup> A *yojana* (technically, the “greater yojana”) or a league (11.25 km or 7 mi = 4 *gāvutas*): **Magha V** (DhA 2.7,50), SD 54.22; **Pahārāda S** (A 8.19,9.1 n), SD 45.18; SD 47.8 (2.4.4.1).

“The rajah Ajātasattu Vedehi,putta of Magadha, desires to wage war against the Vajjīs. He says thus:

‘Powerful as the Vajjīs may be, glorious as the Vajjīs may be, I shall uproot the Vajjīs, I shall destroy the Vajjīs, I shall bring upon them loss and misfortune!’” (D 16,1.3.3), SD 9

Since this is political matter, unrelated to Dharma, the Buddha does not address it, not directly anyway. Instead, the Buddha addresses Ānanda, who is standing behind him, fanning him. Vassa,kāra is, of course, able to hear him.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the Buddha asks Ānanda, listing each of the 7 conditions for non-decline, whether the Vajjīs duly observe them. Ānanda confirms it each time that they do. Hence, “the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline.” (D 16,1.4), SD 9

**1.2.2.2** Immediately after his dialogue with Ānanda (which is actually for Vassa,kāra to hear as a Dharma teaching), the Buddha addresses Vassa,kāra directly. The Buddha informs him that during his stay at **the Sārandada shrine**, outside Vesālī, he has taught these 7 conditions for non-decline to the Vajjīs. Hearing this, Vassa,kāra responds:

“Master Gotama, if the Vajjīs were accomplished in even *just one* of these conditions for non-decline, their growth is to be expected, not their decline, what to say of 7 conditions for non-decline!

Master Gotama, there is no way that the Vajjīs can be overcome by any war of the rajah Ajātasattu Vedehi,putta of Magadha, other than by persuasion, other than by internal discord.<sup>13</sup>” (D 16,1.5.2), SD 9. [1.2.2.4]

At least 2 important points should be noted here. Firstly, the Buddha introduces the **teaching** on the 7 conditions for decline (*aparīhāniya, dhamma*) to Vassa,kāra in his Socratic dialogue with Ānanda. This is to impress on Vassa,kāra that he teaches progress, communal and personal. (Hence, the Buddha speaks to Ānanda, but the student or audience here is, of course, Vassakāra, who is a crafty politician.)

**1.2.2.3** Secondly, the Buddha confirms that he has personally taught his same set of Dharma to the Vajjīs themselves at the Sārandada shrine—as recorded in **the Sārandada Sutta** (A 7.19). This is a very diplomatic reply, even a subtle warning to Ajāta,sattu, not to attack the Vajjīs!<sup>14</sup>

Buddhaghosa explains that the Buddha’s “intercession” (teaching the Vajjīs the 7 conditions) gives them a grace period of some 3 years before Ajāta,sattu conquers them. During that period, the Vajjīs will be able to build up their spiritual strength, thus:

<sup>12</sup> In the Chin version, the Buddha answers Vassa,kāra directly, “You cannot win!” Then, he asks Ānanda whether or not the Vajjīs keep up the 7 conditions for social welfare, so that the brahmin overhears it (T1.160b28). In such secular matters, however, it is unlikely that the Buddha would give such a definite answer.

<sup>13</sup> (Underscored words:) *aññatra upalāpanāya aññatra mithu, bheda*. **Upalāpana** (from vb *upalāpeti*) (D 2:76,4; A 4,21,1; J 4:469,24; Miln 1:17,4; Sadd 529,4); Comy explains as “saying, ‘Enough with conflict; let’s have unity here! Then, offering elephants, horses, chariots, silver, gold and so on in the name of goodwill (~ā nāma alam vivādena, idāni samaggā homāti hatthi, assa, ratha, hiranna, suvann’ādāni pesetvā saṅgha, karaṇam. DA 522,4). See CPD: upalāpana[a/ā]; DP sv); Johnston 1931:572-575. **Mithu, bheda**, lit, “the creation of bilateral dissension” (D 2:76,4; J 4:184,23\*), cognate with Skt *mithobheda* (see Kern: *Toev* 1.165 & Johnston, “Notes on some Pali words,” JRAS 1931:573). Similar confusion between *mithu* (Skt *mithu*, “falsely, wrongly”) and *mitho* (Skt *mithaḥ*, “mutually, reciprocally”) at Sn 825, 882 (*mithu aññam-aññam*). See OberliesPG 670 (Ann 34a); also DA:A 16 n2.

<sup>14</sup> Another famous occasion when the Buddha prevented a battle was one between the Sakyas and the Koliyas over the waters of the river Rohinī: see **the Rohinī incident**, SD 54.4 (3).

“But if I spoke (teach them the 7 conditions), it will take 3 years for him (Ajāta,sattu) to break up their harmony and capture them. Even such a short duration of life is important. For, living, they will each do merit as a basis for their own salvation.”<sup>15</sup>

**1.2.2.4** Yet, Vassa,kāra’s closing words regarding the Vajjīs are ominous [1.2.2.2]. He concludes that the Vajjīs can only be subjugated by “**persuasion**” or by “**internal discord**” [1.2.2.2]. This last phrase is especially significant, since, this is exactly what the Machiavellian Vassakāra will use in due course to weaken the Vajjīs. Persuasion (*upalāpana*) refers to either diplomacy or bribery, usually both.

Sowing the seeds of “**internal discord**” is a more subtle technique by way of false friendliness, false speech, sweet talk, double talk, frivolous chatter, and, above all, divisive speech<sup>16</sup> (in other words, bad friendship and wrong speech).<sup>17</sup> In short, by subterfuge and sabotage—the colonial method of “divide and conquer”<sup>18</sup>—with Vassa-kāra as the “flint” or “firestone,” an agent provocateur, to spark the fire or war and conquest.<sup>19</sup>

**The Vassakāra Sutta** (A 7.20) relates how Vassakāra later conspires with Ajāta,sattu, who feigned to expel him from his kingdom on the charge that he favoured the Vajjīs in the assembly. Pretending to have barely escaped with his life, he crossed the Ganges. The Vajjīs were suspicious at first, but he convinced them otherwise. Then, he was welcomed by them (just as the ancient Trojans took the Greeks’ wooden horse into their city), they even trusted Vassakāra enough to appoint him as the teacher to their own children!<sup>20</sup>

Vassakāra, through his cunning, caused the children to quarrel amongst themselves, and the conflict later spread amongst the elders. Within 3 years (since the Buddha’s last visit to Vesālī)<sup>21</sup> that Vassa,kāra spent with the Vajjīs, he successfully sowed the seeds of distrust and discord amongst them. However, external threat alone was insufficient to defeat the Vajjīs, especially while they still fostered the conditions for non-decline amongst themselves.

**1.2.2.5** Hence, it took 16 years for the Vajjīs to slowly but surely weaken themselves. The Buddha’s teaching and warning were gradually forgotten (especially since he was dead). The Vajjīs began to show signs of decline, as described in **the Kaliṅgara Sutta** (S 20.8): Over the decade, they became indolent, luxurious and lax [1.1.2].

**The Licchavī Vatthu** (DhA 16.4) relates how the Licchavī youths fought one another and shed blood merely on account of jealousy over a courtesan. Once they were god-like, now, bloodied, they were carried off undignifiedly in stretchers.<sup>22</sup> Then, a plague and drought ravaged Vesālī.<sup>23</sup>

These various conditions tested and weakened the Vajjīs in an almost unnoticeable manner. As the years passed, the Vajjī situation only worsened. After 16 years, they became so weak and disunited that Ajāta,sattu easily overran the country (DA 522-524).

<sup>15</sup> DA 2:522,12-16 (DA:A 17). For a similar account, see AA 4:16,

<sup>16</sup> More exactly, this is lying about one party to another, sowing the seeds of discord, instigating them to break up, quarrel or fight (Malay, “batu api,” lit, “to flint”; Indonesian “adu domba,” goad sheep to fight).

<sup>17</sup> See **Bad friendship**, SD 64.17; on wrong speech, see SD 10.16 (3.3).

<sup>18</sup> From Latin, *divide et impera*, lit, “divide and command.” See Machiavelli, Book 6 of *The Art of War* (1521). Similar to *divide ut regnes*, “divide to rule,” but this is usu when a people or country is strategically divided to easier govern them. Technically, the former is used in battle, while the latter in governing.

<sup>19</sup> D 16,1.5.2/2:76,5 (SD 9)

<sup>20</sup> A 7.20/4:17-21; Ajāta,sattu’s subterfuge in sending Vassa,kāra to sow discord amongst the Vajjīs is also related in the Mahā,parinibbāna S Comy (DA 2:522-524).

<sup>21</sup> DA 2:522,13-16.

<sup>22</sup> DhA 16.4/3:279 f (on Dh 214); cf VA 1:284.

<sup>23</sup> See Intro to **Ratana S** (Khp 6/3-6 = Sn 2.1/222\*-238\*/39-42): KhpA 160-165 = SnA 1:278.

### 1.2.3 Uncertain times: the rise of empires

**1.2.3.1 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), as we have noted, opens rather dramatically, with king Ajāta,sattu wishing to invade and conquer the neighbouring Vajjī republic [1.1.3.1]. Buddhaghosa tells us that, the Buddha, knowing this, intervenes indirectly by teaching the 7 conditions for non-decline to the Licchavīs, who form the majority of the Vajjī confederacy.

With the Buddha teaching the Vajjīs the 7 conditions, and they, keeping to them, consolidated themselves by strengthening their weaknesses and enhancing their strengths for nearly 2 decades after the Buddha before being conquered by Ajāta,sattu [1.2.2.3]. The fall of the Vajjīs was a part of a larger pattern of growing imperialism in north India.

Early in the life of the Buddha's life, there were already signs that republics of northern India were weakening due to the rise of the kingdoms. When the newly renounced Gotama meets the young prince Bimbi-

sāra, Gotama introduced himself as one "settled amongst the Kosalas" (*kosalesu nīketino*; ie, Pasenadi's realm). In **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), the Buddha states that the Sakyas are vassals of Kosala.<sup>24</sup>

Since Ajāta,sattu's conquest of the Vajjīs, their most important tribe, the Licchavīs, remained subdued for many centuries. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, however, they regained their power under the Imperial Guptas, when a Licchavī daughter married Candragupta I, and mothering Samudragupta.<sup>25</sup>

## 2 The Licchavīs and the Vajjīs

### 2.1 MYTHICAL ORIGINS

**2.1.1** The Commentaries contain a mythical account of the origin of the Licchavīs.<sup>26</sup> The queen of Benares, it is said, gave birth to a lump of flesh, and, wishing to avoid disgrace, her ladies-in-waiting placed it in a sealed casket and threw it into the Ganges river.

A guardian deity wrote a label, reading: "Offspring of the chief queen of the king of the Benares," and tied it to the jar. The jar was found by an ascetic living on the Ganges bank, dependent on a family of cowherds living nearby. He carefully retrieved the embryo and looked after it until it grew into two children, a boy and a girl.

**2.1.2** The ascetic fed the twins with milk. Whatever entered the stomachs of these 2 children, it seemed, could be seen as though the stomach were transparent. Apparently, they were without outer skin (*nicchavī*); some said their skin was so thin (*līna,chavī*) that the stomach and whatever entered it appeared as if sewn together. Hence, the children came to be called **Licchavi**.

As they grew up, the family of cowherds took over caring for them, so that the ascetic could go about his own avowed life properly. The cowherd's children, however, disliked the twin because of their aggressive nature, saying they should be avoided (*vajjitabbā*). Interestingly, this seems to suggest that their difficult kshatriya nature was inherent even as children.

<sup>24</sup> D 27/3:83), SD 2.19. **Viḍūḍabha V** (DhA 4.3) relates how an uneasy marriage alliance between the Sakyas and Kosala actually led to the massacre of the Sakyas at the hands of Viḍūḍabha's hands, soon after Pasenadi's death (DhA 4.3, esp 1:357-361; J 4:146-152).

<sup>25</sup> DA 99; JASB 17 1921:269-271. For details, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples* (2004) ch 8 "The Thundering Silence" §9b.

<sup>26</sup> The main sources for the origin-story of the Licchavīs are the commentaries to **Ratana S** (Khp 6 = Sn 2.1) (KhpA 158-160 = SnA 1:278 (KhpA:Ñ 172-175)) and to **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12) (MA 2:19-21). On the latter, see Preston 2017:199 f.

**2.1.3** When they were 16 years old (mature enough to start their own families by the standards of the times), the cowherds obtained land for them from the king (probably a local rajah), and founded them a village. They anointed the boy a rajah and married him to his sister. Their family would remain endogamous like the ancient royal lines.<sup>27</sup> Their country came to be called **Vajjī**.

They had 16 pairs of twins, and as they grew, their village grew into a town. In fact, their realm grew thrice, from a village (*gāma*) into a market-town (*nigāma*) and then a city (*nagara*).<sup>28</sup> Since it was vast, it was called Visālā or **Vesālī** (“vast”).<sup>29</sup>

## **2.2 The Licchavī clan**

**2.2.1 The Licchavī**, whose capital is at Vesālī, were the predominant of the clans constituting the Vajjī confederacy [1.2.1, 1.2.3]. Like the Buddha, they, too, were of the warrior (*khattiya*) class. It was for this reason that they claimed a share of the Buddha’s *relics* after his death.<sup>30</sup>

Their strength lay in their solidarity. When one Licchavi fell ill, all the others would visit him. The whole clan would join in any ceremony performed in a Licchavī home, and they would altogether honour any distinguished visitors to their *city*, and welcome them into their own homes.<sup>31</sup>

**2.2.2** They were beautiful to look at and wore brilliantly coloured garments, riding in brightly painted carriages.<sup>3</sup> On one such occasion, the Buddha compared them to the gods of Tāvātimsa.<sup>32</sup>

All this might seem to suggest that they were very wealthy and prosperous, but they did not live in luxury or idleness. They were, on the contrary, as described in **the Kaliṅgara Sutta** (S 20.8), as using stone cushions, getting up before sunrise, and being diligent and ardent in exercising (for good health).<sup>33</sup> [1.1.2]

## **2.3 The Vajjī confederacy**

**2.3.1 The Vajjī confederacy**, a republic in the Buddha’s time, comprised 8 clans, the largest being the Licchavīs; then, there were the Videhā clan, and other smaller clans, including Nāta or Ñāti (Skt *jñāta*, *jñātrī*, *-kā*) and the Vajjī (Skt *vrijī*). The Vahhī country was located to the east of the main Gandak river, which flows into the Ganges before Hajipur and across from Patna; and probably extended as far as the Kośī river (ancient Kosiki, Skt *kauśiki*; J 5:2, 5, 6), which flows into the Ganges in the district of Purnia (which was part of the Mithila, capital of **Videha**).

<sup>27</sup> Sibling marriage or royal incest occurred with the start of the Sakyas clan and other ancient royal families, too. The possible reasons were propinquity (there were no others suitable for marriage) and lineage purity; hence, the endogamy (Trautmann 1973:174; Thapar 2004:148).

<sup>28</sup> Archaeological works show that the city’s defences were actually rebuilt (probably extended) thrice. The last two corresponded to the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods (Kumar 1986:70). If this were the case, then, the commentarial text must have been compiled earliest in the 5th cent CE (which was when Buddhaghosa flourished and many of the Pāli commentaries were written). Another explanation to this triple expansion is found in the Tibetan Dulva account of Vesālī: the city was divided into three to accommodate the upper, middle, and lower classes (prob the kshatriya at the centre, surrounded by the brahmins, and then the vaishyas) (Law 1924:37; Mishra 1962:93). See Preston 2017:192 n17.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed account of Licchavī origin, see Law, *Ksatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, 1922:1-140. See esp Preston 2017.

<sup>30</sup> **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,6.24/2:165), SD 9. According to **Mahā,vastu**, they belonged to the Vāseṭṭha gotra (Mvst 1.283 etc). Cf the Mallā (DPPN sv), who were also called Vāseṭṭha, which is an ancient gotra name.

<sup>31</sup> DA 2:518,14-20.

<sup>32</sup> **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.15-17/2:96), SD 9; **Licchavī V** (DhA 16.4/3:279 f).

<sup>33</sup> However, in the future, when they use cotton-pillows, sleeping on soft beds, and waking after sunrise, king Ajāta,sattu will conquer them (S 20.8/2:267 f).

**2.3.2 Videha** was a kingdom under the rule of Janaka, with his capital at Mithila, probably identifiable with the town of Janakpur, just inside Nepal's border and the administrative centre of the Janakpur zone.<sup>34</sup> The Buddha's teachings in **the Makhā,deva Sutta** (M 83) was given in Mithila.<sup>35</sup>

## **2.4 Vesāli**

**2.4.1 Vesālī** (Skt *vaiśālī*) was the capital of the Licchavī clan, and also the metropolis of the whole Vajjī confederacy. A Vesālī suburb called Kuṇḍa,gāma (Skt *kunda,grāma*) was the residence of the Nātā (or Nāyā; Skt *jñāta*), the kshatriya clan into which **Mahā,vīra** ("great hero," the founder of Jainism) was born; hence, he was known as Nāta,putta (Skt *nāyā,putra, jñāti,putra*, native of Nātā), more fully, as Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta, to the Buddhists.

The Jain scripture describes **Nāta,putta** as a famous citizen of Vesālī (Sūtrakṛtāṅga 1.2.3).<sup>36</sup> During his ministry, he spent no less than 12 rains (religious years) in his home city of Vesālī.<sup>37</sup> He died in 425 BCE or a few years later, predeceasing the Buddha by about a quarter of a century,<sup>38</sup> and left his order in sorry disarray.<sup>39</sup>

**2.4.2** The Buddha frequently visited Vesālī, where he gave many discourses to the Licchavīs, who came to him individually<sup>40</sup> and in large groups.<sup>41</sup> Towards the end of his life, the Buddha stayed in the mango grove donated by the courtesan **Amba,pālī**, who then joined the order as a nun and became an arhat.<sup>42</sup>

**2.4.3 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), an account of the Buddha's last journey and teachings, records that after leaving Ambapālī's mango grove, he sojourns outside **Beḷuva**, a village at the foot of a hill south of Vesālī, just outside the city-gates.<sup>43</sup> Here, the Buddha spends the 45<sup>th</sup> rains, his last (just 10 months from his final passing away at 80),<sup>44</sup> when he suffers from the 1<sup>st</sup> dysentery attack.<sup>45</sup> **The Sakka Vatthu** (DhA 15.8) records how Sakka, lord of the devas, himself attended to him.<sup>46</sup>

A 100 years after the Buddha's death, **the 2<sup>nd</sup> Buddhist council** (following the traditional account) was held in Vesālī. A traditional account of the 2<sup>nd</sup> council is given in chapter 12, entitled "chapter on the 700" (*satta,sat-k,khandhaka*), of **the Culla Vagga** of the Vinaya.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>34</sup> R P Sharma, *Nepal: A detailed geographical account*, 1974:96.

<sup>35</sup> M 83,1/2:74 (SD 60.8). On the Videhas, see Law, *Ksatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, 1922:141-161.

<sup>36</sup> Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras* 1 (SBE 22) 1884:190 f.

<sup>37</sup> See P Dundas, *The Jains*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2002:25; Fogelin 1989:82 f.

<sup>38</sup> Taking **the Buddha's death** to be between 411 and 400 BCE: Norman 1991:31-39 (*Collected Papers* 7 1995:130-144); Dundas 2002:24.

<sup>39</sup> See **Pāsadika S** (D 29,1), which reports that Nāta,putta died in Pāvā (SD 40a.6). This was also the occasion for Sāriputta reciting **Saṅgīti S** (D 33), as a definitive list (*māṭikā*) of teachings for posterity (Norman 1983b:43).

<sup>40</sup> **A 4.193/2:190-194** (to Bhaddiya), SD 45.8; **A 4.196/2:200-202** (to Sālha), SD 65.17; both these discourses were given in the pinnacled house in the great forest.

<sup>41</sup> **A 5.58/3:75-78** (Licchavī youths hunting); **A 5.195/3:239 f** (the brahmin Piṅgiyāni and 500 Licchavīs), SD 96.11; **A 7.19/4:16 f** (Sārandada shrine), SD 55.10a; **A 10.72/5:134 f** (a number of well-known Licchavīs), SD 80.17.

<sup>42</sup> For the elder nun Amba,pālī's verses, see Thī 252-270; see SD 66.14.

<sup>43</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). See SD 54.8 (6.2.3.2).

<sup>44</sup> SA 3:351,23-27.

<sup>45</sup> On the Buddha's 1<sup>st</sup> dysentery attack (Beḷuva), see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.23/2:99), SD 9.

<sup>46</sup> DhA 15.8/3:269-272 (SD 54.20).

<sup>47</sup> V 2:294-308.

**2.4.4 Geographically**, Vesālī was located near modern Besarh (35 km = 20 mi north of Hajipur, the largest city in the Vaishali district, Tirhut division, Bihar). A hill called Rāja Viśal Ka Garh (Rajah Visal’s fort), probably marks the location of the ancient Vajjī mote-hall, north of modern Vaishali city. Archaeological finds of light pottery, terracottas, clay seals and other artefacts confirm Vesālī’s ancient location and 4 periods of its existence between 500 BCE and 500 CE.<sup>48</sup>

### 3 Vassa,kāra

#### 3.1 HIS BACKGROUND

**3.1.1** According to D D Kosambi, **Vassa,kāra**, Ajāta,sattu’s chief minister, was “referred to only by his nickname Vassakāra, ‘he who subdues,’ derived from this spectacular intrigue. He was undoubtedly one of the great masters of statecraft whose opinions and policies must have been cited in the Arthasāstra<sup>49</sup> under his unknown official name” (1965:130 f). This is not only pure conjecture, but Kosambi clearly confuses *vasa,kāra*, “power-giver” for *vassa,kāra*, “rain-maker”; also, it would have been helpful if he had actually cited any references to Vassa,kāra in the classic work.<sup>50</sup>

**3.1.2** The earliest information we have about Vassa,kāra is that he was chief minister<sup>51</sup> to king Bimbisāra of Magadha [3.2.2]. After Bimbisāra’s death, he continued in the same office under Bimbisāra’s parricide son, Ajāta,sattu. Apparently, his skill and cunning suited the new king well, and he was, in fact, ultimately instrumental in bringing the downfall of the Vajjī nation [1.2.2].

In this later role, Vassakāra was often mentioned with Sunīdha (*sunīdha,vassakāra*), such as in **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), where they are referred to as “chief ministers” (*mahāmatta*), in charge of the fortifications of Magadha capital, Pāṭaligāma, against any attacks from the Vajjīs.<sup>52</sup> It is possible that Sunīdha was his protégé or understudy. Moreover, Vassa,kāra should be very old by then, ready to retire from duty.<sup>53</sup>

**3.1.3** The closest that Vassakāra is depicted as an amenable listener to the Buddha’s teaching is in **the (Catukka) Vassa,kāra Sutta** (A 4.187), where the Buddha appropriately teaches him about the true person (*sappurisa*) and the false person (*asappurisa*) on a worldly level. For Vassakāra, however, this was probably more of a lesson in character-reading of others to one’s advantage, especially in the world—rather than knowing oneself in terms of spiritual progress.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See Law, *Ksatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, 1922:35-59 & Fogelin 1989:83. On Rāja Viśal Ka Garh, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSKG5ItN0vs>.

<sup>49</sup> **Artha,śāstra** (the treatise on benefits), a notorious Indian work on statecraft (like Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, 1532), is attr to Kauṭilya, often identified with Caṅakya (371-283 BCE), the able brahmin minister of Candragupta Maurya (r c321-c297 BCE). But there are many features of the text that show it to belong to 150 CE or later. See Ency India: Artha Shāstra.

<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, Vassa,kāra (serving the benefit of his king) was more Machiavellian than Kautilya in his Arthasāstra, which is a work on the art of socioeconomic management for the king or ruler. It is clearly a more humane work (serving mostly the common good) compared Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, which serves kingship as being good in itself.

<sup>51</sup> Pār 2.1.3 (V 3:43,12).

<sup>52</sup> D 16,1.26/2:86 (SD 9); also at V 1:228 = U 8.6/87-89. On their ranks, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.2) n, SD 9. On Pāṭali,gāma, see D 16,1.26 n, SD 9.

<sup>53</sup> See SD 45.6 (2.1.2).

<sup>54</sup> A 4.187/2:179-181 (SD 45.6).



### 3.2 THE 2<sup>ND</sup> DEFEAT RULE

**3.2.1** Vassakāra is connected with the promulgation of the **2<sup>nd</sup> defeat rule** (*dutiya pārājika*). **Dhaniya the potter's son** (*dhaniya kumbhakāra,putta*) built a hut of wood and grass in the Magadha forest but thrice women gatherers removed it. Then, he built a pleasant mud-hut, ruddy, looking like a ladybird. On seeing this, the Buddha prohibits such a dwelling (as wrong-doing, *dukkata*) since using mud would harm little creatures. Finally, Dhaniya obtained wood from the royal woodyard, since Bimbisāra had allowed the monks to freely use the grass, wood and water of his forests.

**3.2.2** Vassa,kāra, who was then Bimbisāra's chief minister, discovered this, and reported the wood-yard keeper to the king, who had him bound. Upon learning of this, Dhaniya approached the king, who told Dhaniya that the wood was needed for important repairs in the city. He forgave Dhaniya since he was a monk (*lomena*, on account of his hair). When the people heard this, they protested, since Dhaniya had taken from the king the not-given.

Upon learning of this, the Buddha asked a monk who was a former justice minister of the king, the minimum value of what is stolen for which a thief is punished (being flogged, imprisoned or banished). The incriminating amount was 1 *pāda* or more. A *pāda* (monetary measure) then was worth 5 *māsaka*.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, when a monastic were to take anything not given (*adinn'ādāna*), worth one *pāda*, that is, 5 *māsaka*,<sup>56</sup> it entails “defeat”: he automatically and immediately falls from his monastic state.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.3 THE GOPAKA MOGGALLĀNA SUTTA

**3.3.1** Although Vassa,kāra is one of the darker protagonists in the Buddha's life-story, he also seems to be the longest lived of them, outliving even the Buddha himself. We know of his being Bimbisāra's chief minister, and after him, that of Ajāta,sattu. He is also recorded as meeting the elder Ānanda after the Buddha's passing, as recorded in **the Gopaka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 108).

**3.3.2** As a politician, Vassa,kāra understandably sees the world as turning on power. Power holds society together, keeps law and order, and even brings peace and prosperity to the nation. Having served kings all his life, he is depicted as wondering how the sangha is governed now that the Buddha has died.

**The Gopaka Moggallāna Sutta** records him as asking Ānanda how the sangha is able to live in concord without a leader. Clearly, to Vassakāra, this was like a kingdom without a king! In a way, we see here the sangha as a society within society, actually runs very democratically like a Greek polis. The Dharma serves as the “constitution” for this “republic.”

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<sup>55</sup> 5 *māsakas* were a quarter of a *kahāpana* (= 16 *māsaka*). A *māsaka* was made of metal (usu copper) the size of a phaseolus (wild bean) seed. A *kahāpana* (Skt *kāṣārpaṇa*) was a punch-marked coin of irregular shape, usu of silver: see Geiger, *Culture* §76; B C Law, *Buddhist Studies* 1931:383-449; DhsA (Ne 1942) Intro: xxii; for evidence on its use in Ceylon, see S Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon* vol I 1970: xcvi (inscr n 791). See also D C Sircar, *Studies in Indian Coins*, 1968:94-101; O von Hinüber, *JPTS* 36 2000: 132. See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punch-marked\\_coins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punch-marked_coins).

<sup>56</sup> V 3:46,36-47,5. A *pāda* was a measure with the value of 5 *māsakas*; the lowest denomination of value then in Magadha. Hence, foll the Vinaya case-history, we can take this as the lowest denomination of local money, which would be 1 cent in Singapore; 1 sen in Malaysia; a UK penny in UK; a US cent. Keeping to the Vinaya spirit, when a monastic merely has the intention to steal and carries it out, he is *pārājika*. This is not just money, but anything stolen of that minimum value or more.

<sup>57</sup> Pār 2 (V 3:46,16-20), which applies both to monks and to nuns: Ptmk 2001:166 f.

**3.3.3** Vassakāra is still perplexed, unable to understand how all this worked—how such a community, without a centre or pyramid of power, is able to live in concord, to exist at all! Ānanda’s answer is vitally significant even for monastics today.

He replies that renunciants follow **a course of training** (*sikkhā,pada*), keeping to **the Paṭimokkha** (the monastic code) laid down by the Buddha himself. On an uposatha day (the full-moon and new-moon days), the monks within the same parish (living in dependence on the same village) gather to resolve any ethical lapses in accordance with the Dharma “as training-rule and teaching” (*yathā,dhamma*). That is to say: No one deals with us, “the Dharma deals with us” (M 108,11.1), SD 33.5.

**3.3.4** Vassakāra, still thinking in **a person-based manner** (rather than a Dharma-based spirit of concord that Ānanda has spoken of), insists on knowing whether they actually have looked up to any person in the order! Ānanda replies that they show respect to the eldest amongst them. Even then, Ānanda stresses, the relationship is neither that of hierarchy nor of power.

It is based on **the 10 qualities that inspire faith** (*dasa pasādanīya dhamma*), that is, on being morally virtuous, deeply learned in Dharma, contented, mastering the 4 dhyanas, and the 6 superknowledges (various psychic powers and the liberating knowledge of arhathood). This clearly implies that the unawakened monastics are expected to cultivate the first 4 qualities, and that the seniors to have obtained the last 6. In this way, they are all those on the path of awakening, or heading for it.<sup>58</sup>

All this is significant: it is one of the rare occasions that Vassakāra actually asks about the Dharma and is taught it. Another occasion (perhaps the *only* other one) was when the Buddha taught him about the good person and the false person, as recorded in **the (Catukka) Vassa,kāra Sutta** (A 4.187) [3.1.3].

### 3.4 VASSA,KĀRA’S REBIRTH AS A MONKEY

**3.4.1** The Majjhima Commentary on **the Gopaka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 108) tells a curious, almost humorous, story about Vassa,kāra. It is said that once, upon seeing **Mahā Kaccāna** descending Mount Vulture Peak, he remarked that Mahā Kaccāna looked just like a monkey. Hearing this, the Buddha said that unless Vassakāra asked for the elder’s forgiveness, he would himself be reborn as a monkey in Veḷu,vana.

Vassa,kāra, however, was more of a politician than a man of faith, and did not see himself as seeking any forgiveness from a monk. Yet, fearing that the Buddha’s prophecy would come true, he had various fruit trees and other trees planted in Veḷu,vana. After his death, he was actually reborn as a monkey, inhabiting those trees, answering to the name Vassa,kāra! (MA 4:73)<sup>59</sup> Whether we take this story seriously or not, the point is that we are accountable for our own karma.

## 4 Welfare of the sangha

**4.1** After prince **Ajāta,sattu** had murdered his own father, king Bimbisāra, king **Pasenadi** of Kosala and the Vajjīs (Skt *vṛjī*) banded together against him. Ajātasattu first battled his own uncle Pasenadi and won, but later lost in another battle and was taken prisoner by Pasenadi who, however, freed him and gave him his daughter Vajirā in marriage. As dowry, she received a village in Kāsī that had been the pretext for the war.

**4.2** During the Buddha’s last year, Vassakāra tells him of Ajātasattu’s plans to attack the Vajjīs [1.2.2.1]. The Buddha then expounds “**the 7 conditions for non-decline**” (*satta अपरिहāniya,dhamma*) on a secular as well as religious levels, such as those recorded in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) [4.3].

<sup>58</sup> M 108,13-23 (SD 33.5).

<sup>59</sup> See SD 45.6 (2.1.3). On Vassa,kāra’s destiny and other details, see **Gopaka Moggallāna S** (M 108), SD 33.5 (1.2.4).

After Vassakāra has left, the Buddha instructs Ānanda to assemble all the monks in Rājagaha for further instructions, this time on the progress of the sangha itself. When the monks have assembled, he expounds to them various sets of conditions for the welfare of the sangha, especially **the conditions for the non-decline of the sangha** (*bhikkhu aparihāniyā dhammā*, D 2:79; A 4:21), that is, the conditions for the sangha progress (the growth of monastics):

- (1) They hold frequent and well-attended meetings.
- (2) They meet together in harmony, disperse in harmony, and go about their sangha duties in harmony.
- (3) They do not promulgate what has not been promulgated, and do not abolish what has been promulgated, but train themselves in accordance with the prescribed training-rules.
- (4) They honour, respect, esteem and salute the elders of long experience and long standing, the fathers and leaders of the Order, and consider them worthy of listening to.
- (5) They do not fall under the influence of craving.
- (6) They delight in forest lodgings.
- (7) They establish themselves in mindfulness with this thought, “Let virtue-loving fellow brahmacharis (*pesalā*<sup>60</sup> *sabrahmacari*<sup>61</sup>) who have not come, come here, and let those virtue-loving fellow brahmacharis who are already here live at ease”. (D 16,1.6.2/2:79), SD 9; (A 7.21/4:21), SD 55.11

#### 4.3 SUTTAS ON NON-DECLINE

**4.3.1** At the start of **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha gives a series of 7 discourses on “the conditions for non-decline” (*aparihāniya,dhamma*), as follows. These discourses mostly originated elsewhere, and were put together in D 16 as part of the Buddha’s last instructions to the sangha for their spiritual survival and prosperity.

**4.3.2** These discourses on “the conditions for non-decline”—forming the “chapter of the Vajjī seven” (*vajjī sattaka vagga*) (A 4:16-27) of the Aṅguttara—recur in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), thus:

<u>“the conditions for non-decline”</u> <sup>62</sup>	<u>probable sequence of teaching</u>			<u>D 16</u> <sup>63</sup>
1. to the Licchavīs of Vajjī	<b>Sāraṇ,dada Sutta</b>	A 7.19/4:16 f	SD 55.10a	§1.4
2. to the chief minister Vassakāra	<b>(Aparihāniya) Vassa,kāra Sutta</b>	A 7.20/4:17-21	SD 55.10b	§1.5
3. the monastic renunciant sangha	<b>(Aparihāniya) Bhikkhu Sutta</b>	A 7.21/4:21 f	SD 55.11	§1.6
4. effort	<b>(Aparihāniya) Kamma Sutta</b>	A 7.22/4:22	SD 106.1	§1.7
5. faith, moral shame, etc	<b>(Aparihāniya) Saddhiya Sutta</b>	A 7.23/4:22 f	SD 106.2	§1.8
6. the 7 awakening-factors	<b>(Aparihāniya) Bodhi Sutta</b>	A 7.24/4:23	SD 106.3	§1.9
7. the 7 perceptions (meditations)	<b>(Aparihāniya) Saññā Sutta</b>	A 7.25/4:24	SD 106.4	§1.10
the 6 conditions for conciliation	<b>(Chakka) Sāraṇīya Dhamma S 1</b>	A 6.11/3:288 f	SD 55.22a	§1.11
on the downfall of the Licchavīs	<b>Kaliṅgara Sutta</b>	S 20.8	SD 55.10c	—

<sup>60</sup> According to Buddhaghosa, *pesala* = *piya,sīla* (SnA 475), which has 2 senses at least: (1) one whose (moral) conduct is lovable; (2) one who loves moral virtue.

<sup>61</sup> “Brahmachari” is an anglicization of *brahma,cāri*, a celibate monastic practitioner, one living the “holy life” (*brahma,cariya*) ie, a celibate working for the path in this life itself.

<sup>62</sup> All the sets, except the last (only 6 factors), have 7 conditions or factors. Except for the 1<sup>st</sup>, the other 6 teachings are addressed to the sangha. A similar list is found in SD 55.15 (1.3.2.2).

<sup>63</sup> For a concordance of such sources, see SD 9 (3.4).

## 5 The 7 conditions for the non-decline of a nation or community

**5.1 “THE VAJJĪS GATHER REGULARLY AND THEIR GATHERINGS ARE WELL ATTENDED”** (*licchavī vajjī abhiṇhaṃ sannipātā bhavissanti sannipāta, bahulā*)

**5.1.1 A nation or community** will only prosper when its leaders and administrators meet often to report their progress and discuss common needs and situations, or to celebrate special occasions, or simply to better know one another. At the highest levels, they should meet to legislate laws to protect their people, or discuss ways to help them, so that the community is safe, healthy, productive and wholesome.

**5.1.2 National safety.** In fact, this is one of the key reasons for the internal strength of the Vajjī republic. Like the citizens of the ancient Greek city-states, especially Athens, the Vajjī leaders met regularly to discuss and act on their national defences and common agenda. In this way, they kept themselves ready to counter any external threats and to keep their citizens safe and happy.

**5.1.3 A wholesome society** is one that has laws that effectively highlight and preserve **the values** (*dhamma*) of life, of happiness (right to personal property), of freedom (right of personal movement and action, or not to act or veto), of truth (expressing and keeping to what is good and true), and of fearlessness (a real sense of inner peace and common security), that is, excelling in both physical and mental health. These are, in fact, the values underlying the 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*) that humanize us and promote a “good society.”

### **5.1.4 A productive, creative and healthy community**

**5.1.4.1 A productive community** is one that is rooted in the 5 values [5.1.3] that inspires its people to be productive in material, artistic and spiritual ways. “Material productivity” refers to the healthy economic wellbeing of the nation, where right livelihood predominates, that is, work is done in a life-centred and morally right (precept-keeping) manner, for example, where people are held above *profit*, and where we use what we *need*, and give what we *can*.<sup>64</sup>

**5.1.4.2 A creative community** is the sweet fruit of a productive society [5.1.4.1]. A healthy economy entails some kind of specialization of labour, which allows the skilled or the diligent to do the kind of work that best suits them. There is also a fair and workable manner of barter or monetary system that allows a profitable and fair exchange of goods and services.

**5.1.4.3** Such a system gives us sufficient leisure to educate ourselves and to live creatively, expressing beauty and goodness. Such a community promotes in a high standard of universal education in the arts, literature, sciences, technology and related fields. The wealthy (those with surplus income) in such a community are generous and sagacious in supporting teachers, thinkers, engineers, artists, performers and other talented individuals in the promotion of truth and beauty. In short, we have a rich, wholesome and growing culture.

**5.1.4.4** Clearly, the Licchavī youths were strong and healthy individuals, often gathering together to show their prowess in sports, martial arts and personal talents. They were vigilant and zealous in exer-

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<sup>64</sup> On right livelihood, see SD 37.8.

cising (*appamattā ātāpino upāsanaṣmim*), and keeping themselves healthy<sup>65</sup> [2.2.2]. **The Chiggaḷa Sutta** (S 56.45) says that they would show their bowmanship in the mote-hall, shooting arrows from a distance, through a tiny keyhole, shot after shot, without a break or ever missing.<sup>66</sup> At other times, as **the Licchavī Kumāraka Sutta** (A 5.58) tells us, they would wander about in fellowship in the great forest (*mahā,vana*) in groups, with their bows strung, surrounded by hounds.<sup>67</sup> [5.5.1]

## 5.2 “THE VAJJĪS GATHER IN FELLOWSHIP, ADJOURN [RISE] IN FELLOWSHIP, AND MANAGE VAJJĪ AFFAIRS IN FELLOWSHIP” (*vajjī samaggā sannipatissanti, samaggā vuṭṭhahissanti, samaggā vajjī,karaṇīyāni karissanti*)

### 5.2.1 Fellowship and consensus

**5.2.1.1 Fellowship or concord** is fostered when we gather together for work, sport or leisure, and the Licchavīs had great love for sports, hunting and the martial arts. Hence, young Licchavīs especially, often gathered for such activities [5.1.4.4]. Hence, they not only had strong fellowship but were also strong, healthy and intelligent, ready to defend their nation against any external threat.

Yet, for the very same reasons, when people meet, they are likely to have differences of opinions, clash of personalities, and getting caught up in situations. Hence, it is vitally important that our leaders, often meet to discuss and resolve issues, and to do so in **fellowship** (*sa,magga*, “going the same way”). When a nation’s leaders are unified, the nation, too, is unified, strong and prosperous.

**5.2.1.2** Differences of views can be helpful in allowing us to see different aspects and possible solutions to challenges facing us. However, when it comes to a proper course of actions, or some common agreeable attitude, it is vital that all the leaders speak with “one voice,” **a consensus**. This means that when all views and suggestions have been heard and considered, leaders and others should be able to set aside personal differences and their own views to accept the most workable solution or the majority decision.

**5.2.1.3 “Fellowship”** (*samagga*) is beautifully defined in **the (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128) as “all dwelling in concord, in mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, looking at each other with kindly eyes.”<sup>68</sup> This means that we should dwell showing one another lovingkindness (uncondi-

<sup>65</sup> S 2:267 f.

<sup>66</sup> *Santhāgāre upāsanaṃ kāronte durato va sukhumena tāla-c,chiggaḷena asanam atipātente poṅkhānupoṅkham avirādhitam* (S 5:453,11 f): *upāsana*, shooting (arrows), practice (of archery); practising (a skill); *tāla*, key; *tāla-c,-chiggaḷa*, a keyhole; *asana*<sup>3</sup> (from *assati*), a shot, a missile, an arrow (M 1:82,36; S 5:453,11); *atipātente* (from *atipātetī*, to make fly, shoot); *poṅkhānupoṅkha*, shot after shot (of arrows) (inrem of *puṅkha*, a fletching, an arrow’s feathered part); *avirādhitā*, without missing. *Poṅkha* (only in redupl cpd *poṅkhāpoṅkha*) means “arrow”: so PED + PTC 3:329, svv; also DPI 638). Comy explains **poṅkhānuppoṅkha**, thus: “He saw them shooting an arrow, then another. This is called an ‘after-fletching’ (*anupoṅkha*), where the first arrow was split in the fletching by the second arrow, and that one split by another” (*ekam kaṇḍam khipitvā yathā assa sarassa poṅkham vijjhati, aparam anupoṅkham nāma dutiyassa poṅkham, puna aparam tassa poṅkhan’ti evam atipātente addasa*). Comy is describing what is called in archery slang a series “robin hood,” which may well happen, but it’s difficult to imagine it happening *all* the time. It’s more likely that the canonical Pali expression *poṅkhānupoṅkha* simply means “shaft after shaft,” ie, a continuous series of arrows being skillfully or expertly shot.

<sup>67</sup> A 5.58/3:75 f.

<sup>68</sup> M 128,11+12/3:156 etc (SD 5.18). Rajah Pasenadi makes a similar remark to the Buddha in **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,11/2:120 f). This is stock: M 1:206, 398, 3:156; A 1:70, 3:67, 104; S 4:225. **Parisā S** (A 3.93) uses the rain simile to show how spiritual friendship (defined in the words here) [11] builds up positive qualities in one (A 3.93,5/-1:243), SD 6.12 (3).

tional acceptance) by way of action, speech and thought, both openly and privately. In this way, we live together, “it seems that we are of different bodies but of one mind.”<sup>69</sup>

### 5.2.2 Alliances

Politically, the Licchavīs were on good terms with their neighbours:<sup>70</sup> the kingdoms of **Magadha**, ruled by king Bimbisāra, and of **Kosala**, ruled by king Pasenadi.<sup>71</sup> They were also friendly with a neighbouring republic, the **Mallā**, whence came Bandhula, Pasenadi’s general.<sup>72</sup> While the Buddha lived, this was the general situation in the central Gangetic plain.

Bimbisāra was murdered by his own son, Ajātasattu, who desired to expand Magadha. Ajātasattu also resolved to destroy the Licchavī apparently because he saw them as economic rivals [1.2.1.2]; and also probably, as we have noted [1.2.1.2], he was compelled by the fear of his foster-brother prince Abhaya who had Licchavī blood and was on good terms with the Vajjīs.

### 5.2.3 VAJJĪ STRATEGY

**5.2.3.1** The habit of the Vajjīs meeting, adjourning and working together “**in fellowship**” is their key strength and strategy, especially in the face of any widespread emergency or an external threat. They were alert and ready for any strategic response to any challenge. They were able to safeguard their social fabric and were resilient as a nation.

**The Sutta Commentary** explains that when the assembly-drum was sounded around the city, everyone would simply cease whatever they were doing or had planned to do, and would at once gather at the assembly area. This is the meaning of “**the Vajjīs gather in fellowship**” (DA 2:517,35-518,5). In other words, the Vajjī nation *always* came first.

**5.2.3.2** The verb *vuṭṭhahissanti* has 2 important senses. The first means: “they (will) adjourn.” They remained together thinking, discussing and deliberating. Only when all matters had been settled did they promptly adjourned just as they had assembled. Hence, **they adjourn in fellowship**.

The other meaning of *vuṭṭhahissanti* is that: “they will emerge, rise up, stand up (for their nation)” with zest and zeal. When there was any external threat, such as when any village or town were in trouble or danger, they all rose to the occasion, ready to defend their realm, saying: “Me first! Me first!” Hence, **they “rise up in fellowship.”**

**5.2.3.3** When someone’s work or situation was failing, the other rajahs would send their brothers and sons, and see to it. When some royal guests visited them, they did not direct them to such and such a house, but all would *together* show them warm hospitality. Whether it was an occasion of joy and celebration, or one of pain and sadness, they were all there sharing it with esprit de corps. (DA 2:518,14-20)

<sup>69</sup> M 128,12.2/3:156 (SD 5.18).

<sup>70</sup> Magadha and Kosala were new kingdoms, while the Vajjī and the Mallā were old republics; all of them formed part of the 16 great states (*soḷasa mahā, janapada*) in the central Gangetic plains of India [SD 9 (16)]. For a map showing the location of these entities, see SD 9 (Map 16.1), or [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malla\\_\(Ancient\\_India\)#/media/File:Mahajanapadas\\_\(c.\\_500\\_BCE\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malla_(Ancient_India)#/media/File:Mahajanapadas_(c._500_BCE).png).

<sup>71</sup> See **Aṅguli, māla S** (M 86), where the Buddha, seeing king Pasenadi with a small army to hunt for the bandit Aṅguli, māla, asks him if Bimbisāra or the Licchavīs were attacking him (M 86,9/2:101), SD 5.11.

<sup>72</sup> **Viḍḍabha V** (DhA 4.3) relates the story of general **Bandhula** (Pasenadi’s commander-in-chief), how he killed 500 Licchavīs; then, he and his own 32 sons were assassinated by Pasenadi, who wrongly suspected that he wished to usurp the throne (DhA 1:349-356): DPPN sv. On the Mallas, see Law, *Ksatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, 1922:162-180.

**5.3 “THE VAJJĪS DO NOT PROMULGATE WHAT HAS NOT BEEN PROMULGATED, AND DO NOT ABOLISH WHAT HAS BEEN PROMULGATED, BUT CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VAJJĪ CODE”** (*vajjī apaññattaṃ na paññāpessanti, paññattaṃ na samucchindissanti, yathā, paññatte porāṇe vajji, dhamme samādāya vattisanti*)

### 5.3.1 The rajahs

**5.3.1.1** It should be noted that the Vajjī nation, like that of the Sakyas, were a self-contained republican “community” (*gaṇa, saṅgha*),<sup>73</sup> a confederacy or tribal system, governed by a council of hereditary elders, all called “rajahs” (*rāja*). Although *raja* usually means “king,” in this early usage, its root is √RAJ or √RAÑJ, meaning “to delight”: thus, according to **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), a rajah or king is “**one who delights others with Dhamma**” (*dhammena pare rañjetīti rājā*).<sup>74</sup> [5.3.1.2]

**5.3.1.2 Dhamma** (perhaps the most polysemic of Pali words), in this usage [5.3.1.1], has the senses of truth, goodness, tradition, communal code, the law, or justice. In this sense, the term applied only to the republican kshatriyas, which was tribal, where all the rajahs (tribal elders) had a say in the matters of the tribe or republic (*gaṇa, saṅgha*)—very similar to the Greek polis system of western classical times.

**The Vinaya** has a different etymology for “rajah”: he is “**one who has sovereignty**” (*rājā nāma yo koci rajjāṃ kāreti*, V 3:222,11); more simply: he is one who rules (in an absolute sense). This definition reflects the realities of a kingdom (*rajja* or *raṭṭha*) rather than a republic (*gaṇa, saṅgha*). In fact, the Vinaya was, as a whole, compiled later than the suttas, at a time when the kingdoms held sway over the central Ganges plain (that is, after the Vajjīs had been conquered by Ajāta, sattu).

### 5.3.2 Keeping to the code

**5.3.2.1** Considering the Vajjī situation as it was, without any new developments, they would not introduce a toll (*suṅka*)<sup>75</sup> or a tax (*bali*) or a fine (*daṇḍa*) without precedent. And when they did introduce a levy, it was based on a precedent. In this way, they “**do not promulgate what has not been promulgated**”—they do not authorize the unauthorized. They would enforce whatever levies that were in force. Hence, it is said that “**They do not abolish what has been promulgated.**” In short, they were law-abiding and follow good governance.

When they promulgated **what has not been promulgated**, such as levying random tolls, taxes and fines, and arbitrarily punishing anyone without keeping to the Vajjī code, then, the people would feel discriminated against and oppressed. They would flee to the remote regions and border country to become brigands and terrorize country.

When they **do not promulgate** what had been promulgated, such as collecting the traditional customs and excise, the Vajjī treasury would decrease. Then, the troops, the elephants, horses and harems would not get their regular support. Their strength and productivity would be badly affected, and they would neither be able to properly defend the country nor provide proper services. The rajahs would then suffer even greater difficulties and losses. (DA 2:518 f)

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that in the study of ancient Indian social history, *saṅgha* usu refers to a republic or “nation,” such as that of the Sakyas, Vajjīs, Mallas, etc (otherwise it refers to the Buddhist monastic community); while *gaṇa* (lit, “group”) refers to “tribe,” such as that of the Licchavīs. The cpd *gaṇa, saṅgha* is a tt for an ancient Indian republic, and is here a synonym for a secular or political *saṅgha*.

<sup>74</sup> D 27,21/3:93 (SD 2.19) = Vism 419.

<sup>75</sup> On *suṅka*, *bali* and *daṇḍa*, see DAṬ 2:160,6-11 :: DA:A 7 nn4+5.

**5.3.2.2** What does it mean that they “conduct themselves in accordance with the Vajjī code”? It is said that when someone was accused of a crime, such as stealing, he would not at once be labelled as a “thief.” He would first be brought before the “examining officers” (*vinicchaya, mahāmatta*). When they examined him and found him not to be a thief, they would release him. In other words, there was “due process” of law.

However, after examining him, and they found that he was a thief, they would then hand him over to the **magistrate** (*vohārika*), without saying anything at all themselves (to prevent bias). When the magistrate examined him and found him innocent, he was freed. When they found him to be a thief, they handed him over to the “legal experts” (*sutta, dhāra*).<sup>76</sup>

Again, when they found that he had not committed any crime, he was freed. Otherwise, when he was found to be a thief, he was brought before the “council of 8” (*aṭṭha, kulika*). These were 8 elders, one coming from each of the 8 clans that comprise the Vajjī confederacy.<sup>77</sup>

They would examine him accordingly: if he were innocent, they would set him free. If not, they would hand him to **the general** (*senāpati*); then, the general to a **deputy rajah** (*uparājā*); and, finally, from the deputy rajah to **the rajah** himself, that is, the seniormost of the council elders. In short, the Vajjīs followed a law-based governance.

**5.3.2.3** When the rajah found the accused to be legally a thief (or culpable of a crime), then, he had **the Book of Precedents** (*paveṇi, potthaka*) recited. He checked the thief’s misdeed against the precedent and imposed a suitable punishment.<sup>78</sup> In this way, the people could see that it is not the rajahs who punished the criminal, but that the criminal was being accountable for his own wrongs. The people would then conduct themselves more wholesomely and work more diligently.<sup>79</sup>

**5.4 “THE VAJJĪS HONOUR, RESPECT, ESTEEM, REVERE VAJJĪ ELDERS AND CONSIDER IT WORTHWHILE TO LISTEN TO THEM”** (*vajjī ye te vajjīnaṃ vajjī, mahallakā, te sakkariṣanti, garuṃ karissanti mānessanti pūjessanti, tesaṃ ca sotabbaṃ maññissanti*)

#### **5.4.1 Definitions of terms**

**5.4.1.1 “To honour”** (*sakkaroti*)<sup>80</sup> means to point out or praise a person’s goodness (such as the beauty of his heart). “**To respect**” (*garu, karoti*) means to “give weight” to a person, accepting him as he is with lovingkindness. “**To esteem**” (*māneti*) means to hold someone dear in our hearts,<sup>81</sup> high in our

<sup>76</sup> See DA:A 9 n3.

<sup>77</sup> DAṬ 2:160,22-24. See DA:A 9 n4.

<sup>78</sup> Bongard-Levin: “Buddhaghosa’s account of the ‘Book of Precedents’ undoubtedly points to the fairly well developed systems of court proceedings and of administration as a whole.” (1986:94). The *paveṇi, potthaka* of king Udaya I (812-828) is mentioned in Mahv 44.20.

<sup>79</sup> The rajah must also correct wrong decisions (Thūpv 236,10 ff). Comy describes a different procedure: “The rajahs noted accordingly, having investigated the old traditions themselves, surrounded by the *aṭṭha, kulika* [sic, *aṭṭha*, “case”], *the general*, and *a deputy rajah*, consulted the Book of Precedents, and punished accordingly.” (AA 4.11,23-12,3). O v Hinüber thinks that this procedure was “nearer to the evidence of the Dharmaśāstras and perhaps also nearer to reality. For, it is not impossible that the commentary on the Dīgha-nikāya intends to demonstrate how during an earlier, that is, better, period, law had been administered much more carefully than this was done during the days of the commentator.” (1905:34). For Majjhima Comy’s description of a hearing: MA 2:252,8-14.

<sup>80</sup> The Sutta uses these verbs in the fut pl: they are here given in the stem form for easier definition.

<sup>81</sup> “Dear in our hearts” (*manena piyāyito*) (SA 2:124,15).



minds. “**To revere**” (*pūjeti*) means to act humbly and attentively towards a person, and through faith offer him the 4 supports of life.<sup>82</sup> These definitions are mostly based on the Commentaries.<sup>83</sup>

**5.4.1.2** Sometimes, we see a fifth verb in this stock phrase, as in **the Kūṭa,danta Sutta** (D 5),<sup>84</sup> that is, “**to revere**” (*apacāyati*; past part *apacita*), means “conducting oneself in a humble manner” (*nīca,vutti,-karaṇena*),<sup>85</sup> which makes it synonymous with *pūjeti*. We see its adjective form, *apacayi*, in a well known Dhammapada verse: *abhivādana,sīlissa | vaddhāpacayino ...* (“Who habitually salutes with respect, | revering the elderly”) will be increasingly blessed with long life, beauty, happiness and strength (Dh 109ab).

#### **5.4.2 “(They) consider it worthwhile to listen to them”** (*sotabbaṃ maññanti*)

**5.4.2.1** Two or three times a day, the younger Vajjī rajahs would visit and consult the eldest rajahs. They listened to them and trusted in their counsel. They explained the old traditions of what should or should not be done, say, in battle, when to advance, when to retreat, and so on. Neither avoiding the elder rajahs nor losing touch with them, they together strengthened and extended the royal lines. In this way, “**only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline.**”

**5.4.2.2** A vital aspect in the life of the Vajjī elder is that there was no conception of “retirement,” as often is the case in most urbanized societies today. The elder rajahs, indeed, all elder Vajjīs, would be socially and personal active for as long as their strength and health permitted. This active participation of these elders meant a constant social connection with everyone else, especially the younger Vajjīs. This helped maintain a social continuity and fellowship amongst all levels of Vajjī society, so that not only the elder of them were known and heard, but they listened and respected one another as a close and vibrant community.

### **5.5 “THE VAJJĪS DO NOT FORCIBLY ABDUCT WOMEN AND MAIDENS<sup>86</sup> OF FAMILY, COMPELLING THEM [THE WOMEN] TO LIVE WITH THEM”** (*vajjī yā tā ku’litthiyo kula,kumāriyo, tā na okkassa pasayha vāsessanti*)

#### **5.5.1 Youthful exuberance**

**5.5.1.1** When the Buddha makes such a statement as the above, it clearly reflects a reality amongst the Licchavīs, that they were an exuberantly passionate people, especially the younger Licchavīs. They seemed to take liberties with their women. **The Licchavi Kumāraka Sutta** (A 5.58), for example, records a Licchavī elder, Mahā,nāma,complaining<sup>9</sup> to the Buddha, thus:

“These Licchavi youths, bhante, are fierce, rough and brash (*caṇḍā pharusā apāṭubhā*). Any sweets left as gifts amongst the families: sugar-cane, jujube fruits, pancakes, sweetmeat or cakes—they just loot and devour them!<sup>87</sup> They strike women and girls of families from behind (with their foot)!<sup>88</sup>”

<sup>82</sup> “By venerating him with the 4 supports of life” (*catu,paccayehi pūjito*, SA 2:124,16), ie, supporting with food, clothing, shelter, and medical and health care.

<sup>83</sup> DA 2:519,27-30 :: DA:A 11; also SA 2:124,14-17.

<sup>84</sup> D 5,6 (9) (SD 22.8); also at V 3:90,1; D 1:130,28, 2:138,17; M 2:166,5-6; S 2:119,21; U 6,27.

<sup>85</sup> SA 2:124,17 at S 2:119,21.

<sup>86</sup> *Ku’itthiyo* refers to housewives of good families; *kula,kumāriyo* were their unmarried daughters. (DA 2:520,6 f).

<sup>87</sup> *Yāni pi tāni kulesu pahiṇakāni pahīyanti ucchū’ti vā badarā’ti vā pūvā’ti vā modakā’ti vā saṅkulikā’ti vā tāni vilumpitvā vilumpitvā khadati; ku’itthīnaṃ pi kula,kumārīnaṃ pi pacchāliyaṃ khipanti* (A 5.58/3:76,12-16).

<sup>88</sup> *Pacchāliyaṃ khipanti*, which Comy glosses with “They come up behind them and strike their backs with their foot” (*pacchato gantvā piṭṭhirṃ pādena* (Ce Se so; Ce Ee *piṭṭhi,pādena*) *paharanti*, AA:Be 3:261,10 f). DP: khipati<sup>1</sup> (2).

**5.5.1.2** But in the same breath, he adds:

“Now they are standing silently in attendance upon the Blessed One with their hands in anjali!”<sup>89</sup>

These are clearly words of disbelief and admiration, that such exuberantly mischievous Licchavī youths would be so tame and pious before the Buddha!<sup>90</sup>

While it is natural for emotionally healthy and intelligent youths to be exuberantly mischievous, it is also natural for them to recognize a spiritually great person like the Buddha, and to act appropriately to him. This only shows that those young Licchavīs, future rajahs of the nation, were only acting in an age-appropriate manner, as young Licchavīs.

## **5.5.2 Patriarchy**

**5.5.2.1** The Licchavīs, being a martial people, fond of sports, archery and hunting, also had a patriarchal, even condescending, attitude towards their women. “**Abduct**” (*okkassa*) is clearly an action done **with force** (*pasayha*). Apparently, some Licchavīs would simply *abduct* any women or girls they fancied, forcing them to cohabit with the Licchavī abductors. The Buddha probably noticed this, of which he disapproved.

Families that had lost their women in this way, or anticipating such a loss, would flee into remote regions of the realm. They would deeply resent such violence against their loved ones, and might end up as brigands or rebels. Such developments would cause social unrest which would not be good for the Vajjī nation, causing it to decline.

**5.5.2.2** Moreover, the Licchavīs tended to regard their women as chattel, as personal property, who must be loyal and obedient to their men. Hence, they saw women losing their chastity as a serious offence. The assembly would even give its consent to a husband’s request that his unfaithful wife be murdered!

This was an ancient cultural idiosyncrasy which we should never emulate. This was a male gender bias which was to the women’s disadvantage. Such disrespect for women would reflect badly on a nation that was otherwise noble and wholesome. Hence, the Buddha does not mince his words in reminding the Vajjīs to respect their women so that their society would not decline.

## **5.5.3 The 2<sup>nd</sup> saṅghādisesa rule** (V 4:225-227)

This rule prohibits one “under the penalty of death” (*vajjhā*), such as a thief, from being ordained. The case history is that of an adulterous woman, whose husband had received sanction from the Licchavī community, to kill her. Fearing for her life, she bribed the false nun Thullā, nandā and was accepted for ordination.

When the matter was brought up before the sangha, the Buddha, prohibited the ordaining of “a thief.” Interestingly, in this case, the rule is against accepting a thief into the order rather than an adulterer. Anyway, as the 1<sup>st</sup> offender (*ādi, kammika*) her ordination remained valid. The rule stipulates that such a candidate for ordination (threatened by death; including a thief) must have prior permission from the king, the sangha (community, in this case the Vajjī), the tribe (*gaṇa*, such as the Licchavī), a guild (*pūga*) or a company (*seṇī*). (V 2:226,18-22).

<sup>89</sup> *Te dān’ime tuṇhī, bhūtā tuṇhī, bhūtā pañjalikā bhagavantam payirupāsantīti.*

<sup>90</sup> A 5.58/3:75 f.

**5.6 “THE VAJJĪS HONOUR, RESPECT, ESTEEM, REVERE THE VAJJĪ SHRINES, BOTH THAT ARE WITHIN (THE CITY) AND THAT ARE OUTSIDE, AND DO NOT NEGLECT THE DUE OFFERINGS AS WERE GIVEN AND MADE TO THEM FORMERLY”**  
*(vajjī yāni tāni vajjīnaṃ vajjī,cetiyaṇi abbhantarāni c’eva bāhirāni ca, tāni sakkariṣṣanti garuṃ kariṣṣanti manessanti pūjessanti, tesaṃ ca dinna,pubbaṃ kata,pubbaṃ dhammikaṃ balim no parihāpessanti)*

### 5.6.1 Vajjī shrines

**5.6.1.1** Vajjī country had numerous **shrines** (*cetiya*), the best known being located within and without their main city of Vesālī. A number of these ancient shrines are mentioned by name in the suttas: Cāpāla (near Vesālī), Sattambaka (west of Vesālī), Bahuputta (north of Vesālī), Gotamaka (south of Vesālī), Udena (east of Vesālī), and Sārandada.<sup>91</sup>

Some of them were built for the purpose of honouring (*citti*) Vajjī rajahs; hence, they are “shrines” (*cetiya*).<sup>92</sup> Some of these were said to be the “haunts of yakshas” (*yakkha-ṭ, ṭhānāni*, DA 520,20), that is, either **yakshas** (tutelary spirits or ogres) actually dwelled there or frequented there (at least in local lore), or, more likely, they were shrines dedicated to them (eg Gotamaka shrine; the Sārandana shrine was dedicated to the yaksha, Sārandada, DA 373).

Such shrines were also “protected areas.”<sup>93</sup> No one was allowed to cut down its trees; water from its reservoir was not to be diverted anywhere else; fishing was prohibited in its lotus ponds. In this sense, it was regarded as a “safe space” (DA 2:521), protected as a sacred area endowed with space, peace and beauty. This is an early Buddhist conception of a “**forest reserve**,” in the spirit of good ecology.

**5.6.1.2** Such shrines were also popular with other recluses (*samaṇā*) probably because such holy places attracted local residents and devotees who made offerings there or gave alms to them.<sup>94</sup> The Buddha and his monks often stayed at such shrines since their remoteness, peace and beauty are conducive for meditation sittings.

Moreover, they are also not too far away from Vesālī and other inhabited areas on which the Buddha and his monks can depend for almsfood. The Vajjīs built a dwelling (*vihāra*) for the Buddha and the sangha at **the Sārandada shrine**.<sup>95</sup>

### 5.6.2 Shrines as national monuments

**5.6.2.1** Buddhaghosa reports the Vajjī belief or superstition behind their shrines. To them, if they were to neglect the proper offerings, the deities would not protect them. Even if they did not face new troubles, their current ones, such as coughs, headaches, etc, would intensify. In war-time, they believed, they would have no allies. But when they kept up the proper offerings to these shrines, even if they find no new happiness, the old ones would grow, and in war-time they would have allies. (DA 2:520,24-31).

<sup>91</sup> D 16,3.1 f/2:102, 3.46/2:117 f + SD 9 (7.3), 24,1.11/3:9; S 51.10/5:259; A 8.70/4:309; Sārandada Cetiya (D 2:75); Ānanda Cetiya (D 2:123, 126). See DA 373. See also B C Law, “Cetiya in Buddhist Literature” in *Studia Indo-Iranica: Ehrengabe für Wilhelm Geiger*, ed Walter Wüst, Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1931:42-48. The cult of yaksha-veneration is discussed in Odette Viennot, *Le Culte de l’arbre dans l’Inde ancienne*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954: esp 113-120. (Refs fr Trainor 1997: 34 n12.)

<sup>92</sup> *Vajjī,rājūnaṃ vajjī,ratthe citti,kat’atṭhena cetiyānīti* (DA 2:520,18-20).

<sup>93</sup> Fully, it was “properly protected, guarded and controlled” (*rakkhāvaraṇa,gutti*, DA 2:521,1).

<sup>94</sup> See eg (**Iddhi**) **Cetiya S** (S 51.10/5:259), **Bhūmi,cāla S** (A 8.70/4:309); A L Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, NY: Grove Press, 1959:262.

<sup>95</sup> DA 2:521,29-34; see also D 2:75, 102; U 6.1/62; AA 4:9,8-10; UA 323,12.

**5.6.2.2** A Dharma-based interpretation would be either that they honoured their ancestors and dead heroes properly; or, since these were spaces of healing, they gave a sense of strength or consolation to the Vajjīs in a psychological way. In every country, even today, the war dead and fallen heroes often have shrines in their memories. On special occasions, especially in the face of foreign threats or any kind of national difficulties, they would offer prayers with offerings at such places.

**5.6.2.3** A famous example of such a shrine today is **the Yasukuni Shrine** (*yasukuni jinja*), a Shinto shrine located in Chiyoda, Tokyo, Japan. Founded by the Meiji emperor in 1869, it enshrines as “deities” (*kami*) some 2.5 million people who had died during Japan’s wars. This shrine reflects Japanese religious belief as well as national solidarity.

**5.7** “THE VAJJĪS DULY PROTECT AND SHELTER THE ARHATS [WORTHY ONES] SO THAT THEY WHO HAVE NOT YET COME (TO THE COUNTRY) WILL COME, AND THAT THEY WHO HAVE COME WILL DWELL AT EASE” (*vajjīnaṃ arahantesu dhammikā rakkhāvāraṇa, gutti susaṃvihitā bhavissati ‘kin’ti anāgatā ca arahanto vijitaṃ āgaccheyyūṃ, āgatā ca arahanto vijite phāsuṃ vihareyyun’ti*)

### **5.7.1 Licchavī devotion to the Buddha**

The Licchavīs were deeply devoted to the Buddha. Even carefree Licchavī youths, as we have noted [5.5.1], wandering about in the forest with bows and hounds, would lay aside their arms when they saw the Buddha seated under a tree and would approach him with clasped hands, eager to serve and hear from him.

**The (Pañcaka) Piṅgiyāni Sutta** (A 5.195) relates how 500 Licchavīs visited the Buddha in the great wood. Despite their colourful and diverse splendour, the Buddha, in his radiance, outshone them all. This inspires the brahmin Piṅgiyāni to sing verses of praise to the Buddha. The Licchavīs were deeply impressed and each offers him their upper robe. Piṅgiyāni then offers them to the Buddha.<sup>96</sup>

### **5.7.2 Licchavī respect for renunciants**

The Vajjīs were renowned for their devotion the “arhats” (*arahanta*), a generic term for worthy renunciants (*pabbajita*) who visited their realm. They looked forward to such arhats visiting them. When they did come, the Vajjīs would rise and welcome them; they received them hospitably (when they came for alms at their doors); they visited them; they questioned them about their teaching; they offered them alms; they listened to their thanksgiving (*anumodanā*); and they arranged for their accommodation. In this way, too, the Vajjīs gained great merit, and their reputation spread around. (DA 2:521,4-27)

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<sup>96</sup> A 5.195/3:239 f (SD 87.12).

## Sārandada Sutta

### The Discourse at Sārandada

A 7.19

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in **the Sārandada shrine**<sup>97</sup> at Vesālī.

2 Then, a number of Licchavīs approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side. To the Licchavīs sitting at one side, the Blessed One said this:

3 “Listen now, Licchavīs to the 7 conditions for non-decline. Listen well. Pay close attention. I will speak.”<sup>98</sup>

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

4 The Blessed One said this:

What, Licchavīs, are **the 7 conditions for non-decline**?

(1) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs **gather regularly** and their gatherings are well attended, Licchavīs, only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline.<sup>99</sup>

(2) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs **gather in fellowship**, adjourn [arise] in fellowship, manage Vajjī affairs<sup>100</sup> in fellowship, *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline*.<sup>101</sup>

(3) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs **do not promulgate what has not been promulgated**, and **do not abolish** what has been promulgated, but keep to the Vajjī code,<sup>102</sup> *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline*.<sup>103</sup>

(4) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs honour, respect, esteem, revere Vajjī elders and consider it worthwhile to listen to them, *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline*.<sup>104</sup>

(5) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs **do not forcibly abduct women and maidens of family**, compelling them [the women] to cohabit with them, *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline*.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>97</sup> **Sārandada shrine** (*sārandada cetiya*) was dedicated to the yaksha Sārandada (D 2:75, 102; U 6.1/62; DA 2:523; AA 4:9; UA 323; cf A 3:167, 4:16). On shrines, see also §3.1n.

<sup>98</sup> *Satta vo licchavī aparihānīyei* [Be:Ka *aparihānīye*] *dhamme desessāmi, taṃ suṇātha sādhuḥkaṃ manasi, karotha, bhāsissāmīti*.

<sup>99</sup> *Yāvakīvañ ca licchavī vajjī abhiñhaṃ sannipātā bhavissanti sannipāta, bahulā, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikañkhā no parihāni*. See (5.1).

<sup>100</sup> “Vajjī duties,” *vajjī, karaṇīyā*, lit, “that which should be done by the Vajjīs,” ie, their affairs of state and their civil and common duties.

<sup>101</sup> *Yāvakīvañ ca licchavī vajjī samaggā sannipatissanti, samaggā vuṭṭhahissanti, samaggā vajjī, karaṇīyāni karissanti, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikañkhā no parihāni*. See (5.2).

<sup>102</sup> “Vajjī code,” *vajjī, dhammo*, or “the Vajjī tradition,” eg, a criminal (such as a thief) is not summarily judged, but goes through stages of adjudication, until he is found guilty beyond reasonable doubt (DA 2:519).

<sup>103</sup> *Yāvakīvañ ca licchavī vajjī apaññattaṃ na paññāpessanti, paññattaṃ na samucchindissanti, yathā, paññatte porāṇe vajjī, dhamme samādāya vattissanti, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikañkhā no parihāni*. See (5.3).

<sup>104</sup> *Yāvakīvañ ca licchavī vajjī ye te vajjīnaṃ vajjī, mahallakā, te sakkarissanti, garuṃ karissanti mānessanti pūjesanti, tesañca sotabbaṃ maññissanti, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikañkhā no parihāni*. See (5.4).

<sup>105</sup> *Yāvakīvañ ca licchavī vajjī yā tā ku’litthiyo kula, kumāriyo, tā na okkassa pasayha vāsessanti, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikañkhā no parihāni*. See (5.5).

(6) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs honour, respect, [17] esteem, revere the Vajjī shrines, both that are within (the city)<sup>106</sup> and that are outside, and do not neglect the proper offerings previously given, *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline.*<sup>107</sup>

(7) Licchavīs, so long as the Vajjīs duly protect and shelter the arhats [worthy ones] so that they who have not yet come (to the Vajjī country) will come, and those who have come will dwell at ease, *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not their decline.*<sup>108</sup>

5 And, Licchavīs, so long as these 7 conditions for non-decline continue to be observed amongst the Vajjīs, and the Vajjīs conform to these 7 conditions for non-decline, Licchavī, *only the growth of the Vajjīs is to be expected, not decline.*<sup>109</sup>

— evaṃ —

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<sup>106</sup> *Vajjīnaṃ*; foll Comy, “located within the city” (*anto, nagare ṭhitāni*, DA 2:520,20).

<sup>107</sup> *Yāvākīvañ ca licchavī vajjī yāni tāni vajjīnaṃ vajjī, cetiyāni abbhantarāni c’eva bāhirāni ca, tāni sakkarissanti garuṃ karissanti mānessanti pūjessanti, tesañ ca dinna, pubbaṃ kata, pubbaṃ dhammikāṃ baliṃ no parihāpessanti, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā no parihāni*. See (3.4), (5.6).

<sup>108</sup> *Yāvākīvañ ca licchavī vajjīnaṃ arahantesu dhammikā rakkh’āvaraṇa, gutti susaṃvihitā bhavissati ‘kin’ti anāgatā ca arahanto vijitā āgaccheyyurū, āgatā ca arahanto vijite phāsurū vihareyyun’ti, vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā no parihāni*. See (5.7).

<sup>109</sup> *Yāvākīvañ ca licchavī ime satta aparihāniyā dhammā vajjīsu ṭhassanti* [Be:Ka vattissanti], *imesu ca sattu apa-rihāniyesu dhammesu vajjī sandissanti* [so Ce Ee; Be sandissanti] *vuddhiy’eva licchavī vajjīnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā no parihāni*.