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(Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta

The (Eights) Discourse on Fame | A 8.86

Theme: The benefits of monastic forest life and solitude

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2019

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 The (Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta (A 8.86), the (eights) discourse on fame, records the events attending a teaching given by the Buddha to his personal attendant **Nāgita** in a thick wood outside Icchā,naṅgala, in Kosala, where they are staying with a large community of monks. When the brahmin housemasters of the village hear that the Buddha is staying in the forest nearby, they come in a great crowd with food-offerings. [§6]

As they excitedly wait at the forest entrance with their offerings, the Buddha, hearing their din, refuses to see them, and gives this lion-roar: “**May I never meet with fame, Nāgita, nor fame meet with me.**”¹ He adds that only those unable to meditate or lack spiritual joy would be drawn to such offerings [§8].

Nāgita then suggests that the Buddha should meet them. The Buddha is so famous that they would throng to meet him wherever he goes [§9], just as heavy mountain-showers flow from the heights down the slopes [§10]. The Buddha then repeats his lion-roar, this time for Nāgita’s benefit [§11].

The Buddha then gives a set of 8 teachings on the value of solitude in a renunciant’s life. [1.2]

1.2 The 8 teachings on the joy of solitude given by the Buddha in **the (Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta** (A 8.86) are summarized as follows:

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| (1) Even certain deities are unable to attain spiritual joy (of dhyana or of awakening). | [§12] |
| (2) Monks engaging in relationships are unable to attain spiritual joy. | [§13] |
| (3) Monks who like to laugh and play with one another are unable to attain spiritual joy. | [§14] |
| (4) Monks who over-eat and spend time lazing around are unable to attain spiritual joy. | [§15] |
| (5) A monk living outside a village will have his meditation disturbed by others. | [§16] |
| (6) A sleepy forest monk who, upon waking, practises forest perception, gains mental oneness. | [§17] |
| (7) An unconcentrated forest monk will be able to gain concentration and guard his mind. | [§18] |
| (8) A forest monk with mental concentration will be liberated with awakening. | [§19] |

This Sutta, however, underwent some transmission difficulties, with variant sets of 8 items or more. [2.2]

2 The 3 related suttas: A 5.30, A 6.42, A 8.86

2.1 NARRATIVE AND OCCASION

2.1.1 The same background narrative of the 3 suttas

These 3 suttas are given by the Buddha to the monk **Nāgita** while he is serving as the Buddha’s personal attendant, all of them given in the very same venue: the thick wood outside Icchā,naṅgala. These 3 suttas are as follows:

¹ This is an antimetabole. On the aesthetic significance of this statement, see SD 55.12a (3).

A 5.30/3:30-32	(Pañcaka) Nāgita Sutta	The 5 meditations on revulsion	SD 55.12a
A 6.42/3:341-344	(Chakka) Nāgita Sutta	The 4 advantages of forest practice	SD 55.12b
A 8.86/4:340-344	(Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta	The benefits of forest life and solitude	SD 55.13

The narrative behind each of these 3 Suttas is identical, thus:

- §1 The Buddha with a large community of monks arrive at Icchā,naṅgala
 §2 They stay in the thick wood outside the village.
 §§3-4 The Buddha is well known to the brahmin housemasters of the village.
 §5 A great crowd of them with alms-offerings, wait at the forest entrance, making a din.
 §§6-7 Upon the Buddha's asking, his personal attendant Nāgita informs him about the brahmins.
 §8 The Buddha roars a lion-roar about rejecting fame.
 §9-10 Nāgita implores the Buddha to consent to meet the brahmins: he is famous.
 §11 The Buddha repeats his lion-roar, directing it at Nāgita this time.
 §§12-end **The teachings.**

2.1.2 Difference and similarities

2.1.2.1 Of the 3 suttas given to Nāgita mentioned, **the (Pañcaka) Nāgita Sutta** (A 5.30) stands alone in its teachings, which are not found in the other 2 suttas. It gives a set of 5 insights into spiritual **revulsion** (*nibbidā*),² meaning a clear rejection of any thought for the following:

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| (1) attachment to food | it all ends up as dung; |
| (2) attachment people | those dear to us bring us suffering; ³ |
| (3) attachment to the body | a "sign of beauty" is a lustful thought but the body is foul; |
| (4) attachment to things (sense-stimuli) | they are all impermanent; hence, cannot be owned; |
| (5) true reality itself (the 5 aggregates) | our body and mind arise and vanish away every moment. ⁴ |

2.1.2.2 The teaching of **the (Chakka) Nāgita Sutta** (A 6.42) differs from that of A 5.30 [2.1.2.1]. Its set of 6 factors is, however, also found amongst the teachings of **the (Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta** (A 8.86) [2.1.2.3]. The 6 factors of **A 6.42**, that is, the Buddha's praises for the forest life for monks are summarized as follows:

- (1) a monk dwelling on a village-fringe will be distracted from concentration by his attendant or others;
- (2) a forest-dwelling monk who sleepily sits in meditation will waken to do the perception of the forest;
- (3) a forest-dwelling monk who is unconcentrated will be able to concentrate and guard such a mind;
- (4) a forest-dwelling monk who is concentrated will be able to liberate his mind;
- (5) a monk dwelling on a village-fringe, gaining supports, will move on to live in the village or town;
- (6) a forest-dwelling monk who gains the support will not neglect his solitude.

(A 6.42,12-17), SD 55.12b

These 6 factors of **A 6.42** deal only with a single monk, 2 (nos. 2+5) of whom dwell just outside a village or town, that is, too near a non-monastic dwelling (with its attendant disadvantages), and 4 are forest-dwellers (with their advantages). It is likely that this shorter sutta is the older due to its brevity.

² SD 55.12a (3.5).

³ On this teaching, see **Bhadraka S** (S 42.11,6-13), SD 55.7.

⁴ On A 5.30, see also SD 55.12b (1.2.2).

Hence, it is possible that the two suttas are variant records of the same occasion, which can also mean that the longer A 8.86 is an expansion of the shorter A 6.42.⁵

2.1.2.3 The (Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta (A 8.86) is either an extension of the shorter **A 6.42** [2.1.2.2], or the 2 may be versions of an older urtext (a more ancient account). Almost all the manuscripts (Burmese, Sinhalese, Siamese and the European)⁶ have each their own variation of the octad [2.2]. It is likely that the original set comprises the first 8 items on the list, as shown in **Table 2.2**.

2.2 A DOCTRINAL COMPARISON OF A 5.30, A 6.42 AND A 8.86

(Pañcaka) Nāgita Sutta (A 5.30), SD 55.12a	(Chakka) Nāgita Sutta (A 6.42), SD 55.12b	(Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta (A 8.86), SD 55.13
(1) <u>the food</u> we take end up as dung		Se ⁷ Be Ce ⁸ Ee The original list is in bold print — — — [1] 1 some deities do not easily have spiritual joy
(2) <u>those dear</u> to us bring suffering		— — {1} [2] 2 those <u>engaging in companionship</u> are unable to meditate
(3) meditation on <u>the foul</u> rejects the sign of beauty (lust)		(1) ⟨1⟩ {2} [3] 3 those <u>laughing, playfully poking</u> are unable to meditate
(4) contemplating <u>impermanence</u> pushes away sense-stimuli	(1) same as A 8.86 →	(2) ⟨2⟩ {3} [4] 4 those <u>eating too much, slothful</u>, are unable to meditate
(5) contemplating <u>arising and vanishing</u> of the aggregates overcomes clinging	(2) same as A 8.86 →	(3) ⟨3⟩ {4} [5] 5 a monk living <u>outside a village</u> gets distracted by others
	(3) same as A 8.86 →	(4) ⟨4⟩ 5} [6] 6 a <u>forest-dweller</u> nodding but able to do forest meditation
	(4) same as A 8.86 →	(5) ⟨5⟩ {6} [7] 7 a <u>forest-dweller</u> unconcentrated will soon concentrate
	(5) <i>only</i> in A 8.86 →	(6) ⟨6⟩ {7} [8] 8 a <u>forest-dweller</u> concentrated will liberate himself
	(6) <i>only</i> in A 8.86 →	(7) ⟨7⟩ — — [dwells outside village; wants gains, etc; moves into village] ⁹
		(8) ⟨8⟩ — — [forest-dweller gains supports, but does not neglect solitude] ¹⁰
		— — {8} — the Buddha's closing remark

Table 2.2. A comparative table of the teachings of the Nāgita Suttas (A 5.30, A 6.42, A 8.86).

Key: [Ee] {Ce:BJT} ⟨Be⟩ (Se:SR, Se:WT).¹¹ The **bold** items probably form the Sutta's original list of 8 factors.

⁵ See A 6.42 (SD 55.12b): for another possibility, see (1.2.2.3). Cf SD 28.9b (1.1); SD 51.11 (2.1.2.1); SD 53.38 (1.2.2).

⁶ For the initials, see Be, Ce, Ee, Ke, Se, in MSS (1) in SD Guide (SD 01).

⁷ Se:SR does not number its list. The numbering here follows that of the World Tipitaka (Se:WT) accessed from Sutta Central: <https://legacy.suttacentral.net/pi/an8.86>.

⁸ Ee only numbers its paragraphs, beginning with (3), which it numbers as para 4 and so on until para 9.

⁹ This passage occurs in A 6.42,16 (SD 55.12b) but inserted into the Be set.

¹⁰ This passage occurs in A 6.42,17 (SD 55.12b) but inserted into the Be set.

2.2.1 The comparative Table 2.2: conclusions

2.2.1.1 Table 2.2 basically shows that:

- (1) **The (Pañcaka) Nāgita Sutta** (A 5.30) stands alone in having its own set of 5 factors.¹²
- (2) **The (Chakka) Nāgita Sutta** (A 6.42) [2.1.2.2] share the same sextet listed under **A 8.86** [2.1.2.3].
- (3) **The (Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta** (A 8.86) octad varies depending on the Pali editions (see the **Key** under the Table 2.2).

2.2.1.2 Elsewhere, we have noted that either **A 6.42** or **A 8.86** is taught first, but it is likely that **A 5.30** is taught last. [SD 15.2b (1.2.2)]

2.2.2 Possible reasons for the variant octad of A 8.86

2.2.2.1 Each of the **4 main versions** of the Sutta—the Siamese (Se), the European (Ee), the Burmese (Be) and the Ceylonese (Ce)—has its own list of 8 factors. **Six** of these 8 factors overlap—they are all from the original list (as reconstructed here, given in **bold print**) [2.2.3]. Although all these sets mostly overlap, they have significant differences. **The original set** itself comprises the first 8 factors of a total of 12 listed [Table 2.2].

2.2.2.2 Both the **Siamese (or Thai)** (Se:SR) and the **Burmese (Myanmar) editions** of A 8.86 have the same set of 8 factors. They omit the original factors 1+2 but share (1)-(6) = ⟨1⟩-⟨6⟩. Both versions, then, for their respective factors **[(7)]+[(8)]** import the last 2 factors—5-6—from **the (Chakka) Nāgita Sutta** (A 6.42,16+17), which run thus:

16 (5) I see, Nāgita, a monk **dwelling on the village outskirts** who gains robes, almsfood, lodgings, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

Desiring gain, honour and fame, he neglects solitude; he neglects remote lodgings in forests and jungle groves.

16.2 Having entered a village, market-town or royal city, he makes it his home.¹³

For this reason, Nāgita, I am not pleased with this monk's dwelling on the village outskirts.

17 (6) I see, Nāgita, a **forest-dwelling monk** who gains robes, almsfood, lodgings, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

Having dispelled that gain, honour, and praise, he does not neglect solitude; he does not neglect remote lodgings in forests and jungle groves.

For this reason, Nāgita, I am pleased with this monk's forest dwelling. (SD 55.12b)

These additions clearly disrupt the natural sequence of the original list of 8, ending with the forest-dweller who is concentrated and liberated himself [2.2.2.5].

2.2.2.3 Factors (1)-(7) of the **Ceylonese (or Sinhala) edition** of A 8.86 are almost like those of Ee or the original list—that is, except that Ce omits the original (1) “some deities do easily attain spiritual bliss” (those of dhyana or of awakening). Then, as the last factor, (8), it has the Buddha's closing remark (the

¹¹ For details on these initials, see MSS (1) in SG Guide (SD 01).

¹² See A 5.30 (SD 55.12a).

¹³ *Gāma, nigama, raja. dhānīm osarivā vāsaṃ kappeti.*

Sutta’s closing sentence), that wherever he goes he enjoys solitude whether walking on the highway or doing his toilet. Ce is unique in constructing this octad.

However, in doing so, Ce omits the original factor (1), “some deities do not easily have spiritual bliss.” The point is that even those in the heavens cannot easily gain the joys of solitude¹⁴ at any level. By itself, this remark, standing alone, takes on the strength of a keynote. But the Buddha’s closing remark on his joy of solitude is merely one of the 8 factors, albeit *the last one*.

However, when we switch the roles of these two—listing “some deities do not easily have spiritual bliss” with the rest of the original factors as (1)—and letting the Buddha’s closing remark stand alone, it is elevated to his “**lion-roar**” (*sīha, nāda*) on his joys of solitude. In fact, this new arrangement brings out beautifully the Buddha’s gradual teaching on solitude. This is, in fact, the arrangement in **Ee** or the original list [2.2.2.5].

2.2.2.4 Table 2.2 shows that **the European or PTS version of A 8.86** is the same as the original listing of the 8 factors [2.2.3], that is, these are the first 8 factors as taught by the Buddha. We can now think the other way around (use “lateral thinking”): we have taken **the PTS edition listing** as the original listing for the reasons stated above. Once this is clear to us, it is easier to examine the other editions’ listings, and see how each fits or does *not* fit in.

Notice, too, how **the Table** helps us think more “visually”! For example, it is easy for us to notice that in the original octad (far right column in **bold** print), the factors (1)-(4), are in the plural, while (5)-(8) are singular. The rest of the factors (additional ones) relate to gains, except for the last, which is unique, since it is the Buddha’s closing lion-roar.

In an important way, this is how a parable works, too: by appealing to our visual perception. We “see” the ideas, not just “think” it. We shall now discuss further why we should take this listing of 8 factors as the original octad [2.2.3].

2.2.3 The original 8 factors of A 8.86

2.2.3.1 The best and, often, the only way to begin a list is at its very start, with (1)—the passage on “some deities do not easily have spiritual bliss” [Table 2.2] (an abridgement of §12). We have already discussed why this passage should not stand alone [2.2.2.4].

If any changes were made to a sutta, it is usually at the end of a list, passage or sutta itself. No ancient Pali editor was likely to make any change to what had already been preserved earlier—this is the respect for the Dhamma (*dhamma, gāravatā*)¹⁵ in keeping it “perfect in the spirit and in the letter” (*sātharṇ sa, vyañjanam*).¹⁶ [2.2.3.1]

2.2.3.2 Hence, in a list—like that of **A 8.86**—the 1st factor, **(1)**, is likely to have been originally there from the start. In fact, in the A 8.86 near-parallel in **SĀ 1250** we have just this factor regarding “the devas” listed first, too. This shows that this listing had existed in an ancient manuscript used in China to translate SĀ 1250.¹⁷

¹⁴ The 3 levels of solitude are those of the body (*kaya, viveka*), of the mind (*citta, viveka*), and of substrates (*upadhi, viveka*). Simply, the 1st refers to working to overcome the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*: sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt: SD 32.1); the 2nd, the attaining of dhyana [SD 8.4] and lessening of craving; and the 3rd, awakening itself. In the stock-phrase—“joy of renunciation (*nekkhamma, sukha*), the joy of solitude (*paviveka, sukha*), the joy of stillness (*upasama, sukha*), the joy of self-awakening (*sambodha, sukha*)”—*nekkhamma, paviveka, upasama*, are synonyms of *viveka*. See **Viveka, nissita**, SD 20.4 (4.2).

¹⁵ On *dhamma, gāravatā*, see SD 37.11 (3).

¹⁶ See SD 15.9 (2.1) §72.

¹⁷ See SD 55.12b (2.4).

Hence, we have no good reason to doubt taking this factor on “**the deities**,” *as it is*, as the 1st factor in a list of 8. Once this is established, it follows that the other factors should also be accepted as they are, and we have *no* good reason not to.¹⁸

2.2.3.3 Indeed, we can see an interesting gradual sequence here. Factor **(1)** refers to “certain deities” who have difficulties attaining the joys of solitude of any kind. **(2)-(4)** each refers to a **group of monks** living together like a bunch of playful sense-world devas [§12 n], socializing, poking at one another in jest, and over-eating and lazing around—they are all unable to meditate or feel the true joys of solitude.

2.2.3.4 The next few factors: **(4)-(7)**, each refers to a **single monk**: one living just outside a village is likely to be by his attendant and others (visitors, village noise, etc)—he will not be able to meditate or enjoy the joys of solitude. The other 3 monks—all forest dwellers—whether any of them is overcome with nodding (sleepiness), or is unable to concentrate (at times), or is able to do so—each of them will, in time, be able to attain dhyana and the joys of solitude [Table 2.2]. The 4 individual monks, (5)-(8), as a subset, flows smoothly from the preceding factors (1)-(4).

2.2.3.5 Now, we have the last factor, **(8)**, “a forest dweller, concentrated, will liberate himself.” We have also seen why the passage “some deities do not easily have spiritual joy” [Table 2.2] (an abridgement of §12) should *not* stand alone, but should be listed as factor as **(1)**. This arrangement frees the Sutta’s closing sentence (the Buddha’s lion-roar on his joy of solitude) to stand alone prominently as the Sutta’s closing climax [2.2.2.4, 2.2.3.1].

Considering all the above reasons, then, Ce is clearly wrong in numbering **{8}** {within braces} in **Table 2.2**, as the last of the octads. Neither is this arrangement found in any other editions. It is clearly not a part of the octad but stands on its own as the Buddha’s final word in the Sutta, his lion-roar.

2.2.4 The textual variations in Ce

The way that **Ce** arranges its octad is unique. It omits the original (1)—on “some deities do not easily have spiritual joy”—and adds “the Buddha’s closing remark” (which stands on its own in all versions)—as the last, **(8)**, of its octad. Textually, it has no good reason to do so [2.2.3.5].

As we have noted: any addition or change is likelier to be done to the end of a list [2.2.3.1]. Here, however, it has happened probably because the Ce editors were uncertain of what exactly constitutes the A 8.86 octad and introduced its own innovation, which is clearly unnecessary, since the original Sutta octad sounds quite natural just as it is.

3 Related teaching: The mental bondages

3.1 THE 5 MENTAL BONDAGES

3.1.1 For the purpose of Dharma reflection, we can relate the 1st 5 factors—which refer to those who have difficulty meditating or unable to feel the joy of solitude—the **5 mental bondages** (*cetaso, vinibandha*)—which are an alternative set of the 5 mental hindrances.¹⁹ The set of 5 mental bondages are recorded, for example, in **the Ceto, khila Sutta** (M 16) and **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33).²⁰

¹⁸ Bh Brahmalī of Perth (Australia) has also suggested taking this as (1): A:B 1814 n1807.

¹⁹ The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are (1) sensual lust (*kāma-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), (4) sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1; (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgāraṇa S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12.

3.1.2 These 5 mental bondages or hindrances imprison us to our body, physical and mental. **Physically**, we become so body-centred that we are pathologically lust-ridden. **Psychologically**, the mind is so self-centred that we are narcissistic, malignantly self-centred. Hence, we are unable to meditate; we cannot taste inner joy or peace. Moreover, these bondages also hinder us from progressing to train and free the mind from the body (that is, the 5 senses) and from thoughts, so that we do not mentally develop.²¹

3.1.3 Paraphrased, **the 5 mental bondages** are as follows [with the related factors of **A 8.86** given within [square brackets] on the far right, thus:

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| (1) When a monk (meditator) has <u>lust, desire, love, thirst, fever, craving</u> for sensuality , his mind will lack ardour, devotion, perseverance, striving. | [2] |
| (2) When a monk has <u>craving</u> for the body , his mind is <u>badly weakened</u> . | [3] |
| (3) When a monk has <u>craving</u> for form , his mind is <u>badly weakened</u> . | [5] |
| (4) When a monk <u>over-eats and resorts to the pleasure of the bed</u> , his mind is <u>badly weakened</u> . | [4] |
| (5) When a monk lives <u>aspiring for heavenly life</u> , his mind is badly weakened. | [1] |

3.2 THE 5 MENTAL BONDAGE AND THE SUTTA FACTORS

Briefly, this is how the 5 mental bondages prevent our mental and spiritual development.²²

(1) To crave for sensuality means being caught up by our physical senses, letting our thoughts be flooded and flow with the streams of sense-stimuli so that we “drown” in the world. We do not really enjoy what we see, hear, smell, taste or touch—we only see them as objects of pleasures to be collected; or objects of discomfort or pain to be rejected; and uninteresting things to be ignored.

In short, we are merely being reactive to our senses in an almost animal-like manner, living to feed the body that is the senses. **The 2nd factor** [§13]—monks gathering and engaging in intimate intercourse—is that of seeing our body and the body of others as the sources of pleasure. Hence, there is a drive to *enjoy* others as objects of pleasure. This outward-bound pleasure-quest leaves us neglecting the effort to know and understand our own mind—which prevents us from cultivating it for the joy of solitude or inner peace.

(2) To crave for the body means holding the view that our body is our “self,” with which we identify and which we work to gratify. This body is our youth, health and life, with which we are intoxicated.²³ Only they, nothing else, really seem to matter.

The 3rd factor—that of “monks laughing and playfully poking one another with the fingers” [§14]. This is an intoxicated frivolity. This intoxication blurs our vision of the true realities of decay, disease and death. Hence, we will never taste the space, light and peace of wisdom.

(3) To crave for form means basically being attracted to others as “forms,” the projection of our own psychological needs and emotional wants. We see ourselves as what is “out there,” the “friends” we have, the “connections” we keep, the ambience of power, greatness and luxury that frames us. We depend on

²⁰ **Ceto, khila S** (M 16,8-12), SD 32.14 & **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(20)/3:238 f), SD 51.10(3.3.2). For other related suttas, see SD 51.10 (3).

²¹ On how lust stunts us, keeping us imprisoned in our body, see **Kāma-c, chanda**, SD 32.2. On narcissism, see **Me and the nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a.

²² For details, see SD 51.10 (2.2).

²³ On these 3 intoxications (*mada*), see **Mada S** (A 3.39), SD 42.13; **Sukhumāla S** (A 3.38), SD 1.11 (3.2).

the attention and approval of others: the “form” or mirage of our great self is constructed, as it were, by, of and for others. We don’t seem to have any real life of our own.

Such a condition is suggested by **the 5th factor** [§16]—that of the monk living just outside a village, and is distracted by others so that he is unable to actually meditate. He is unable to calm his mind and enjoy inner bliss and peace.

(4) To over-eat and then indulge in the pleasures of the bed refers to feeding the body but starving the mind, as it were. When the body has more food than it needs, it stores the surplus as bulk and fat and spawns laziness. What energy we may have or effort we may make would only be in the service of our body. Our dull mind is bound by our lazy body. This mental bondage is exactly the same as that of **the 4th factor**—over-eating and lazing around. [§15].

(5) To aspire for heavenly life directly and badly weakens our mind because, with this serious wrong view, we are not only looking outward, but into the far horizon or some light-years away, at some promised or imagined posthumous heaven. Whatever we do here, even our religious life, is directed to the afterdeath. Instead, we should be looking directly and deeply into our own minds, where all our real problems are rooted.

As **the 1st factor** tells us: not all the gods are able to gain true spiritual peace. They will all still fall from even their highest heavens into the lowest realms of the samsaric cycle of rebirths and redeaths. The point is that we need to break this endless samsara. This we can only do by freeing our mind.

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(Aṭṭhaka) Yasa Sutta

The (Eights) Discourse on Fame

A 8.86

1 [1] Thus have I heard.²⁴

The Buddha visits Icchā,naṅgala

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was wandering in Kosala together with a large community of monks. He reached a brahmin village of the Kosalas named **Icchā,naṅgala**.²⁵

2 There the Blessed One stayed in a thick wood²⁶ outside Icchānaṅgala.

3 [2] **The brahmin housemasters**²⁷ of Icchānaṅgala heard:

²⁴ This Sutta’s opening narrative up to the Buddha’s lion-roar on fame (§§1-11) recurs in **(Pañcaka) Nāgita S** (A 5.30,1-11), SD 55.12a, and **(Chakka) Nāgita S** (A 6.42,1-11), SD 55.12b.

²⁵ A brahmin village near Ukkatthā in Kosala country; also called Icchā,naṅkala (Sn p15). See SD 34.8 (1.3).

²⁶ “In a thick wood,” *vana,sande*, jungle thicket, dense jungle (D 1:87, 177; S 3:109; A 3:30; J 1:92, 170. The adj *saṅḍa* means (1) “thick, dense,” as in *~c,chaya*, “giving dense shade” (S 4:194; J 1:47, 249); (2) (thick) wood, forest, as in *~vihāra*, “dwelling in the wood, life as a forest hermit” (Tha 688; cf Tha:N n688).

²⁷ “Brahmin housemasters,” *brāhmaṇa,gahapatike*. The word *gaha,patika* or “housemaster” is glossed as “a lord of the house who is the elder of only one house” (*gehassa pati eka,geha,matte jetṭhako*, DA 1:171; Nc 342; PvA 39),

“It is said that the recluse Gotama, the Sakya son who went forth from a Sakya family, has arrived at Icchānaṅgala and is now dwelling in the thick wood outside Icchānaṅgala.

4²⁸ Concerning this Blessed One, this fair report has been spread about, thus:²⁹

‘So, too, is he the Blessed One:³⁰

for, he is arhat,	fully self-awakened,
accomplished in knowledge and conduct,	well-gone,
knower of the worlds,	unexcelled trainer of tamable people,
teacher of beings human and divine,	awakened,
blessed.	

4.2 Having realized by his own direct knowledge

this world with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās,
this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people,
he makes it known to others.

He teaches the Dharma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end,
both in the spirit and in the letter.

He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.’

4.3 It is good to see arhats such as these.”³¹

The brahmins visit the Buddha

5 Then, when the night had passed, the brahmin housemasters of Icchānaṅgala took abundant food of various kinds and went to the thick wood outside Icchānaṅgala. [341]

They stood outside the entrance, making a great noise, a din.

6 [3] Now at that time, the venerable Nāgita was the Blessed One’s attendant.³²

The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Nāgita:

“What’s that great noise, Nāgita, that din? It sounds to me like fishermen plundering fish!”³³

7 “Bhante, these are the brahmin housemasters of Icchānaṅgala who have brought abundant food of various kinds. They are standing outside the entrance, expecting (to make the food-offerings to) the Blessed One and the community of monks.”

The Buddha’s lion-roar of non-fame

8 ³⁴“May I never meet with fame, Nāgita, nor fame ever meet with me.”³⁵

but they are all addressed as “houmelord/s,” eg **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,3+4/1:401), SD 35.5. For details: (**Pañcaka**) **Nāgita S** (A 5.30,3) n (SD 55.12a).

²⁸ This whole section is omitted from the Chin near-parallels, *SĀ* 1250+1251: SD 55.12b (2).

²⁹ *Evam kalyāṇo kitti,saddo abbhuggato*: **V** 1:35; **D** 1:49, 116, 236, 2:317; **M** 1:285, 2:167; **S** 5:352; **A** 1:180, 3:58, 4:80 (*kalyāṇo ... abbhuggaccheyya*); **Sn** p103; **J** 1:509.

³⁰ Alt tr: “For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord] ...” On the meaning of *iti pi so*, see **Bud-dhānussati**, SD 15.7 (2.2) & n.

³¹ *Sādhū kho pana tathā,rūpānaṃ arahataṃ dassanaṃ hotī ti*. *Arahatam* is 3 gen pl. For details on this statement, see **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65/1:188-193) @ SD 35.4a (comy n 1d). On “kept silent” as social or emotional distance, see SD 44.1 (2.2); see also **Love**, SD 38.4 (6.3).

³² On Nāgita, see SD 55.12a (1.1.3.2).

³³ *Ke pana te nāgita uccā,saddā mahā,saddā kevaṭṭā maññe maccha,vilope’ti*. *Vilopa* means “plunder, pillage.” See SD 55.12a (2).

³⁴ §8 recurs at A 5.30 (SD 55.12a) = A 6.42,8 (SD 55.12b).

8.2 Nāgita, let one who does not attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of stillness, this joy of self-awakening³⁶—

8.3 *this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of stillness, this joy of self-awakening* that I can attain at will, without trouble or difficulty³⁷—

8.4 let him enjoy for himself that dung of pleasure,³⁸ that sloth of pleasure, those pleasures of gain, honour and praise!³⁹

Nāgita's reaction

9 “Let the Blessed One now consent,⁴⁰ bhante, let the welcome one consent! This is now the time for the Blessed One to consent.

Wherever the Blessed One will go now, the brahmin housemasters of town and countryside will incline in the same direction.

10 Just as, [342] when **heavy rain-drops** are falling, the water flows down along the slopes, even so, wherever the Blessed One will go now, the brahmin housemasters of town and country will incline in the same direction.

10.2 What is the reason for this? Because of the Blessed One's moral virtue and wisdom.”

Reprise: The Buddha's lion-roar

11 “*May I never meet with fame, Nāgita, nor fame ever meet with me.*

Nāgita, let one who attains not at will, without trouble or difficulty, this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of stillness, this joy of self-awakening,

this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of stillness, this joy of self-awakening that I can attain at will, without trouble or difficulty

*let him enjoy for himself that dung of pleasure, that sloth of pleasure, those pleasures of gain, honour and praise!*⁴¹

³⁵ *Māhaṃ nāgita yasena samāgamaṃ, mā ca mayā yaso.* This sentence is an example of an antimetabole: SD 55.12a (3.2.1.2).

³⁶ *Yo kho nāgita na-y-imassa nekkhama, sukhasa paviveka, sukhasa upasama, sukhasa sambodha, sukhasa nikāma, lābhī assa akiccha, lābhī akasita. lābhī.* Psychologically, the implication is that those who lack inner joy, esp that of meditation and awakening, are drawn to “gain, honour and praise.”

³⁷ *Yassāhaṃ nekkhamma, sukhasa paviveka, sukhasa upasama, sukhasa sambodha, sukhasa nikāma, lābhī akiccha, lābhī akasira, lābhī.* The underscored is stock describing the ease with which the Buddha attains dhyana: see eg **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28,19.3) +n (SD 14.14).

³⁸ On *mīlha, sukha*, see also **Laṭukikōpama S** (M 66,19/1:454,14), SD 28.11; **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9.2/3:233,-22, 13(3)/3:236,13), SD 7.8; **(Pañcaka) Nāgita S** (A 5.30,8.4/3:31,13, 11/3:29), SD 55.12a; **(Chakka) Nāgita S** (A 6.42,-8.4/3:342,11, 11/3:27), SD 55.12b; **(Aṭṭhaka) Yasa S** (A 8.86,8.4/4:341,21, 11/4:42,11), SD 55.13. See SD 55.12a (3.4.1.3).

³⁹ *So taṃ mīlha, sukhaṃ middhā, sukhaṃ lābha, sakkāra, silokaṃ sādiyeyyāti.*

⁴⁰ “Consent” to welcoming the noisy brahmins and their offerings. See SD 55.12a (3.6).

⁴¹ This reprise is a subtle rebuke to Nāgita!

The 8 teachings on solitude⁴²

12 (1) Even **certain deities**,⁴³ Nāgita, are unable to attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of stillness, this joy of self-awakening,

12.2 *this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of stillness, this joy of self-awakening* that I can attain *at will, without trouble or difficulty.*

13 (2) When, Nāgita, you gather and meet, **engaging in intimate intercourse**,⁴⁴ it occurs to me:⁴⁵

‘Surely, these venerable ones do not attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of peace, this joy of self-awakening that I attain at will, without trouble or difficulty.’

For, when they [343] gather and meet, they dwell engaged in companionship.

14 [4] (3) Nāgita, I see monks **laughing**⁴⁶ **and playfully poking one another with the fingers**.⁴⁷ It then occurs to me:

‘Surely, these venerable ones do not attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of peace, this joy of self-awakening that I attain at will, without trouble or difficulty.’

For, these venerable ones laugh and playfully poke one another with the fingers.’

15 [5] (4) I see, Nāgita, monks who, **having eaten as much as they want** until their bellies are over-filled,⁴⁸ dwell in the pleasure of the bed, the pleasure of sloth, the pleasure of sleep.⁴⁹

It then occurs to me:

‘Surely, these venerable ones do not attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, this joy of renunciation, this joy of solitude, this joy of peace, this joy of self-awakening that I attain at will, without trouble or difficulty.’

⁴² The foll teachings are not found in A 5.30 (SD 55.12a). The 6 factors of 6.42 (SD 55.12b) recur in the set of 8 factors here: (2.2) + Table.

⁴³ As a rule, the deities (*devatā*; or *devas*) of the sense-world arise there on account of their merit. The deities of the form world and the formless world need both merit and dhyana to arise in their respective realms there. Hence, the allusion is to the sense-world deities.

⁴⁴ “Engaging in intimate intercourse” (*saṅgaṇika, viharaṃ anuyuttā viharataṃ*). The allusion is clearly to monastics socializing, forming emotional bonds or having sexual relations, with one another. The word *saṅgaṇika* usu means “companionship,” but suggests something sensual, illicit or unwholesome (*saṅgaṇa*). This term is closely related to the 7 “bonds of sexuality” (*methuna samyoga*) which monastics are warned against: (1) enjoying physical contact; (2) socializing (especially for the pleasure of it); (3) lusting after the physical form; (4) distracted by pleasurable sounds; (5) delighting in frivolities with others; (6) approving of others indulging in physical pleasures; and (7) living the holy life for the sake of going to heaven: SD 31.7 (2.3).

⁴⁵ *Tumhakam pi kho nāgita saṅgamma samāgamma saṅgaṇika, vihāraṃ anuyuttaṃ viharataṃ evaṃ hoti*

⁴⁶ “Going about with a loud laugh among houses” (*ujjagghikāya antara, ghare gamissamīti*) (Pāc 11 @ V 4:187, 16 f) or “sitting down with a loud laugh among houses” (*ujjagghikāya smysts.ghare nisldissāmīti*) (Pāc 12 @ V 4:187, -16 f) entail an “expiation.” Although technically “laughing loudly” is specified to sitting and walking (the occasions for introducing the rules), in spirit, the rules are about decorum to inspire faith the laity and others; hence, loud laughing in other postures even within the monasteries is wrong.

⁴⁷ “Poking with the fingers” (*aṅguli, patodaka*) entails an offence of “expiation” (Pāc 52 @ V4:111,7).

⁴⁸ “Until their bellies are over-filled,” *yāvad-atthaṃ udarāvadehakaṃ*. **Udarāvadehakaṃ** = *udara*, “belly” + *ava-dehaka* (*ava*, “down” + absol of *avadihati*, “increases, accumulates,” ie, bloats up). Comy glosses *middha* as *niddā* (sleep) (MA 2:69): see **Thīna, middha**, SD 32.6 (2.2). For details, see **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(20),11) n, SD 51.10(2.3.2).

⁴⁹ *Seyy, sukhaṃ passa, sukhaṃ middha, sukhaṃ anuyutte viharante*. Cf **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(20),11) n, SD 51.10(2.3.2).

For, these venerable ones the pleasure dwell engaged in the pleasure of the bed, the pleasure of sloth, the pleasure of sleep.’

16 [6] (5) Here, Nāgita, I see a monk **dwelling on the village outskirts**⁵⁰ sitting in a state of concentration. It then occurs to me:

‘Now a monastery attendant or a novice or a fellow in the Dharma will return to that venerable one, which will cause him to fall away from that concentration.’⁵¹ **[344]**

For this reason, I am not pleased with this monk’s dwelling on the outskirts of a village.

17 [7] (6) I see, Nāgita, a **forest-dwelling monk** sitting and nodding in the forest. It then occurs to me:⁵²

‘Now this venerable one will dispel this sleepiness and fatigue and attend only to the perception of forest, [a state of] oneness.’⁵³

For this reason, I am pleased with this monk’s dwelling in the forest.

18 [8] (7) I see, Nāgita, a **forest-dwelling monk** sitting in the forest in an unconcentrated state. It then occurs to me:⁵⁴

‘Now this venerable one will concentrate his unconcentrated mind or guard his concentrated mind.’⁵⁵

For this reason I am pleased with this monk’s dwelling in the forest.

19 [9] (8) I see, Nāgita, a **forest-dwelling monk** sitting in the forest, in a state of **concentration**.

It then occurs to me:

‘Now this venerable one will liberate his unliberated mind or guard his liberated mind.’⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *Gam’anta, vihāriṃ*. This means that the monk resides just outside the fringe of a village or a town, or in a city suburb (which is quieter but still populated by the laity). Strictly speaking, a monastery or monastic dwelling should be away from any cluster of laity. Hence, the idea of an urban “house-vihara” is foreign to early Buddhism. In a modern situation where one, for good reasons, has to start with a monastic residence in an urban area, careful consideration must be given to keeping to the Vinaya as closely as possible, and yet giving the public wholesome access to the Dharma.

⁵¹ *Ee idāni imaṃ āyasmantaṃ ārāmiko vā paccessi* samaṇ’uddeso vā, taṃ tamhā samādhimhā cāvissatīti. Ce ārāmiko vā samaṇ’uddeso vā saha, dhammiko vā.* [* Ce so; Be *upaṭṭhahissati*, “will attend (to him)”; Ee *saccesati* wr. Not in A 6.42,12.] Both Be Ee omit *sahadhammiko vā* (as in A 6.42). Be differs: *idān’imaṃ āyasmantaṃ ārāmiko va upaṭṭhahissati samaṇ’uddeso vā taṃ tamhā samādhimhā cāvessati*, “Now a monastery attendant or a novice will serve this venerable one, which will cause him to fall away from that concentration” (as at A 6.42,12), SD 55.12b.

⁵² On how the Buddha instructs the nodding Moggallāna before his awakening, see **Pacalā S** (A 7.58), SD 4.11.

⁵³ *Arañña, saññāṃ yeva manasi karissati ekattaṃ*. Comy: “**Oneness**: he will bring to mind just the perception of the forest, a one-pointed state of uniformity” (*eka, sabhāvaṃ, ek’aggata, bhūtaṃ arañña, saññāṃ yeva citte karissati*, AA 3:367,20 f). On the perception of the forest, cf **S** (M 121): *arañña, saññāṃ paṭicca manasi karoti ekattaṃ*, “he attends to the oneness dependent on the perception of the forest.” (M 121/3:104,20 f), SD 11.3.

⁵⁴ For such a situation where meditators struggle with various hindrances, see **(Anuruddha) Upakkilesa S** (M 128), esp the section on the “11 impurities” (§§15-32), SD 5.18.

⁵⁵ *Idāni ayam āyasmā asamāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ samādahissati samāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ anurakkhissatīti* It means that, the forest monk is not only able to meditate, but, upon gaining mental concentration, is able to prevent it from disappearing. In this way, he will be able to progress in his meditation and mental training.

⁵⁶ *Idāni ayam āyasmā avimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ vimuccissati, vimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ anurakkhissatīti*. Clearly, *vimutta* here refers to dhyana (*jhāna*) rather than awakening itself, since the latter need not be “guarded.” Or, better, we can take it as referring to the 1st 3 paths—the meaning is that we should not stop until arhathood is won. The significance here is clear: concentration (*samādhi*) or dhyana (*jhāna*) is not good in itself—it may be misconstrued as a “status” for self-promotion, or be misunderstood by others to be so. It is itself a conditioned “state” that must be

For this reason, I am pleased with this monk's dwelling in the forest.
[Here Be Se inserts A 6.42,16+17: (2.2.2.2).]

The Buddha's lion-roar on his love of solitude

20 When, Nāgita, I am traveling on a highway and do not see anyone ahead of me or behind me, or even in the act of defaecating and urinating—at that time I am at ease.⁵⁷

— evaṃ —

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renounced or transcended for nothing less than reaching the path *in this life itself*: **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7. Note also how the Buddha often declares: “But there is here something more to be done” (*atthi c’ev’ettha uttariṃ karaṇīyaṃ*): **(Ānanda) Subha S** (D 10,1.31 + passim), SD 40a.13; **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114), SD 39.8 (1.1.1.8); **(Gaha,pati) Potaliya S** (M 54,14), SD 43.8; SD 51.17 (3.4.2.5).

⁵⁷ *Yasmā’haṃ nāgita samaye addhāna,magga,paṭipanno na kiñci passāmi purato vā pacchato vā phāsu me nāgita tasmīṃ samaye hoti antamaso uccāra,passāva,kammassāyāti.*