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Saṅkha,dhama Sutta

The Discourse on the Conch-blower | S 42.8

Theme: How lovingkindness limits the effects of our karma

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2015

1 Summary and significance

1.1 SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

1.1.1 Sutta summary

The **Saṅkha,dhama Sutta** (S 42.8) is a short but significant criticism of the Jain idea of karma by the Buddha. The Jain teacher, nirgrantha Nāta,putta or Mahāvīra,¹ teaches that those who often kill, steal, misconducts sexually or lie are all reborn in hell [§4]. The Buddha retorts that, since we do not *often* do these bad karmic deeds, no one will go to hell [§§5-8]. Moreover, there is the real unwholesome danger thinking *negatively* about our bad karma—*this* creates hellish sufferings for us [§§9-12].

The Buddha declares that he teaches **moral restraint**, that is, to abstain from the 4 bad karmic deeds. When we reflect and realize we have broken a precept, we will be diligent in abstaining from such bad deeds [§§13-17]. In this way, we cultivate the 10 courses of wholesome karma [§18]. Further, we practise the 4 immeasurables (*brahma, vihara*, or divine abodes) to free ourself of our karma [§§18-27].

Impressed, Asi,bandhaka,putta goes to the 3 jewels for refuge to become a lay-follower. [§28].

1.1.2 Asi,bandhaka,putta's faith in the Buddha

1.1.2.1 Asi,bandhaka,putta,² “the swordsmith’s son,” is a Kosala brahmin headman (*gāmaṇi*) of a village outside Nālandā. He is a nirgrantha disciple (*sāvaka*), meaning that he is a respected follower of the Jains. However, in all these 4 suttas we have about him, he is depicted as being deeply respectful of the Buddha. Unlike other brahmins, who usually address the Buddha simply as “sir” (*bho*), Asi,bandhaka,putta is reported as constantly addressing the Buddha properly as *bhante* and “Blessed One.”

At the end of each of the 4 occasions reported of his visits to the Buddha, he goes for refuge addressing the Buddha respectfully in the same way. The 4 occasions of his visit to the Buddha are recorded in the following suttas in **the Gāmaṇi Saṃyutta** (S 42) of the Saṃyutta Nikāya:

S 42.6	Asi,bandhaka,putta Sutta	Only karma determines rebirth	SD 39.9
S 42.7	(Khetta) Desanā Sutta	The parable of the 3 fields	SD 51.12
S 42.8	Saṅkha,dhama Sutta	Nāta,putta’s view of bad karma and hell	SD 57.9
S 42.9	(Gāmaṇi) Kulā Sutta	Jains use him to ask the Buddha a trick question	SD 7.11

1.1.2.2 We will here try to work out the chronology of the 4 suttas that recount Asi,bandhaka,putta’s meetings with the Buddha.

Now, of the 4 suttas, **S 42.8** records Asi,bandhaka,putta as simply approaching the Buddha and then sitting down silently [§2]. The Buddha initiates the lesson by asking him how the nirgrantha Nāta,putta teaches his disciples their Dharma. All the other 3 suttas show Asi,bandhaka,putta as **saluting** the

¹ On Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta or Mahāvīra, see SD 27.1 (2.1).

² For other details and discussion on Asi,bandhaka,putta, see SD 39.9 (1).

Buddha, and addressing him properly as *bhante* throughout, and going for refuge at the end of every lesson. It makes good sense for the Buddha to begin by asking Asi,bandhaka,putta about his own Jain beliefs. The Buddha’s convincing answer moves Asi,bandhaka,putta to go for refuge. Clearly then, S 42.8 must be the Sutta recording **their 1st meeting**.

S 42.9 probably records Asi,bandhaka,putta’s **2nd meeting** with the Buddha, when, during a famine in Nāḷandā, Nāta,putta instructs his reluctant disciple (perhaps to exploit his familiarity with the Buddha or undermine his faith in him) to confront the Buddha with the question why he has come to Nāḷandā with a large community of monks when there is a famine—*is he trying to destroy families?* The Buddha gives 8 reasons for famines, none of which has to do with destroying families. Asi,bandhaka,putta is impressed and goes for refuge a 2nd time.

S 42.6 probably records Asi,bandhaka,putta’s **3rd meeting** with the Buddha. This time he asks the Buddha about his own belief whether brahminical death-rituals are able to bring heavenly rebirth to the dead. The Buddha’s well-reasoned and clear reply convinces Asi,bandhaka,putta, and he goes for refuge a 3rd time.

S 42.7, by the process of elimination, must be the sutta recording their 4th meeting, by which time, Asi,bandhaka,putta is more familiar with the Buddha’s teaching, and asks him about why, in his teachings, he gives priority to the monks. The Buddha replies with the parable of the 3 fields, which convinces Asi,bandhaka,putta, and he goes for refuge a 4th time.

Hence, we can rearrange the 4 suttas about **Asi,bandhaka,putta** chronologically in this manner:

(1) S 42.8	Saṅkha,dhama Sutta	Nāta,putta’s view of bad karma and hell	SD 57.9
(2) S 42.9	(Gāmaṇi) Kulā Sutta	Jains use him to ask the Buddha a trick question	SD 7.11
(3) S 42.6	Asi,bandhaka,putta Sutta	Only karma determines rebirth	SD 39.9
(4) S 42.7	(Khetta) Desanā Sutta	The parable of the 3 fields	SD 51.12

Whether this chronology is correct temporally or not is, however, secondary to the fact that they show Asi,bandhaka,putta to be a man of good faith in truth who is amenable to the Buddha’s teaching, preserving teachings that are of great practical value to us even today.

1.2 MORAL VIRTUE

1.2.1 Bad karma and hell

1.2.1.1 On being asked by the Buddha what Nirgrantha Nāta,putta teaches his disciples, Asi,bandhaka,putta replies that Nāta,putta teaches that anyone who often breaks any of **the 4 precepts**—against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, or lying—will surely go to hell. The Buddha replies that, considering how infrequently we *kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct or lie*, according to Nāta,putta’s teaching, no one would go to hell! [§§2-8]

On a more serious note, warns the Buddha, anyone who has faith in Nāta,putta and heeds such a teaching, would be deeply troubled, feeling guilty and negative, on reflecting that they have broken any of those precepts (even if infrequently). This is the kind of negative thinking that actually creates hellish sufferings in them!³ [§§9-12]

1.2.1.2 The Buddha’s approach, on the other hand, is to make an unequivocal moral stand on the 4 precepts: that *we should abstain from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct and from lying*. When a faithful disciple reflects on such teachings and recalls having broken a precept, he acknowledges it, that

³ On “hell” as painful feelings, see **Pātāla S** (S 36.4), SD 2.25.

it is done: he regrets this bad deed of his that cannot be undone. Reflecting in this manner, he is determined to abandon the bad deed—"thus, there is an overcoming of that bad deed." [§§13-17]

With such a wholesome karmic attitude, the practitioner not only keeps the precepts, but also protects all **the 3 karmic doors**⁴ of *body, speech and mind* by practising the 10 wholesome courses of karma.⁵ Then, with this moral virtue as foundation, he clears his mind of the 3 unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion,⁶ and goes on to cultivate **the 4 divine abodes** of *lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity*.⁷ He pervades the whole world—his whole being [2.1]—with these immeasurable qualities, like **a conch-blower** sounding his conch that is heard in all the quarters. [§§18-27; 2.2]

1.2.2 The 4 precepts

1.2.2.1 In **the Saṅkha,dhama Sutta** (S 42.8), Asi,bandhaka,putta quotes Nirgrantha Nāta,putta as referring to **the 4 precepts** against *killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and lying*. These **4 precepts** are ancient, older than the 5 precepts, and are common to both early Jainism and early Buddhism.⁸ The Buddha's main argument against the Jain approach to precept-breaking is that it seems simplistic: that we are *only punished* for such and such a breach: "Whoever destroys life, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell" [§4].

The Buddha gives similar teachings on the precepts in **the Sabba,lahusa Sutta** (A 8.40), where he, more qualifiedly states thus:

"Bhikshus, **the killing of living beings**, resorted to, cultivated, often doing it, brings about hell, the animal kingdom, the realm of the departed.

The lightest⁹ fruit of the killing of living beings is a human state that conduces to a short life."

It's not merely the act of killing that defines its fruit, such as "hell." The karmic dimension is defined by *intention, circumstance and habit (frequency)*—that one intends it, that it is done out of greed, hate or delusion, that it is compulsively done whenever the conditions arise. In other words, there is the mind that is bent to such a negative purpose, that when one does not regret such an act, and that it will recur when similar conditions arise, whether one is conscious of it or not.¹⁰

1.2.2.2 The Sabba,lahusa Sutta (A 8.40) lists these 8 kinds of unwholesome karma of body and speech: *killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, frivolous speech and the taking of intoxicants*. When any of these is "resorted to, cultivated, often done, brings about hell, the animal womb, the preta realm."¹¹ The Sutta lists down the severest fruit of a bad karma—arising in the 3 suffering states (apāya) and its "lightest" (*sabba,lahusa*) fruit, which is as follows:

⁴ On the 3 karmic doors (dvāra), see SD 29.6a (1.1).

⁵ On the 10 wholesome courses of karma (kusala kamma,patha), see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7; **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,7.2-12), SD 3.9.

⁶ On the 3 unwholesome roots (akusala mūla), see **Mūla S** (A 3.69), SD 18.2; SD 4.14 (1.5); SD 50.20 (3.1.3).

⁷ On the 4 divine abodes (brahma,vihāra), see **Tevijja S** (D 13,76-79), SD 1.8; **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5; SD 51.14 (3.2.2.3).

⁸ See **(Catukka) Niraya S** (A 4.64), **(Catukka) Pāṇātipāta S** (A 4.81), **(Catukka) Pāṇātipāta S 1** (A 4.214), **(Catukka) Pāṇātipāta S 2** (A 4.224): SD 47.3b (2.1).

⁹ "Lightest," *sabba,lahusa*. Comy glosses as *parittaka*, "small."

¹⁰ On the efficacy of karma unconsciously done (*asampajāna*): **The unconscious**, SD 51.20 (2.2.2).

¹¹ *Āsevito bhāvito bahulī,kato, niraya,samvattaniko tiracchāna,yoni,samvattaniko, pitti,visaya,samvattaniko*.

karma of body and speech

- (1) killing
- (2) stealing
- (3) sexual misconduct
- (4) false speech
- (5) divisive speech
- (6) harsh speech
- (7) frivolous speech
- (8) the taking of intoxicants

the lightest fruit when habitually done by a human is a state that conduces to:

- a short life
 loss of property
 rivalry and hate
 false accusations
 break-ups amongst friends
 unpleasant sounds (making such sounds or subject to hearing them)
 others not heeding our words
 madness

We must be careful not to misconstrue all this as a *consequentialist* “punishment” for our bad karma, which is not what the Sutta is teaching us. Karma does not “punish” us, since it is not an external agency, but what our own mind does. Rather, we become our karma: on account of our intentions, habits and conditionings, we are likely to experience or “suffer” such fruits. The suffering arises not from the fruits themselves but rather our own reaction to these fruits. In other words, despite these negative fruits of past karma, we are still able, with wisdom and diligence, to rise above them by creating new wholesome karma.

1.2.2.3 The teachings of **the Sabba,lahusa Sutta** [1.2.2.2] may be seen as an elaboration of the 4 precepts [1.2.2.1]. In terms of daily practice, the 8 factors of the Sabba,lahusa Sutta have been compacted into **the 5 precepts** (*pañca, sīla*). The 4 precepts (*sikkhāpada*) of **the Saṅkha, dhama Sutta** [1.2.2], then, highlight the 3 key bodily actions and the 1 key verbal action that are unwholesome, from which we should abstain. When the 1 verbal action is fully listed out, with the rest, we have the “8 precepts” of **the Sabba,lahusa Sutta** [1.2.2.2].

The 5th precept against intoxication is discussed and defined in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31). Even when not listed as the 5th precept, since intoxication is a potent source for the arising of unwholesome karma, as highlighted in the Sabba,lahusa Sutta [1.2.2.2]. Hence, it is listed *by itself* as the 5th precept so that we are reminded *daily* to keep our mind unclouded, so that we are mindful of right action, and ready for calming the mind for meditation.¹²

2 How lovingkindness limits our karma

2.1 LIMITING THE EFFECTS OF SENSE-WORLD KARMA

2.1.1 The Saṅkha, dhama Sutta (S 42.17) makes a remarkable statement about karma. After stating how we should pervade **lovingkindness** in all directions (the 4 quarters, above, below, in between and everywhere, as well as to ourself), we should dwell cultivating the mental freedom of mind by lovingkindness, then “any limited karma that was done does not remain here, does not persist here” (*yaṃ pamāṇaṃ kataṃ kammaṃ na taṃ tatr’avāsissati na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati*). [§17] [2.1.2.2]

2.1.2 How sense-world karma is limited

2.1.2.1 The Commentary on **the Saṅkha, dhama Sutta** [§17] explains that “When (simple) lovingkindness is meant, it is understood either as access concentration¹³ or dhyana, but when it is qualified as

¹² **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,7+8) n, SD 4.1.

¹³ In commentarial terms, there are 3 levels of mental images (*nimitta*): (1) the preparatory image (*parikamma nimitta*) or the meditation object perceived at the start of one’s meditation. (2) When this image has reached some

‘freedom of mind’ (*ceto,vimutti*), it definitely means dhyana (*jhāna*)” (SA 3:105; ItA 89). The point is that if a person masters the “freedom of mind by lovingkindness,” that is, bringing lovingkindness to the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm.¹⁴

2.1.2.2 It is sense-sphere karma that is called “**limited karma**” (*pamāṇa,katam kammaṃ*); form-sphere karma is called “**boundless**” (immeasurable, *appamāṇa,katam*) karma. It is called *boundless* because it is done by breaking the limit (to self, others, etc). For, it is cultivated by way of *specified, unspecified* and *directional* pervasion (Vism 9.49-58/309-311).

2.1.2.3 The phrase “**will not remain therein, does not persist therein**” (*na tam tatrāvasissati, na tam tatrāvatitṭhati*) means that sense-sphere karma will not linger on, does not stay on, in that form sphere or formless-sphere karma. What is meant here? That sense-sphere karma is unable to overpower the form-sphere or formless-sphere karma, or to stay and gain the chance to bear fruit.

Rather, like a great flood might inundate a little stream, the form-sphere or formless-sphere karma overpowers the sense-sphere karma and remains after finding the chance to fruit. The superior karma, having prevented the sense-sphere karma from fruiting, by itself, brings rebirth in the brahma world. (SA 3:105,33-106,9)

2.1.2.4 But better than that, we can use such a mental focus to reflect on impermanence in our aspiration for streamwinning. Then, when we are reborn in the higher realms, we will never fall into the 3 suffering states (hell, the animal womb or the preta realm) but continue to arise in a rebirth conducive for our practice for attaining the path and awakening.

2.2 RELATED SUTTAS

2.2.1 Two suttas

Besides **the Saṅkha,dhama Sutta**, the teaching on how dhyana through any of the divine abodes limits karma is also taught in **the Te,vijja Sutta** (D 13) and **the (Karaja,kāya) Brahma,vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208). Both these Suttas say that if we are consistent in our cultivation of lovingkindness, “any karma done in a limited way neither remains nor persists here.”¹⁵ In short, we can better the effects of our karma.

2.2.2 The Araka Jātaka (J 169)

The Araka Jātaka (J 169) was told by the Buddha to the monks at Jeta,vana in reference to **the Mettā Sutta**¹⁶ and the 11 blessing of lovingkindness.¹⁷

degree of focus, albeit still unsteady and unclear, it is called the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*). (3) On greater mental focus, an entirely clear and immovable image arises, and becomes the counter-image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). As soon as this image arises, the meditator has attained access (or neighbourhood) concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). It is also by means of the counter-image that one gains full concentration (*appanā samādhi*). See **Nimitta**, SD 19.7 (3), & **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (7) (What happens when one reaches dhyana).

¹⁴ See Vism 9.49-58/309-311; also S:B 1149 n346; A:B 315 n73.

¹⁵ **D 13**,76/1:250 f (SD 1.8); **S 42.8**,17/4:422 (SD 57.9); **A 10.208**,1.2/5:299 (SD 2.10 (2)).

¹⁶ Sn 1.8 = Khp 9 (SD 38.3).

¹⁷ (**Ekā,dasa**) **Mettā'nisaṃsa S** (A 11.16), SD 2.15.

Once, the Bodhisattva was born into a brahmin family and called Araka. In due course, he left home and lived an ascetic life in the Himalayas as a teacher with a large following. He taught his pupils how to cultivate the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).

In explaining the benefits of lovingkindness, he declared:

<p><i>Appamāṇaṃ hitaṃ cittaṃ paripuṇṇaṃ subhāvitaṃ yaṃ pamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ na taṃ tatrāvasissatī ti</i></p>	<p>For a heart that is boundlessly friendly [good], cultivated to fulfillment, whatever limited karma that is done, nothing is left over here.¹⁸</p>	<p>(J 169/2:61)</p>
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When he died, he was reborn in the brahma-world where he remained for 7 aeons.

At the end of the story, the Buddha identified the ascetic's followers then as the present audience, and that the Buddha himself was then the ascetic Araka. (J 2:60-62)

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Saṅkha, dhama Sutta

The Discourse on the Conch-blower

S 42.8

¹⁹ At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Pāvārika's mango grove outside **Nālandā**.

The 4 precepts and hell

2 Then, **Asi, bandhaka, putta**, the headman,²⁰ a lay disciple of the nirgranthas,²¹ approached the Blessed One, and having approached, sat down at one side.

3 As the headman Asibandhaka, putta sat there at one side, the Blessed One said to him:
“In what way, headman, does the nirgrantha Nāta, putta teach the Dharma to his disciples?”

4 “Bhante, the nirgrantha Nāta, putta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples thus:²²
‘Whoever destroys life, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.²³
Whoever takes the not-given, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.’

¹⁸ The last 2 lines are found in all the 4 Nikāyas, all in the same context, relating to the divine abodes, as limiting the fruits of one's karma: D 1:251×2 = S 4:322×2; M 2:207×2, 208×2 ≠ A 5:299,27-301,1 ≈ J 2:61,28* (62,14'-21'). This well known teaching is given in **Tevijja S** (D 13.77/1:251), SD 1.8, **Saṅkha, dhama S** (S 42.8,17/4:322), SD 57.9, (**Karaja, kāya**) **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:300) & SD 2.10 (2); see also **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7/19-21) @ SD 30.7 (1.2.3).

¹⁹ Where PTS para numbering differs, it is given in [square brackets].

²⁰ Asi, bandhaka, putta, lit, “son of a sword-binder, ie, a swordsmith,” and a headman (*gāmaṇi*) in Kosala village: [1.1.2].

²¹ *Nigaṇṭha*, nirgrantha, the Jains: S 41.8.

²² These 4 precepts are ancient, older than the 5 precepts. [1.2.2]

²³ These 4 precepts read: *Yo koci pāṇaṃ atipāṭeti ... Yo koci adinnaṃ ādiyati ... Yo koci kāmesu micchā cārāti ... Yo koci musā bhaṇati, sabbo so āpāyiko nerayiko*. For “all such” (*sabbo*), I have followed S:W 4:223.

Whoever commits sexual misconduct, *all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.*
 Whoever speaks false speech, *all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.*
 One is led on to rebirth by the way in which one often dwells.²⁴

It is in this way, bhante, that the nirgrantha Nāta,putta teaches the Dharma to his disciples.”

4.2 “If, headman, it were the case that one is led on to rebirth by the way in which one often dwells, [318] then, according to the nirgrantha Nāta,putta’s word, no one at all would be bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.

How often do we break the precepts?

5 What do you think, headman?

In the case of a person **who destroys life**, taking occasion by occasion, day or night, which is more frequent: the occasions when he is destroying life or those when he is not doing so?”²⁵

5.2 “In the case of a person who destroys life, bhante, if one takes occasion by occasion, day or night, the occasions when he is destroying life are infrequent while those when he is not doing so are more frequent.”

5.3 “Headman, if it were the case that one is led on to rebirth by the manner in which one often dwells, then, according to the nirgrantha Nāta,putta’s word, no one at all would be bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.

6 What do you think, headman?

In the case of a person **who takes the not-given**, taking occasion by occasion, day or night, which is more frequent: the occasions when he is taking the not-given or those when he is not doing so?”

“In the case of a person who takes the not-given, bhante, if one takes occasion by occasion, day or night, the occasions when he is taking the not-given are infrequent while those when he is not doing so are more frequent.”

“Headman, if it were the case that one is led on to rebirth by the manner in which one often dwells, then, according to the nirgrantha Nāta,putta’s word, no one at all would be bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.

7 What do you think, headman?

In the case of a person **who commits sexual misconduct**, taking occasion by occasion, day or night, which is more frequent: the occasions when he is committing sexual misconduct or those when he is not doing so?”

“In the case of a person who commits sexual misconduct, bhante, if one takes occasion by occasion, day or night, the occasions when he is committing sexual misconduct are infrequent while those when he is not doing so are more frequent.”

“Headman, if it were the case that one is led on to rebirth by the manner in which one often dwells, [319] then, according to the nirgrantha Nāta,putta’s word, no one at all would be bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.

8 What do you think, headman?

In the case of a person **who speaks false speech**, taking occasion by occasion, day or night, which is more frequent: the occasions when he is speaking false speech or those when he is not doing so?”

²⁴ Yaṃ bahulaṃ yaṃ bahulaṃ viharati tena tena niyyatīti. [Be niyyatī].

²⁵ Yo so puriso pāṇātipātī, rattiyā vā divasassa vā samayāsamayaṃ upādāya, katamo bahu,taro samayo: yaṃ vā so pāṇaṃ atipāteti yaṃ vā so pāṇaṃ nātipātetīti.

“In the case of a person who speaks false speech, bhante, if one takes occasion by occasion, day or night, the occasions when he is speaking false are infrequent while those when he is not doing so are more frequent.”

“Headman, if it were the case that one is led on to rebirth by the manner in which one often dwells, then, according to the nirgrantha Nāta,putta’s word, *no one at all would be bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.*”

The unwholesome karma of fear

9 Here, headman, some teacher holds such a doctrine, such a view, as this: [§4]

‘Whoever destroys life,	all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.
Whoever takes the not-given,	all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.
Whoever commits sexual misconduct,	all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.
Whoever speaks false speech,	all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.’

9.2 Then, a disciple is filled with faith in that teacher.

It occurs to him: ‘My teacher holds such a doctrine, such a view, as this:

“Whoever **destroys life**, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.”

Now I have destroyed life, so I, too, am bound for a state of misery, bound for hell!’

Thus, he gains such a view.

9.3 If he does not give up that talk, does not give up that thought, does not abandon that view, then, he will be, as it were, carried off and cast into hell.²⁶

10 It occurs to him: ‘My teacher holds such a doctrine, such a view, as this:

“Whoever **takes the not-given**, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.”

Now I have taken the not-given, so I, too, am bound for a state of misery, bound for hell!’

Thus, he gains such a view.

10.2 If he does not give up that talk, does not give up that thought, does not abandon that view, then, he will be, as it were, carried off and cast into hell.

11 It occurs to him: ‘My teacher holds such a doctrine, such a view, as this:

“Whoever **commits sexual misconduct**, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.” [320]

Now I have engaged in sexual misconduct, so I, too, am bound for a state of misery, bound for hell!’

Thus, he gains such a view.

11.2 If he does not give up that talk, does not give up that thought, does not abandon that view, then, he will be, as it were, carried off and cast into hell.

12 It occurs to him: ‘My teacher holds such a doctrine, such a view, as this:

“Whoever **speaks false speech**, all such are bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.”

Now I have spoken false speech, so I, too, am bound for a state of misery, bound for hell!’

Thus, he gains such a view.

12.2 If he does not give up that talk, does not give up that thought, does not abandon that view, then, he will be, as it were, carried off and cast into hell.

²⁶ *Yathābhataṃ* [Ee *yathā hatam*] *nikkhitto evaṃ niraye*: on *yathā + ābhata*, see **A 4.81,3** @ SD 47.3b(2.1.2) n; also SD 49.1 (6) §21. On *yathā hatam* (Ee): S:W 4:225 n1. This difficult sentence recurs in **M 12,21/1:71,31**, where it is explained in n (SD 49.1). PED: *yathā*, is uncertain.

The wholesome karma of reflection

13 [11] But here, headman, a **Tathagata** [the Buddha thus come] arises in the world, an arhat, fully self-awakened accomplished in knowledge and conduct, well-farer [Sugata], knower of worlds, unexcelled trainer of tamable persons, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.

In many ways,
 he censures and blames the destruction of life, and says: 'Abstain from *the destruction of life*';
 he censures and blames the taking of the not-given, and says: 'Abstain from *taking the not-given*';
 he censures and blames sexual misconduct, and says: 'Abstain from *sexual misconduct*';
 he censures and blames false speech, and says: 'Abstain from *false speech*.'

14 [12] Then, headman, a disciple has full confidence in that teacher. He reflects thus:
 'In many ways the Blessed One censures and blames **the destruction of life**, and he says:
 'Abstain from the destruction of life!'

Now I have destroyed life to such an extent. That is not proper; that is not good.

But though I feel regret over this, that bad deed of mine cannot be undone.'

Having reflected thus, he abandons the destruction of life
 and *abstains from the destruction of life* thenceforth.

Thus, there comes about the abandoning of that bad deed;²⁷
 thus there is an overcoming of that bad deed.²⁸

15 [13] (He reflects thus:)

'In many ways the Blessed One censures and blames **the taking of the not-given**, and he says:
 'Abstain from taking the not-given!'

Now I have taken the not-given to such an extent. That is not proper; that is not good.

But though I feel regret over this, that bad deed of mine cannot be undone.'

Having reflected thus, **[321]** he abandons taking the not-given
 and *abstains from taking the not-given* thenceforth.

Thus, there is an overcoming of that bad deed.

16 [14] (He reflects thus:)

'In many ways the Blessed One censures and blames **sexual misconduct**, and he says:
 'Abstain from sexual misconduct!'

Now I have committed sexual misconduct to such an extent. That is not proper; that is not good.

But though I feel regret over this, that bad deed of mine cannot be undone.'

Having reflected thus, he abandons sexual misconduct
 and *abstains from sexual misconduct* thenceforth.

Thus, there is an overcoming of that bad deed.

17 [15] (He reflects thus:)

'In many ways the Blessed One censures and blames **false speech**, and he says:
 'Abstain from false speech!'

Now I have spoken false speech to such an extent. That is not proper; that is not good.

But though I feel regret over this, that bad deed of mine cannot be undone.'

²⁷ Ee omits *evam etassa pāpassa kammaṣṣa pahānaṃ hoti*.

²⁸ *Evam etassa pāpassa kammaṣṣa samatikkamo hoti*.

Having reflected thus, he abandons false speech
and abstains from false speech thenceforth.

Thus, there is an overcoming of that bad deed.

18 [16] THE 10 COURSES OF WHOLESOME KARMA

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) Having abandoned the destruction of life, | he abstains from the destruction of life. |
| (2) Having abandoned taking the not-given, | he abstains from taking the not-given. |
| (3) Having abandoned sexual misconduct, | he abstains from sexual misconduct. |
| (4) Having abandoned false speech, | he abstains from false speech. |
| (5) Having abandoned divisive speech, | he abstains from divisive speech. |
| (6) Having abandoned harsh speech, | he abstains from harsh speech. |
| (7) Having abandoned frivolous talk, | he abstains from frivolous talk. |
| (8) Having abandoned covetousness, | he is uncovetous. |
| (9) Having abandoned ill will, [322] | he has a mind without ill will. |
| (10) Having abandoned wrong view, | he is one of right view. |

The 4 immeasurables: the conch-blower

19 Then, headman, that noble disciple²⁹—who is thus without covetousness, without ill will, unfused, clearly knowing, ever mindful³⁰—

19.2 (1) with a heart of **lovingkindness**, dwells suffusing one quarter;

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,³¹

he dwells suffusing all the world with lovingkindness

that is vast, grown great [exalted],³² immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.³³

²⁹ This whole section on the 4 divine abodes is stock: **Cakka,vatti Sīha.nāda S** (D 26,31/3:78), SD 36.10, says that it is “the wealth for a monk (*bhikkhuno bhogasmim*).” **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.11(6)/3:223, calls it “the immeasurables” (*appamañña*). **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,31/1:297), SD 35.1, (**Ceto,vimutti**) **Anuruddha S** (M 127,4-7/3:146 f), SD 54.-10 & **Go,datta S** (S 41.7,5/4:296), SD 60.4, call it “the immeasurable freedom of mind” (*appamañña ceto,vimutti*). According to **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52,8-11/1:351 f) = **Dasama Gaha,pāti S** (A 11.17/5:344), SD 41.2, if one stabilizes these states, reflecting on its impermanence, etc, one attains arhathood; if not, one attains non-returning. (**Majjhima**) **Jīvaka S** (M 55,6/1:369), SD 43.4, presents the Buddha as Brahmā. **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97,32-33/2:195), SD 4.9, and (**Brahma,vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99,24-27/2:207 f), SD 38.6, call it the path to companionship with Brahmā (communion with God). (**Saṅgha**) **Uposatha S** (A 4.190,4/2:184), SD 15.10b, concerns one “attained to Godliness,” *brahma-p,patta*. **Pm** 5.20/2:39 calls it “freedom that is focused on only the beautiful,” *subhan t’eva adhimutto hotī ti vimokkho*); **Vbh** 13/272-276 (*sutta,niddesa*), 276-282 (*abhidhamma,niddesa*), 282-284 (*comy*). For a table of refs, see SD 38.5 (2.1.3.2).

³⁰ *Sa kho so gāmaṇi ariya,sāvako evaṃ vigatābhijjho vigatāvvyāpādo asammūlho sampajāno patissato.*

³¹ *Iti uddham-adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb’attatāya sabbāvantaṃ.*

³² The mind “grown great” (*maha-g,gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

³³ The recurrence of these last two phrases—“without hate, without ill will”—attests to the fact that lovingkindness is the basis for all the other three abodes, ie, they are actually a refinement of lovingkindness applied on deeper and broader levels.

20 [17] Just as a strong **conch blower** can easily sound his signal to the 4 quarters,³⁴ even so, when the freedom of mind by lovingkindness is cultivated and developed in this way, any limited karma that was done will not remain therein, does not persist therein.³⁵

21 (2) With a heart of **compassion**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself (equally),³⁶ he dwells suffusing all the world with compassion that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

22 *Just as a strong conch blower can easily sound his signal to the 4 quarters, even so, when the freedom of mind by lovingkindness is cultivated and developed in this way, any limited karma that was done will not remain therein, does not persist therein.*

23 (3) With a heart of **gladness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing all the world with gladness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

24 *Just as a strong conch blower can easily sound his signal to the 4 quarters, even so, when the freedom of mind by lovingkindness is cultivated and developed in this way, any limited karma that was done will not remain therein, does not persist therein.*

25 (4) With a heart of **equanimity**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing all the world with equanimity that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

26 [18] *Just as a strong conch blower can easily sound his signal to the 4 quarters, even so, when the freedom of mind by lovingkindness is cultivated and developed in this way, any limited karma that was done will not remain therein, does not persist therein."*

Asi,bandhaka,putta goes for refuge

27 [19] When this was said, Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman said to the Blessed One:
"Excellent, bhante, excellent, bhante!
Just as if, bhante, one were to place upright what had been overturned,
or were to reveal what was hidden,
or were to show the way to one who was lost,

³⁴ On this conch-blower (*saṅkha,dhama*) parable, cf **Te,vijja S** (D 13,79/1:251 x2), SD 1.8; **Pāyāsi S** (D 23,39/2:-337); **Maha Sakul'udāyi S** (M 77,55.2/2:19) conch-sound, SD 49.5a; **Saṅkha,dhama S** (S 42.8,20/4:322 x4), SD 57.9.

³⁵ *Yaṃ pamāṇa,katam kammaṃ na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati.* In *tatra-avatiṭṭhati*, **ava-tiṭṭhati** means "to persist, remain, abide, linger, tarry": D 1:251,8-20 = M 2:207,22-208,7 = S 4:322,14-26 = A 5:229,27-301,1; S 1:25,17* (*otiṭṭhati*); Tha 21; J 2:62, 4:208). On how lovingkindness limits our karma: (2).

³⁶ *Iti uddham-adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb'attatāya sabbāvantaṃ. Sabb'attatāya*, "equally" to all whether inferior, medium or superior, friendly, inimical or neutral, and so on; just as to oneself (*attatā*); equally with oneself (*atta,samatā*), without any distinction, "this is another being." Alternatively, it means "with the whole mind" (with all one's heart), not distracted in any small way. (NcA 118; PmA 3:555; VbhA 377 f)

or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,
 in the same way, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been made clear by the Blessed One
 I, bhante, go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.
 May the Blessed One remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth, for
 life."³⁷

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³⁷ It is noteworthy that Asi,bandhaka,putta does not salute (with lotus palms) the Blessed One, as he does in Asi-bandhaka,putta S (S 42.9), which suggests that this is an earlier meeting of his with the Buddha. However, his respectful language in addressing the Buddha, esp here, shows that this is prob not his 1st meeting either, and that he already has some faith in him. [1.1.2.2]