

# 19a

## (Anamatagga) Puggala Sutta

The (With Neither Beginning Nor End) Discourse on the Person | S 15.10

Theme: Truly seeing the noble truths awakens us

Translated by Piya Tan ©2020

### 1 Summary and significance

#### 1.1 SUMMARY

The **(Anamatagga) Puggala Sutta** (S 15.10) is a reflection on samsara or the endless cyclic life that we all go through, living and dying, over and over again. The Sutta has 3 main parts:

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|--|-----------|
| (1) the reflection on samsara                                    | [§§1-5];  |
| (2) our spiritual response to it: “revulsion” ( <i>nibbidā</i> ) | [§6];     |
| (3) the closing verses (giving the essence of the reality)       | [§§7-11]. |

#### 1.2 COMMENTARY

##### 1.2.1 A reflection on samsara [§§1-5]

**1.2.1.1 §3:** The Sutta’s opening teaching is a reflection on *samsāra*, this cycle of lives we are caught in, that has neither beginning nor ending. We are caught in a time-loop like cattle, blinkered by **ignorance**, fettered by **craving**. We leave our pens in the morning of our life, we pasture in the day, and return to our pen to sleep when the sun sets. In essence, this is our life’s routine: as we age, we begin to notice and recall the familiar and boring routine.

**1.2.1.2 §4:** The Buddha then shows us a graphic image of how the bony remains of each of us for all our lives in a single aeon (*kappa*) pile up to be a towering **mountain of bones** as huge as Mount Vepulla (the highest of the 5 hills around Rājagaha) [2.2] for each of us alone upon dying at the end of each life. The Commentary makes an interesting observation by noting that our rebirths as **invertebrates** (*anaṭṭhi*) are far more numerous than our existences as **vertebrates** (*aṭṭhi*). For, when we become creatures such as worms and so on, we have no bones. But when we become fishes, turtles, and so on, our bones are numerous. Hence, we are not taking into consideration the time when we are invertebrates, but only the time when we have obtained existences as vertebrates (*samaṭṭhika, kālo’va*).<sup>1</sup> (SA 2:158,21-26).

Overall, we must consider that when the bone-mountain of our individual existences as vertebrates bones is as huge as Mount Vepulla, we must have existed in samsara for an unimaginable number of lives over an equally unimaginable duration of time in samsara. When we add to this the even greater number of lives we have existed as invertebrates, our total existences in samsara are even more unimaginable and unimaginably longer!

**1.2.1.3 §5:** “What is the reason for this?” asks the Buddha rhetorically; for, he knows the answer. This samsara is without a knowable beginning (time has no beginning). There is no first point of samsara,

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<sup>1</sup> Be *Tasmā anaṭṭhi, kālañ ca bahu, aṭṭhi, kalañ ca aggahetvā samaṭṭhi, kālo’va\* gahetabbo* (SA 2:158,25 f). Be (Comy + Subcomy) so, but Ee reads *app’aṭṭhi, kālo va*, “only a time with few bones” or “a time with only a few bones.” Be reading is preferred.

of beings roaming and wandering on, obscured by ignorance and fettered by craving. In other words, we are driven on like cattle by our own lust, hate and delusion.

We often measure samsara in terms of time; hence, but we fail to see its **impermanence**. Since we fail to see its impermanence, we are caught in it, in time, in a time-loop. Like any loop, we run as its cogs and wheels daily and feverishly, compulsively, just like a hamster running in its wheel, only we are on a grander scale of things; hence, it is **suffering** for us.

We do not see the principle of **conditionality** that governs all that exist; hence, we identify with what we *see, hear, smell, taste and touch*. Our thoughts, too, are caught in the flow and current of things that seem endless. We think we are permanent, too, or we seek and run after something we imagine to last forever. We do not understand what is **nonself**.

### **1.2.2 Revulsion (*nibbidā*) [§6]**

**1.2.2.1** Simply put, *nibbidā*, is the most powerful spiritually or existentially conceivable idea and emotion. It is *the feeling* that arises from knowing the world as it really is; it is *the knowing* that arises from feeling true reality, even for a moment. It is that seeing, that vision, in between knowing and feeling arising from getting and having everything we have ever desired; then, we realize that this is not really what we thought it was.

We will never know *nibbidā* when we are unable to get what we want, especially when we are driven by that want, seeking to fill an emptiness in our life. We can never feel *nibbidā* when we think we are enjoying life as we think we want it: we have deluded ourself to such *a depth* that we are unable to see beyond the depth: we are that proverbial frog in the well, that toad under a coconut shell.

Indeed, *nibbidā* does arise in us, for a moment at a time. But we are so adept in brushing it away with our lust, hate and delusion. **Lust** holds us in its dark direction; **hate** keeps us apart and away from what we feel no lust for; **delusion** keeps us seeing this colourful mirage, this glorious rainbow, which is virtually real to us, which we never reach.

**1.2.2.2** The most famous case of *nibbidā* is, of course, that of the young Siddhattha. He was young, healthy, strong and powerful, and attended by constant pleasures and luxuries in the 3 mansions (*pāsāda*) for all seasons. He was flooded daily with food, females and fun, encouraged by his own father who saw him in his own image.

One day, he left the mansions that his father had built for him, an open prison of pleasure, and wandered in the open world of reality, the antithesis of all that he was raised to know in the mansions. He saw an old man, weighed down with decay, a sick person painfully wallowing in his own filth, and a bloated rotten carcass, a corpse borne on a bier for the funeral pyre.

He was told that even his body, the source of pleasures, would decay; that even those pleasures do not last, when they give in to loss, pain and disease; that all his beloved and companions, indeed, he, too, must perish in the end. It suddenly, as it were, dawned upon him that his mansions were but mirages, his pleasures but distant double rainbows.

The 4<sup>th</sup> sight the young Siddhattha saw was that of a calm and happy renunciant, simply dressed, mindfully walking by. The first 3 sights aroused *nibbidā*, revulsion towards them, and towards what the 3 mansions had meant for him, prisons of decay, disease and death. The vision of the radiant renunciant was the contrary: a figure of blissful freedom, or *pasāda*, joyful faith, inspiration, that there is a way out (*okāsa*) in all this endless suffocating narrowness (*sambādha*) that is samsara.

**1.2.2.3** When we begin to truly **think** about the bad things that happen to us—to notice causes and effects in such things and everything else—we begin to notice how *lust* has blinded us, how it is spurred

on by lame ignorance,<sup>2</sup> how *hate* burns us and is simply lust's back side; and that *delusion* is that distance that keeps us apart from the mirage and the rainbow so that we keep chasing them—then, we begin to feel bored, to suffer disappointment, to be burdened with angst.

When we truly **feel**, directly experience life as purely sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought, we will notice *nibbidā*. The question is whether we recognize it so, or not; usually not. In other words, *nibbidā* can also arise in us when we are used to a profound experience of the senses on their most aesthetic level: the most beautiful paintings, the most enthralling music, the sweetest of fragrance, the best of culinary taste, the most uplifting dances, the subtlest of deep thinking. Or even something as personal as falling in love.

**1.2.2.4** We are so used to the best of such experiences that any performance that falls below such standards, our standards, we will deem as mediocre and feel **bored** with them. Or worse, when the performance is really bad, it simply hurts of sensitivity, and we **suffer** aesthetically or sensually. When we think that we will not be able to experience such an aesthetic feeling, we despair, caught in a rut of **angst**. It's almost like losing the love we seek. These are examples of a worldly experience of *nibbidā*. We feel as if we can never love anyone or anything again.

This was probably how the young Siddhattha felt when he saw the 4 sights. It made him leave behind his world of pleasure, power and plenty. He renounced the external world of the senses, which had failed him totally and miserably. When the best things in life cannot really make us happy, where else can we turn to for happiness?

The Bodhisattva discovered *the way out* of this is actually the way into our own mind and heart. He mastered the mind, understood *nibbidā*, and freed his heart of greed, hate and delusion. He awakened to true reality and became the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.3 The closing verses [§§7-11]**

**1.2.3.1 [§8]** This 1<sup>st</sup> verse is simply a versification of the reflection of samsara in terms of the cycle of countless lives we have lived in an aeon or world-period. Our bones (assuming these remains do not rot) of all these lives will pile up **mountain-high**. This is a graphic depiction of what occurs over an unimaginably long time (samsara) in terms of space. [§3]

**1.2.3.2 [§9]** The verse develops the idea of depicting our countless lives in terms of the piling up of the bones of all our lives in an aeon. This is now related to what is visually palpable: this pile of our bones is as huge and high as **Mount Vepulla**, the highest of the 5 hills surrounding Rājagaha. What is a majestic hill now represents the bony remains of all our existences in a world-period. [§4]

**1.2.3.3 [§10]** While the first 2 verses [§§8-9] are a versification of the prose teachings of the Sutta, this sextet (verse of 6 lines) instructs us how to end this endless samsaric cycle. We need to properly understand **the 4 noble truths**: we must see existence for what it is, as *unsatisfactory*; hence, suffering. This suffering is not inherent in the world out there but in our own nature of craving. This is the *meaning* of life.

When we properly understand the nature of our craving, we also end it: this is nirvana (the ending of suffering). Then, we stop projecting a world of our own creation, and see the world as it really is—as being impermanent, suffering and nonself. To gain this vision, we must walk the path leading to the ces-

<sup>2</sup> On ignorance being blind and craving lame, see SD 31.3 (2.2).

<sup>3</sup> See *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1; on the long pericopes/cycles: SD 20.1 esp (2.2.2); on the short pericopes/cycles: **Alagadd-ūpama S** (M 22,29), SD 3.13.

sation of suffering, that is, the Dharma-spirited practice of moral virtue, mental cultivation and liberating wisdom.

**1.2.3.4 [§11]** This closing verse speaks of the fruits of the path. Once we have reached the path of awakening, we become a **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*), going through rebirths “seven times at the most” [§11c], living lives that conduce to spiritual training and progress. This is, in fact, the key and urgent purpose as true Buddhists: to aspire to streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>4</sup>

A streamwinner is defined as one who has broken **the first 3** of the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*), that is, *self-identity view, spiritual doubt and attachment to rituals and vows*.<sup>5</sup> Upon further weakening the 3 unwholesome roots<sup>6</sup>—*greed, hate and delusion*<sup>7</sup>—we become **once-returners** (*sakad-āgāmi*).<sup>8</sup> When we have broken all the 5 lower fetters (*orambhāgiya saṃyojana*)<sup>9</sup>—the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 fetters plus *sensual lust* and *repulsion*<sup>10</sup>—we become **non-returners** (*anāgāmi*).<sup>11</sup> When, as a non-returner, we go on to break the remaining defilements, that is, the 5 higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya saṃyojana*)<sup>12</sup>—*lust for form existence, lust for formless existence, conceit, restlessness and ignorance*—we become arhats (*arahata*).

With the extinction of all our defilements (*kilesa,nibbāna*), craving and ignorance, we attain arhat-hood. While **the arhat** lives out his life, his freedom from defilements is called “the nirvana-element with residue” (*sa,upādi,sesa nibbana,dhātu*). The “residue” is the 5 aggregates (without clinging)—the body, that is, the 5 senses (form) and mind (feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness) continue to function without creating new karma. Upon dying, the arhat is thus not reborn any more.<sup>13</sup>

**1.2.3.5 Sumedhā Therī,gātha** (Thī 496), the verse of the elder nun Sumedhā, serves as a summary of the Sutta’s 4 closing verses [§§8-11]:

*assu thaññaṃ rudhiram  
saṃsāraṃ anamat’aggato saratha |  
sattānaṃ saṃsaritaṃ sarāhi  
aṭṭhīnañ ca sannicayaṃ ||*

The tears, the breast-milk, the blood,  
remember: samsara is *without beginning, without end*.  
Of the beings wandering on in samsara, remember  
(their) piling up of bones. (Thī 496)<sup>14</sup>

### 1.3 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

#### 1.3.1 The worlds depicted in the Sutta

**1.3.1.1** The thesis of the (Anamatagga) Puggala Sutta [§3] states the time-loop nature of samsara, “without a knowable beginning” (*anamatagga*), that is, with neither beginning nor end (which is the

<sup>4</sup> The instruction for this practice is found in any of the 10 suttas of S 25.1-10 of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 3:225-228).

<sup>5</sup> See SD 3.3 (5); **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

<sup>6</sup> See SD 10.16 (12.1.2.1).

<sup>7</sup> See **(Tika) Channa S** (A 3.71/1:217), SD 18.10.

<sup>8</sup> See SD 10.16 (12).

<sup>9</sup> See SD 23.16 (1.1) n.

<sup>10</sup> See **Oram,bhāgiya S** (S 45.179/5:61), SD 50.11.

<sup>11</sup> See SD 10.16 (13).

<sup>12</sup> See **Uddham,bhāgiya S** (S 45.180), SD 50.12; **Ajjhatta Bahiddhā Saññojana Sutta** (A 2.4.5), SD 80.5.

<sup>13</sup> On the 2 kinds of nirvana, *kilesa,nibbāna* and *khandha,nibbana*: SD 45.18 (2.5.2.4).

<sup>14</sup> See also Thī 495, 498, 499.

nature of time). This is *samsāra* as condition or state of **external reality**, the “world” as space-time (*okāsa,loka*).<sup>15</sup>

Its sub-thesis [§4] that follows, highlights *samsāra* as our **internal reality**, that is, the cycle of births and deaths we experience, or the “world” of beings (*satta,loka*). This is a reality true of *all* beings: they are all caught in the samsaric time-loop of rebirths and redeaths, of existential suffering.

**1.3.1.2** The **exhortation** or instruction regarding the teaching—states in the thesis and the sub-thesis [1.3.1.1] —is given in **§6**, which states that when we clearly see this repetitive nature of our lives, the samsaric cycle of living and dying, we would surely tire of it. However, our worldly distractions effectively cancel out or counter these visions as soon as they arise [1.2.2].

However, when we are able to truly notice the samsaric nature of our existence, we would see it as a painful experience. The world is ablaze, and yet we keep touching and going into this samsaric conflagration. Unlike a burnt child who dreads the fire, we are fascinated by it, even proud of the burns and burn marks inflicted upon us, oblivious of the suffering and danger, on account of our **ignorance** (*avijjā*). This is the 1<sup>st</sup> noble truth which we fail to see.

Our thirst for the rush of sensuality and danger, for the euphoria of a crowd’s appeal or approval, keeps going back into the samsaric blaze, losing oneself in the fiery maze of that rush and gush: this is our **craving** (*taṇhā*), the 2<sup>nd</sup> noble truth which we fail to truly see.

**1.3.1.3** The **verses** [§§8-11] refer to the “world of beings” [1.3.1.1] in both a literal sense [§8] and a figurative sense [§9]; and to the “**world of formations**” (*saṅkhāra,loka*), that is, in terms of “right wisdom,” seeing it all as the true reality of the 4 noble truths [§10], which leads to awakening [§11].

### **1.3.2 Related sutta**

The sub-thesis of the (Anamatagga) Puggala Sutta—samsara as our *internal reality* [1.3.1.1]—along with the Sutta’s verses, recurs in **the Aṭṭhi,puñja Sutta** (It 24) as its **thesis**.<sup>16</sup> Using the parable of **the bone-mountain**, our remains from the numerous lives we have lived in an aeon, **It 24** then explains this thesis with the Sutta’s verses, which, as we have noted, teaches us about the world of formations and how we must work to free ourselves from it by understanding the 4 noble truths. [1.2.3]

## **2 Sutta notes**

### **2.1 ANAMATAGGA**

#### **2.1.0 Polysemic term**

**Anamatagga**, like many important Pali words, is polysemic. Its 2 key meanings are: “with neither beginning nor end” [2.1.1], “without a knowable beginning (or end)” [2.1.2], and “not ending in the deathless” [2.1.3].<sup>17</sup> Here are the key ideas on this important term.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> On the 3 worlds, those of space-time (*okāsa,loka*), of beings (*satta,loka*) and of formations (*saṅkhāra,loka*), see SD 49.7 (1.3); SD 15.7 (3.5.1 (2)).

<sup>16</sup> It 24/1.3.4/17 f (SD 57.19b).

<sup>17</sup> For details, see SD 28.7a (2); SD 48.3 (1.2.3).

<sup>18</sup> For other defs of *anamatagga*, see Pischel, 1900 §251 n1; Sadd 396 n10.

### 2.1.1 “With neither beginning nor end”

The Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD), resolves it as *an + amata + agga*, which reflects the Commentaries. The BHS cognate is *anavarâgra* (Mvst 1:34,7), “without lower or upper limit.”<sup>19</sup> Other Prakrit (Ardha,mā gadhī) cognates are *aṇavadagga* (Skt *anamadagra*) and *aṇavayagga* (literally, “having the point not bent (*anama*),” found in a Jain text entitled Udāyaṇa).<sup>20</sup>

### 2.1.2 “Without a knowable beginning”

A second possible etymology is to take *anamatagga* as deriving from: *ana* (negative) + *mata* (to be known, from *VMAN*, to think) + *agga* (starting point), meaning “of the beginning is unknown.”<sup>21</sup> It is also possible to take the middle component as *muta* (past participle of *munāti*, “to think, know,” Dh 269), meaning “not to be known.”<sup>22</sup>

### 2.1.3 “Not ending in deathlessness”

We may also take *anamat’agga* as the cognate of the Sanskrit *a + amṛta + agra*, “not ending in the deathless (nirvana).” This makes good sense, too, although it is more explanatory or attributive than it is definitive. If we use it as a definition, it would be somewhat narrow, squinted teleologically, or only oriented towards the future. Anyway, this is one of the possible senses of *anamat’agga*.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.2 MOUNT VEPULLA AND THE HILLS OF RĀJAGAHA

### 2.2.1 The 5 hills of Rāja,gaha

**2.2.1.1** According to the **(Deva,putta) Nānā,titthiyā Sutta** (S 2.30), Vepulla [Vipula] is “called the best of the hills of Rājagaha,” that is, the highest and most majestic of them.<sup>24</sup> The **Vepulla Pabbata Sutta** (S 15.20) says that the 5 famous hills surrounding **Rājagaha** are Paṇḍava, **Gijjha,kūta**, Vebhāra, Isigili and Vepulla [Vipula]. The Sutta adds that these hills, with the exception of Isigili—says the **Isigili Sutta** (M 116)<sup>25</sup>—were once known by other names (S 2:190 f):<sup>26</sup>

- in the time of **Kakusandha Buddha**, the hill was called **Pācīna,vaṃsa**;
- in the time of Konāgamana, **Vaṅkaka**;
- while in that of **Kassapa Buddha**, it was **Supassa**.

**2.2.1.2** According to the **Vepulla Pabbata Sutta** (S 15.20), the people living near it were called, respectively, Tivarā, Rohitassā and Suppiyā, that is, in the times of the past buddhas, Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana and Kassapa respectively [2.2.1.1].

<sup>19</sup> Tib *thog-ma dan tha-ma med pa*, cf Dharma,pradīpika 64,9 ad Mahābodhivaṃsa 2,14: *anavarâgra* = ag-mul næti, taking *avara* and *agra* as “lowest and highest limit.” *Anavarâgra*, says CPD, is an adaptation of ≠ Amg *aṇava-(d)agga*, eg Bhagavatī I 1ṣ18 (CPD 156, sv an-amat’-agga). See BHS Grammar 2.48; Dh:G (Brough) 256 n259; also JPTS 1906-1907:84; S:B 795 n254; Thī:N 172 n495.

<sup>20</sup> See SD 28.7a (2.1.4.5); H Jacobi, *Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Mahārāshṭrī*, Leipzig, 1886, III 33, 89. See also R Pischel, *Grammar of the Prakrit Languages*, 1900:207 n1; Oberlies, *Pali Grammar, Pali Grammar*, 2019:702 (Annot 108).

<sup>21</sup> PED: *anamatagga*. Cf Sadd 396 n10; CPD: *anamatagga*, explains this etym as “of which you cannot say that it begins from there or there.”

<sup>22</sup> See SD 28.7a (2.1.4.2).

<sup>23</sup> See CPD: *anamatagga* + SD 28.7a (2.1.4.3 f).

<sup>24</sup> *Vipulo rājagahiyānarāṃ | giri seṭṭho pavuccati* (S 2.30/1:67), SD 86.11.

<sup>25</sup> **Isigili S** (M 116,3/3:68).

<sup>26</sup> S 15.20/2:190-193 (SD 49.7); SnA 2:382.

Over time, the hill diminished in size: **the Tivaras**, who lived for 40,000 years, took 4 days to climb Pācīna,vaṁsa and 4 to descend.

The Rohitassas, who lived for 30,000 years, took 3 days up and down Vaṅkaka each way.

The Suppiyās, with a lifespan of 20,000 years, journeyed up Supassa and back in 2 days.

In the present age, **the Magadhans**, who lived for about 100 years, could both climb and descend the hill in a very short time. At the close of the Sutta, the Buddha declares:

“There will come a time, bhikshus, when this very Vepulla will have been destroyed, and these people will have died. I, too, will have attained final nirvana.

28 So impermanent, bhikshus, are formations!

So unstable, bhikshus, are formations!

So unreliable, bhikshus, are formations!

29 Just for this, bhikshus, it is enough to be revulsed towards all formations, enough to become dispassionate (towards them), enough to want to be free (from them)! ...

*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*

*uppāda,vaya,dhammino*

*uppajjitvā nirujjhanti*

*tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho'ti*

Impermanent, alas, are formations!

‘Tis their nature to rise and fall:

having arisen, they cease to be—

happy it is when they are stilled!”

(S 15.20/2:190-193), SD 49.7

**2.2.1.3** According to **the Mahā Samaya Sutta** (D 20), Mount Vepulla’s slope was the abode of the yaksha Kumbhīra and his 100,000 followers.<sup>27</sup> (D 2:257).

**The Dummedha Jātaka** (J 1:445) says that it was possible for an elephant to climb to the top of Mount Vepulla.<sup>28</sup>

It was from Vepulla, the world monarch (*cakkavatti*) got his *world gem* (*cakka, ratana*),<sup>29</sup> and it is this gem, too, that Puṅṅaka obtained from the mountain and offered it as the stake in his game of dice with Dhanañjaya Koravya.<sup>30</sup>

## **2.2.2 Other hill spots around Rājagaha**

**2.2.2.1 The Indaka Sutta** (S 10.1) mentions another peak near Rājagaha, that is, Inda, kūṭa, Indra’s peak, the haunt of the yaksha, Indaka.<sup>31</sup> It is not known whether it is one of the 5, or a separate hill of this name.

**2.2.2.2** The notorious **Black Rock** (*kāla, silā*), an isolated spot, is located on the side of Isigili (*isigili, passe*).<sup>32</sup> It was there that the elder Mahā Moggallāna was murdered,<sup>33</sup> and that the arhats Godhika<sup>34</sup> and Vakkali<sup>35</sup> committed suicide.

<sup>27</sup> D 20,8/2:257 (SD 54.4).

<sup>28</sup> J 122/1:444 f.

<sup>29</sup> KhpA 173; **Kaliṅga, bodhi J** (J 479/4:232).

<sup>30</sup> **Vidhura Paṇḍita J** (J 545/6:271, 272, 326).

<sup>31</sup> S 10.1/1:206 (SD 114.2).

<sup>32</sup> See DPPN: Kāḷasilā.

<sup>33</sup> DhA 10.7/3:65-71; **Sarabhaṅga J** (J 522/5:125 f) with important differences; ApA 241-243.

<sup>34</sup> **Godhika S** (S 4.23/1:120-122), SD 61.16 = DhA 4.11/1:431-434.

<sup>35</sup> **Vakkali S** (S 22.87/3:124), SD 8.8.

It was a lonely spot, and we are told that when monks came from afar to Rājagaha, they would purposefully ask Dabba Malla,putta to give them lodgings there because they wished to see proof of Dabba’s psychic powers.<sup>36</sup>

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## (Anamatagga) Puggala Sutta

### The (With Neither Beginning Nor End) Discourse on the Person

S 15.10

- 1 At one time, the Blessed One was on Vulture Peak outside Rājagaha.<sup>37</sup>
- 2 There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:  
“Bhikshus”  
“Bhante!” the monks replied.
- 3 The Blessed One said this:

#### THE THESIS

“Bhikshus, this samsara is **without a knowable beginning** [this cycle of lives is with neither beginning nor end].<sup>38</sup> A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on, obscured by ignorance and fettered by craving.<sup>39</sup>

#### THE SUB-THESIS

4 <sup>40</sup>Of one person, <sup>41</sup> bhikshus, roaming and wandering on, there would be the huge skeletal remains,<sup>42</sup> heap of bones, pile of bones just like this Mount Vepulla, if there were someone to collect them and the collection were not to perish.

- 5 What is the reason for this?

<sup>36</sup> It is said that he is able to produce a bright light from a fingertip to see his way in the dark! (V 2:76, 3:159). For other details, see DPPN, svv.

<sup>37</sup> §§1-3: Ee abridges to *Bhagavā rājagahe gijjhākūṭe pabbate. Tatra ... voca.* Other MSS read in full as above.

<sup>38</sup> On *anamatagga*, see SD 28.7a (2);

SD 48.3 (1.2.3).

<sup>39</sup> Ce *Anamataggo’yaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjā, nīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhā, saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsarataṃ.* Be Se abridges to *anamataggo’yaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro.* Ee see prec n.

<sup>40</sup> Ce *Eka, puggalassa bhikkhave kappam sandhāvato saṃsarato siyā evaṃ mahā aṭṭhi, kaṅkhalo\* aṭṭhi, puñjo aṭṭhi, rāsi yathā’yaṃ vepullo pabbato, sace saṃhārako assa, sambhatañ ca na vinasseyya. Aṭṭhi, kaṅkhalo,* “skeleton” (MA 3:42,26 ad M 1:364,14; ItA 1:83,36+84,3 ad It 17,8). **Aṭṭhi, puñja S** (It 24) §§5-7, opens with this verse, and closes with the same verses as below [§§8-11]. See (1.1.2.1).

<sup>41</sup> Comys discuss “person” (*puggala*) in some detail, incl the 2 languages (*sammuti* and *param’attha*): ItA 1:82,4-83,33; cf MA 1:137-139; AA 1:94,19-97,14; also DA 382 f; SA 2:391 f types; Kvua 34; JPTS 1889:34.

<sup>42</sup> “A great collection of bones,” *mahā aṭṭhi, kaṅkhalo.* Both *aṭṭhi* and *kaṅkhalo* (or *kaṅkāla*) mean “a skeleton”; but *aṭṭhi* means “bone.” As at **(Anamatagga) Puggala S** (S 15.10,4), SD 57.19a. Although CPD, DP, PED say that *aṭṭhi, kaṅkhalo* means “skeleton,” the context here is clear as noted by Comy, which states that this and the 2 that follow—*aṭṭhi, puñjo* and *aṭṭhi, rāsi*—are all synonyms for *rāsi*, “heap” (SA 2:158,21-26). Hence, it refers to the total skeletal remains of a single person rather than that of a single person.

Because, bhikshus, *this samsara is without a knowable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on, obscured by ignorance and fettered by craving.*

**6** Surely, bhikshus, this is enough to feel **revulsion** towards all formations, enough to become dispassionate towards them, enough to want to be free from them!<sup>43</sup>

**7** The Blessed One said this. Having said this, the Welcome One, the teacher, further said this:

- |   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| <b>8</b> <i>Ekass'ekena kappena<br/>puggalass'aṭṭhi,sañcayo<sup>44</sup><br/>siyā pabbata,samo rāsi<br/>iti vuttam mahēsino</i>   | “The heap of bones of one person alone,<br>with the passing of a single aeon,<br>would form a heap a mountain high:<br>so said the great sage. <sup>45</sup>   | ba |
| <b>9</b> <i>So kho panāyam akkhāto<br/>vepullo pabbato mahā<br/>uttaro gijjha,kūṭassa<br/>magadhānam giri-b,bajo</i>  | This is said to be as huge<br>as Mount Vepulla is huge,<br>on the north of Vulture Peak,<br>in Magadha's hilly fort [Giribbaja]. <sup>46</sup>   |    |
| <b>10</b> <i>Yato ariya,saccāni<br/>samma-p,paññāya passati<br/>dukkham dukkha,samuppādam<br/>dukkhassa ca atikkamam<br/>ariya'aṭṭha'āṅgikam maggam<sup>47</sup><br/>dukkhūpasama,gaminam</i> | But when one sees the noble truths<br>with right wisdom so:<br>suffering, the arising of suffering,<br>the overcoming of suffering, and<br>the noble eightfold path<br>that leads to suffering's stilling. <sup>48</sup> | ba |
| <b>11</b> <i>sa,satta-k,khattum paramam<sup>49</sup><br/>sandhāvitvāna puggalo<br/>dukkhass'antar,karo<br/>sabba,samyojana-k,khayāti</i>  | Then, that person, having wandered on<br>seven times at the most, <b>[186]</b><br>makes an end to suffering<br>by destroying all the fetters.” <sup>50</sup>   | ba |

— evam —

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<sup>43</sup> *Yāvañ c'idam bhikkhave alam eva sabba,sañkhāresu nibbinditum alam virajjitum alam vimuccitun'ti.* This is stock.

<sup>44</sup> Both S+It MSS so, except It:Be -*sañjayo*.

<sup>45</sup> On this verse, see (1.2.3.1).

<sup>46</sup> *Giri-b,baja* (-*vaja*) means a place enclosed by hills (like a cow-pen, *vaja*) (Tha 1097; ThaA 3:152,13; J 3:479,4 f). On Rājagaha being called so: V 1:43,16\* (VA 976,30); M 1:31,28 (MA 1:151,10 f); S 2:185,21\* (SA 2159,2 f); UA 265,-6. On this verse, see (1.2.3.2).

<sup>47</sup> S:Be *ariyam c'aṭṭha'āṅgikam maggam*; S:Be+Se It:Be+Ce+Se *ariyañ c'aṭṭha'āṅgikam maggam*; S:Ee *ariya'aṭṭha'āṅgikam maggam*; It:Ee *ariyam aṭṭha'āṅgikam maggam*.

<sup>48</sup> On this verse, see (1.2.3.3).

<sup>49</sup> S:Be+Ee+Se *sa satta-k,khattum paramam*; S:Ce *na satta-k,khattu,paramam* (wr); S:Be It:Be *sa satta-k,khattum paramam*; It:Ce *satta-k,khattum paramam*; It:Ee *sa,satta-k,khattum paramam*.

<sup>50</sup> See (1.2.3.4).