

6

Brahmā Baka Sutta

The Discourse to Brahma Baka | S 6.4

Theme: A High God has wrong view

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Brahmā Baka

1.1 His name. The name **Baka** means “crane” or “heron” in Epic Sanskrit and Pāli. In Indian tradition, the crane is regarded as a bird of cunning and deceit. Since this is the Brahmā’s name, he probably reflects some of his namesake’s quality as evident in **the Brahmā Nimantanika Sutta** (M 49).¹ His past lives, however, were quite illustrious.

The Baka Brahma Jātaka (J 405) contains the same stanzas as those in the Brahmā Baka Sutta [6-10], mentioning a number of Baka’s past good deeds that brought him to be reborn as a Brahmā:

- (1) Once, on seeing a caravan in distress in a desert, he used his supernatural powers to redirect a river into the dry desert which saved the travellers. [9 = v575]
- (2) On another occasion, while he was staying on the bank of the river Enī, near a frontier village, he found the village being attacked by dacoits (bandits), whom he drove away by causing them to see the royal authorities approaching with him at the head [9 = v576].
- (3) An incensed naga once attacked some merry-makers in boats, but Baka assumed the form of a garuda² and frightened the naga away. [9 = v577].
- (4) The fourth incident mentioned above is related with more details in **the Kesava Jātaka** (J 346),³ which says that Baka was born into a kshatriya (noble) family, but he renounced the world as an ascetic named **Kesava**. The Bodhisattva, then known as Kappa, was Kesava’s pupil. [9 = v578]

1.2 The Commentaries—including **Baka Brahmā Jātaka** (J 405)—relate how Kesava, practising meditation, developed the fourth dhyana and was reborn in the Vaha-p,phalā Brahmā world. At the end of his life-span there, he fell (*cavati*) into the third-dhyana Subhakiṇṇā world. Passing away from there, he was reborn in the 2nd-dhyana Abhassarā Brahmā world (where the lifespan is eight aeons), and, later, falling into the 1st dhyana, he was reborn in the same world, but with a life-span of only a single aeon. Baka, while living in Ābhassarā, forgot that he had fallen from higher Brahmā planes and had been reborn there and that he had lapsed into wrong view.⁴

1.3 The Majjhima Commentary and its Porāṇa Tīkā say that Brahmā Baka holds **an eternalist view** with regard to both his own personal individuality (*sakkāya*) and the world over which he lords.⁵ His claim that there is “no escape beyond” [4] is a rejection of the higher dhyana planes, the paths and fruits, and nirvana, none of which he even knows exists!

¹ See SD 11.7.

² In Buddhist mythology, the *nāga* is a spirit of the earth or water, when in physical form appears as a giant serpent, usually a cobra (and in Chinese mythology, evolved into the dragon, a spirit of the sky). The *garuḍa*, also called *supanṇa* or *suvanṇa*, is a spirit of the air and sky (similar to the harpies of Greek mythology). During the 6th week of the Great Awakening, it is said that the serpent-king (*nāga,rāja*) Mucalinda emerged from his subterranean abode and coiled around the meditating Buddha’s body seven times, spread his hood over him to shelter him from a violent storm that had arisen (V 1:2). The garuda is the naga’s mortal enemy and the naga’s greatest joy if to be free from attacks from the garuda (J 4:463).

³ See next section.

⁴ J 405/3:359-363; MA 2:409; SA 1:208 f.

⁵ MA 2:409; MAṬ:Be 2:311.

2 Kesava Jātaka

2.1 The Kesava Jātaka (J 346)⁶ says that Baka was born into a kshatriya (noble) family, but he renounced the world as an ascetic named Kesava, who lived in Himavā (Himalayas) with five hundred pupils. The Bodhisattva, having been born as Kappa, a brahmin of Kāsī, joined him and became his senior pupil. When the ascetics went to Benares for salt and vinegar, the king lodged them in his park and fed them. When they returned to Himavā, the king persuaded Kesava to stay behind. Soon, Kesava fell ill out of loneliness, and the five royal physicians could not heal him. At his own request, he was taken to the Himavā by the king's minister, Nārada. On once again seeing his familiar haunts and his pupil Kappa, he immediately recovered, though his medicine was but a broth of wild rice.

The king in the Jātaka is identified as Ānanda, Nārada is Sāriputta, and Kesava, Baka Brahmā.

The story was related to Pasenadi. Having discovered that Anāthapiṇḍika daily fed 500 monks in his house, the king gave orders that the same should be done in his palace. One day, he discovered that the monks would take the food from the palace, but would, after receiving their almsfood, eat it at another place where they are loved. When the king reported this to the Buddha, the Buddha pointed out to him that the best food was that which was given with love: love was the best flavouring for food (J 3:142-145, 3:362).

2.2 According to **the Dhammapada Commentary**, the king personally looked after the monks for seven days, after which he forgot about them and they were uncared for. So they stopped going to the palace (DhA 1:342 ff). The story of the past as given in the Dhammapada Commentary differs considerably from the Jātaka account. In the Dhammapada Commentary, Kesava is described as a king who had left the world and become an ascetic. The ascetics left the royal park, disliking the noise there, but they left Kappa with Kesava. Soon after, Kappa went away, and it was then that Kesava fell ill.

Kesava is identified with the Bodhisattva, Kappa with Ānanda, the king of Benares with Moggallāna, and Nārada with Sāriputta.

It was this reluctance of the Sākya monks to accept Pasenadi's hospitality which led him to seek an alliance through marrying a Sākya maiden; but the Sākyas gave him Vāsabhā Khattiyā, Mahānāma's daughter by an outcaste.⁷

3 Related suttas

3.1 SUTTA LOCATION

3.1.1 The Brahmā Baka Sutta relates the Buddha's visit to Baka in the Brahmā world and their ensuing conversation. Both the sutta openings [§1] are identical, except that the former is set at Ukkatṭhā. The incidents of Baka's previous life are briefly referred to. The prose section of the sutta [§§1-5] is identical to **the Brahmā Nimantanika Sutta** (M 49),⁸ which however contains more dramatic details.

3.1.2 It is interesting to see that the Majjhima Reciters (*majjhima bhaṇakā*) set the Brahmā Baka story (the Brahmā Nimantanika Sutta, M 49) at Ukkatṭhā,⁹ while the Saṃyutta Reciters (*majjhima bhaṇakā*) give the setting of the Baka Brahmā Sutta as Jetavana, near Sāvattṭhī. While the Saṃyutta account is brief

⁶ J 346/3:141-145.

⁷ See SD 10.8 (7).

⁸ See SD 11.7.

⁹ See **Brahmā Nimantanika S** (M 49) @ SD 11.7 (2).

and related in the third person, the Majjhima sutta is put in the mouth of the Buddha himself as a more engaging first-person narration.

3.2 A COMMON NARRATIVE?

3.2.1 Two connected Suttas

3.2.1.1 There is a more likely possibility: that **the Brahmā Baka Sutta** (S 6.4) is an integral part of **the Brahmā Nimantanika Sutta** (M 49): they are based on the same source or urtext. While the brief **S 6.4** records only the opening and what follows the ending of the full-length **M 49**. This is strongly suggested by the identical opening of both M 49 and S 6.5, which reads:

Now at the time, this evil wrong view had arisen in Brahmā Baka, thus:
 “This (brahma world) is permanent; this is everlasting; this is eternal;
this is everything [complete in itself];
 this is not subject to passing away,
 this (body) is neither born, nor decays, nor dies, nor passes away (from here),
 nor reappears [is reborn]; and there is no escape beyond here.”¹⁰ (M 49,2 = S 6.4,2)¹¹

This passage is part of the thesis of both Suttas—M 49 and S 6.4—that is, Brahmā Baka’s wrong view.

3.2.1.2 Another significant fact is the conclusion of **the Brahmā Baka Sutta** (S 6.4), where Brahmā Baka acknowledges the Buddha, thus:

Surely you know this life-span of mine. The others, too, you know—thus you are the Buddha!
Thus this blazing majesty of yours shines and remains in the brahma realm! [S10/579*]

This ending seems abrupt, without any mention of the spiritual attainment of Baka or any of the other brahmas. Furthermore, lines cd—“Thus this blazing majesty of yours | shines and remains in the brahmas realm!”—does not refer to any part of S 6.4 as we have it.

We can, of course, read **“this blazing majesty of yours”** (*tyāyaṃ jalitānubhāvo*) in lines cd figuratively. However, *jalita* seems here used in a literal sense of “burning glory,” as in the Peta, vatthu (Pv 1.10,14). This does not seem to connect to any part of S 6.4 as we have it. The Commentary to mentions this as the conclusion of “the Brahmā Baka Sutta,” which may be either S 6.4 or S 6.5.

3.2.2 A *Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta?

3.2.2.1 From our discussion above, we can envision that M 49, S 6.4 and 6.5 are integrally connected, forming a single Sutta—**the *Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta**, “the detailed discourse on Brahmā Baka.”¹² This interesting possibility can be summarized as follows:

¹⁰ *Idaṃ niccaṃ idaṃ dhuvaṃ idaṃ sassataṃ idaṃ kevalaṃ idaṃ acavana, dhammaṃ, idaṃ hi na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na cavati na upapajjati, ito ca paṇ’aññaṃ uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ n’atthi ti.* (M 49,2 = S 6.4,2). S Comy gives an account of why he holds this wrong view: see SD 11.6 (4). See SD 54.18 (2.2.2.1).

¹¹ M 49,2/1:142 (SD 11.6) = S 6.4,2/1:326 (SD 11.7).

¹² The initial asterisk (*) before the title means that the Pali is a neologism; it does not exist in the texts.

(Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahma Sutta (S .65) Wrong view: “There is no recluse, no brahmin, who can come here!” that is, to his brahma world. The Buddha comes to meditate there, followed by 4 great arhats. The brahmas are moved with urgency (*samvega*). (SD 54.18)

***The Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta** (the full discourse on Brahmā Baka) comprises:

- (1) Brahmā Baka Sutta** (S 6.4) Baka’s eternalist views: “This world is ... eternal ... This is everything ... no escape beyond here, too.” The Buddha teaches Brahmā who acknowledges him. (Note that **S 579*** arguably refers to the Buddha fire-element meditation in S 6.5.)¹³
- (*) Alternatively: (Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahmā Sutta** (S 6.5): see above. [3.2.2.4]
- (2) Brahma, nimantanika Sutta** (M 49) Baka’s eternalist views: as in S 6.4 (above). Mara intervenes just as the Buddha begins to teach.¹⁴ Māra seizes Baka’s mind, but the Buddha exposes Māra and defeats him.¹⁵
- (3) Conclusion** (ThaA 3:175,6-8) The Buddha teaches the 4 truths; brahmas attain the paths and the fruitions. We are not told, however, whether Baka attains any path or fruition. (SD 54.18 (1.3.2))

Hence, we may have 2 possible reconstructed suttas, as follows:¹⁶

The *Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta 1: S 6.4 + M 49 + Conclusion;

The *Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta 2: S 6.4 + S 6.5 + M 48 + Conclusion.

3.2.2.2 Firstly, it should be noted that the events of **S 6.5** precede those of the hypothetical *Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta [3.2.2.3]. According to **the (Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahma Sutta** (S 6.5) [5], Baka Brahmā holds the wrong view that his world is inaccessible to “recluses and brahmins.” In other words, he has attained such a level of existence that there is none other.

The Buddha appears in Baka’s brahma world and meditates resplendently in the fire kasina. He is followed by 4 other great arhats. Baka is impressed, and after the Buddha leaves, he asks Moggallāna if there are other disciples like the Buddha. Moggallāna replies that there are many. We are not told of Baka attaining any spiritual level. [5]

3.2.2.3 Hypothetically, the ***Vitthāra Brahmā Baka Sutta**—a combination of S 6.4, M 49 and the conclusion from the Thera, gāthā Commentary (ThaA 3:175 f) on S 6.5, the (Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahma Sutta (SD 54.18) [3.2.2.1]. We will now attempt a reconstruction of the sutta narrative of the Buddha’s meeting and Brahmā Baka. [3.2.2.1]

(1) **The Brahmā Baka Sutta** (S 6.4). Despite the Buddha’s visit to his brahma world, Baka still holds the eternalist view that his world is eternal, not affected by birth and death; it is all that really exists and nothing beyond it. This last statement means that Baka rejects the paths, fruitions and nirvana (the view that there is *only this* world).

¹³ S 6.4,2/1:142,11-16 (SD 6.11)

¹⁴ M 49,1-5 (SD 11.7).

¹⁵ M 49,6-31 (SD 11.7).

¹⁶ See SD 54.18 (1.3.2.2). The initial asterisk (*) means that the sutta is a hypothetical reconstruction.

(2) **The Brahma, nimantanika Sutta** (M 49). The Buddha again visits Baka, this time to correct his eternalist view. As soon as the Buddha begins his teaching (M 49,2), Māra, possessing a brahma from Brahmā's retinue (*brahma, parisajja*), who becomes Māra's spokesman, countering the Buddha's words. Although the Buddha exposes Māra, Baka (probably still under his power), continues to counter the Buddha's words. The Buddha then relates Baka's past lives and his various past acts.

Once, Baka and his brahmas are convinced, Māra, through a certain brahma, instructs the Buddha to stop teaching. The Buddha again exposes Māra, and this time Māra is unable to counter his words.

(3) **The conclusion** (ThaA 3:175,6-8) comes from the Thera, gāthā Commentary on the elder Moggallāna's verses, which quotes S 6.5 in full. The Commentary notes that when the Buddha knows that the brahmas are spiritually ready, he teaches them the 4 truths. At its conclusion, "countless thousands of brahmas attain the path and the fruition." Then, it adds, implicitly referring to the Buddha, addressing Baka, thus: "He uttered the verse, 'Avuso, do you now still have that view ... ?' [S 580*], reproving (Brahmā) in this connection" (*taṃ sandhāya codento "ajjāpi te āvuso sā diṭṭhīti gatham āha*). (ThaA 175,2-8).

3.2.2.4 Note that S 6.5 actually precedes the events here, before Māra's intervention, summarized in (2). In other words, it is likely that none of the brahmas mentioned in S 6.5 have attained any path or fruition. Hence, the conclusion fits better at the end of **M 49**, after Māra has left and the brahmas' mind are more ready for the Dharma.

On the other hand, if we take the Thera, gāthā Commentary (ThaA 3:175,8-9) literally¹⁷—as referring to the "Brahmā Baka Sutta" (ThaA cites it as "Baka Brahmā Sutta")—then S 6.4 would fit in just before S 6.5 (as listed in the Saṃyutta). This means that the Buddha performs his fire-element meditation *before* the events of S 6.5, which records Brahmā's view that "no recluse, no brahmin, ... can come here (to his brahma world)."

Then, after the events of S 6.5, the Buddha re-visits Baka's brahma world from Jeta, vana to teach the Dharma to the brahmas. After all—as noted in S 6.5¹⁸--Brahma (Baka) is inspired with a sense of spiritual urgency (*taṃ brahmānaṃ saṃvejetvā*), ready to listen to the Dharma.

The sutta sequel, **M 49**, opens with the Buddha relating how when he tries to address Baka's eternalist view, Māra intervenes and tries to lead the brahma assembly (Brahma and Brahmā's retinue) astray. In the end, Māra is routed. The whole narrative concludes with countless thousands of brahmas attaining the paths and fruitions, as the Thera, gāthā Commentary tells us.¹⁹ [3.2.2.1]

3.2.2.5 According to the Commentary on **the (Apara Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahma Sutta** (S 6.5), at the end of the Buddha's visit to the Brahma world, he gets into the attainment of the fire element, along with 4 other great arhats. Seeing the majesty of this mandala of the Buddha and the arhats blazing in meditation, Brahmā Baka abandons his wrong views that his world is inaccessible to others. The Buddha teaches him the Dharma, and he attains **streamwinning** (SA 1:213,17).

As a streamwinner, Brahmā—like Ānanda during the Buddha's last days --can still be influenced by the presence of Māra. The streamwinner, however, will not be induced into any immoral act. In the case of **Ānanda**, we see his errors of omission (that of not inviting the Buddha to remain in this world for the rest of his natural life-span).²⁰ In the case of Brahmā Baka in **the Brahma Nimantanika Sutta**, we see his

¹⁷ This argument also at SD 54.18 (1.3.2.3).

¹⁸ S 6.5,24/1:145,28 (SD 54.18).

¹⁹ If we accept this narrative sequence—with S 6.4 followed by S 6.5—then, we must take Brahmā Baka's remark—"Thus this blazing majesty of your | shines and remains in the brahma realm!"—in a figurative sense [3.2.1.2].

²⁰ On Ānanda's "errors of omission," see **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.38-48) + SD 9 (9.2.2.1).

errors of commission: he held on to his wrong views about eternalism, which is essentially a lack of understanding of the real nature of nonself, a wisdom attained by only the arhat.²¹

4 Brahmā Baka's wrong views

4.1 BRAHMĀ BAKA'S WRONG VIEWS

Brahma Baka's wrong views are defined in §2 and also in **the Brahma Nimantanika Sutta** (M 49), as follows:

- 1 This (brahmā realm) is permanent; this is everlasting; this is eternal;
- 2 this is everything [complete in itself];
- 3 this is not subject to passing away,
- 4 this (body) is neither born, nor decays, nor dies, nor passes away (from here),
- 5+6 nor reappears [is reborn]; and there is no escape beyond here.²² (M 49,2 = S 6.4,2)²³

These are the details of Brahmā Baka's:

- (1) **eternalist view** (*sassata, diṭṭhi*). Basically, this is the notion that Brahma, the other brahmas and the brahma world exist forever.²⁴
- (2) Brahma assumes that his world is all (*kevala*) that there really is; there is nothing beyond it.
- (3) He views that he and the brahmas will not die (their lifespan is astronomically long).
- (4) He believes that since he does not die, he was not born; he will not change (he looks the same all the time); none of the brahmas will die there nor fall away from that heaven.
- (5) Hence, neither he nor any brahma will be reborn anywhere.
- (6) "No escape from beyond here" means that there is neither way nor need of leaving the brahma world. This is, in effect, a rejection of the path and its fruits, that is, the possibility of awakening. These wrong views are the staples of a theistic notion of heaven.²⁵

4.2 HOW BRAHMĀ BAKA'S VIEWS AROSE

The Brahmā Nimantanika Sutta (M49), its Commentary (MA 2:409), and the Saṃyutta Commentary to the Baka Brahmā Sutta (SA 1:208-212) give an interesting account of how Brahmā Baka falls into wrong view. While the Sutta briefly recounts it, the Commentaries give us more details.

In an earlier human birth, Baka developed the dhyanas and was reborn in the Vaha-p,phalā (Abundant Fruit) brahma realm, a 4th-dhyana plane with a life-span of 500 aeons (world-cycles). After that, he was reborn in the Subha,kiṇṇā or Subha,kiṇhā (Resplendent Glory) brahma realm, a 3rd-dhyana plane with a life-span of 64 aeons.

²¹ On Brahmā Baka's "errors of commission," see **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49,7), SD 11.7.

²² *Idaṃ niccaṃ idaṃ dhuvaṃ idaṃ sassataṃ idaṃ kevalaṃ idaṃ acavana, dhammaṃ, idaṃ hi na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na cavati na upapajjati, ito ca pan'aññaṃ uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ n'atthi ti.*

²³ See **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49,2/1:142), SD 11.7 = **Baka Brahmā S** (S 6.4,2/1:326) + SD 11.6 (4).

²⁴ Interestingly, Brahma, the other brahmas and their world came into being as some point in time, as described in **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1,39-44), SD 25.2. In other words, he can only be said to have had a beginning, but only claim they will have no end. Ironically, on account of their arising, they are by that very process subject to time: whatever that arises must pass away!

²⁵ This section also at SD 54.18 (2.2.2.1), which see for its connection with **(Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññātara Brahma S** (S 6.5), SD 54.18.

When he fell²⁶ from there, he was reborn in the Ābhassarā (Streaming Radiance), a 2nd-dhyana brahma plane, with a life-span of 8 aeons. Thereafter, he was reborn in the lowest of the 1st-dhyana brahma planes with a life-span of only 1 aeon. At first, he knew his own past karma and planes of rebirth, but as time passed, he forgot both and lapsed into an eternalist view (M 49,10/1:329). It is during this time, that the Buddha visits the brahma Baka and corrects his wrong view.²⁷

5 Aparā Diṭṭhi Aññatara Brahma Sutta

There is another Brahmā Sutta—the (Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahma Sutta (S 6.5/1:144-146), SD 54.18—quoted in full in the Thera,gāthā Commentary, which identifies him as **Baka** (ThaA 3:175 f). It is said that once when the Buddha is staying at Jetavana, a certain brahma conceives the view that no monk or recluse could come to his world. The Buddha, aware of this, goes to that brahma realm and stands midair enveloped in flames.

The Buddha is followed by Moggallāna, Mahā Kassapa, Mahā Kappina and Anuruddha, each standing at one of the cardinal points: east, south, west and north respectively. Moggallāna then asks the brahma if he still holds the same view, to which he replies that he no longer thinks that he is eternal.

When the Buddha and the arhats have left, brahma Baka sends a brahma from his retinue to ask Moggallāna if there are other disciples of the Buddha as mighty as he. Moggallāna’s answer is that there are *many* such saints. It is likely that this is Brahmā Baka’s first meeting with the Buddha. [3.2.2]

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Brahmā Baka Sutta

The Discourse to Brahma Baka

S 6.4

1 [142] Thus have I heard.²⁸

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s Park in Jeta,vana [Jeta’s Grove], near Sāvattihī.

Brahmā Baka’s wrong view

2 Now at the time, **this evil wrong view** had arisen in Brahmā Baka, thus:

“This (brahma world)²⁹ is permanent; this is everlasting; this is eternal;
this is everything [complete in itself];
this is not subject to passing away,
this (body) is neither born, nor decays, nor dies, nor passes away (from here),

²⁶ “Fall” (*cavati*) is the Pali idiom for “die” (otherwise *marati* or *kalam karoti*) in regards to celestial beings.

²⁷ On how Brahmā Baka’s other wrong views arose as related in **(Aparā Diṭṭhi) Aññatara Brahma S** (S 6.5), see SD 54.18 (2.3.3).

²⁸ This Sutta opening is the same as that of **Brahmā Nimantanika S** (M 49), except that the latter is set at Ukkaṭṭhā. See (3) above.

²⁹ “This” refers to *Brahma-t,ṭhāna* (MA 2:405).

nor reappears [is reborn]; and there is no escape beyond here.³⁰

3 The Blessed One, having known with his mind the thought in Brahmā Baka's mind, just as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or would bend his stretched arm, vanished from Jeta,vana, and reappeared in the Brahma world.

4 Brahmā Baka saw the Blessed One coming in the distance. Seeing the Blessed One, he said this (to him):

"Come, good sir! Welcome, good sir! It has been a long time since the good sir has gone out of his way [taken the trouble] to come here."³¹

BRAHMĀ'S ETERNALIST VIEW

Now, good sir, this (brahma world) is permanent; this is everlasting; this is eternal; this is everything [complete in itself];

this is not subject to passing away,

this (body) is neither born, nor decays, nor dies, nor passes away (from here), nor reappears [is reborn]; and there is no escape beyond here."

5 When this was said, **the Blessed One** said this to Brahmā Baka:

"Alas! The worthy Brahmā Baka is overcome by ignorance³² in that he says

of the impermanent

that it is permanent;

of the non-lasting

that it is everlasting;

of the non-eternal

that it is eternal; **[142]**

of the incomplete

that it is everything;

of what is subject to passing away

as being not subject to passing away;

of where one is born and decays and

dies and passes away (from the heavens)

and reappears,

this (body) is neither born, nor decays, nor dies, nor

passes away (from here), nor reappears [is reborn];

and when there is an escape beyond this,

he says that there is *no escape beyond here*."

Jātaka stanzas³³

[Brahmā Baka:]

6 Because of 72 meritorious deeds, Gotama,³⁴
now we are lords of power, gone beyond birth and decay.

³⁰ *Idaṃ niccaṃ idaṃ dhuvaṃ idaṃ sassataṃ idaṃ kevalaṃ idaṃ acavana,dhammaṃ, idaṃ hi na jāyati na jīyati ba mīyati na cavati na upapajjati, ito ca paṇ'aññaṃ uttariṃ nissaraṇaṃ n'atthi ti.* This para, on Baka's wrong views, as at **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49,2), SD 11.7. Comy gives an account of why he holds this wrong view: see (4) above; also SD 54.18 (2.2.2).

³¹ "Come, good sir! ... to come here" *ehi kho marisā, sāgataṃ marisā,cirassaṃ kho marisā imaṃ pariyāyaṃ akāsi yadidaṃ idh'āgamanāya*, which is cold formality. In **Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda S** (D 25), the wanderer Nigrodha says, *etu kho bhante Bhagavā sagataṃ bhante Bhagavato...*, "Please come, venerable Blessed One! Welcome to the Blessed One!" using the 3rd imp sg *etu* ("Let ...come!") as a polite formality (D 25.7a/ 3:39): so too in **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.5/1:179). This is stock: D 1:90, 179, 2:270, 3:2, 39; M 1:252, 326, 481, 2:2, 30, 3:7; S 1:142; U 13.

³² "Overcome by ignorance," *avijjāgato*, alt tr "steeped in ignorance" (M:H 1:389).

³³ The ensuing stanzas are all found in **Kesava J** (J 405/3:359-363).

³⁴ *Dva,sattati Gotama puñña,kammā*. Bhikkhu Bodhi in tr this pāda (line) follows the SA (paraphrased): "Master Gotama, we seventy-two men of meritorious karma [SAPT: ie, doers of meritorious deeds] have been reborn here through that meritorious karma (*bho Gotama mayam dvā,sattati janā puñña,kammā* [SAPT: *puñña,kārino*]) *tena puñña,kammāna idha nibbattā*." I have kept to the Pali text which clearly makes good sense on its own.

- This, knowledge-master, is our final brahma birth.³⁵
 Many are the people who long for us.³⁶ 572
- [The Buddha:]
- 7 Short is the life-span here, not long at all,
 that you, Baka, think is long—
 I know it, O Brahmā, to be but
 a hundred thousand nirabbudas.³⁷ 573
- [Brahmā Baka:]
- 8 “I am the one of infinite vision,” (so you say), Blessed One,
 “who has overcome birth and decay and sorrow.”
 What was my ancient devotion to virtue and vow?³⁸
 Tell me this so that I might understand. 574
- [The Buddha:]
- 9 You gave drink to many people
 who were thirsty, oppressed by the heat³⁹—
 that was your ancient devotion to virtue and vow,
 that I recollect as if just awakening.⁴⁰ 575
- When people were seized at Eṇī,kula [Antelope Bank],
 you released these captives who were being led away⁴¹—

³⁵ Bodhi reads *brahma,patti* in pāda c following Ee2 (PTS ed 1998) rather than *brahm’uppatti* or *brahm’upapatti* as in the other eds: “This, knowledge-master, is our final attainment of Brahmā.” I have kept to the Pali text.

³⁶ *Asmābhi jappanti janā anekā ti*. Comy however has the reading *abhijappanti* with *patthenti pihenti*, “yearn for, desire for” (SA 1:209). **Baka Brahma J** (J 405) has 3 verbs: “Many people, with their hands joined in reverence, yearn for us, desire us (*namassanti patthenti pihayanti*), saying “He is the Lord Brahmā, Mahā Brahmā, and so forth. They wish, ‘Oh, that we too might become thus!’” (J 405/3:359). It should be noted that being reborn as a Brahmā is a Buddhist teaching. The ancient brahminical belief was that the faithful are only reborn in “companionship” (*sahavyatā*) with Brahmā, ie, in his heaven: see eg **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.31/2:195 = SD 4.9; see also D 1:118, 2:206; M 3:199; S 4:306; A 3:192). As such, here, “Many are the people who long for us” refers to those faithful who desire for rebirth in Brahmā’s presence (as a God-believer today would desire to be reborn in God’s presence).

³⁷ *Nirabbuda*. SA explains the time measurements as follows: 1 *koṭī* = 10 million years (10⁷ years); a *koṭi* of *koṭi* = *pakoṭi* (10¹⁴ years); a *koṭi* of *pakoṭi* = *koṭi,pakoṭi* (10²¹ years); a *koṭi* of *koṭi,pakoṭi* = *nahuta* (10²⁸ years); a *koṭi* of *nahutā* = *ninnahuta* (10³⁵ years); a *koṭi* of *ninnahutā* = *abbuda* (10⁴² years); 20 *abbudā* = 1 *nirabbuda* (10⁸⁴⁰ years). SA says that here the duration refers to the remainder of Baka’s life-span (SA 1:209; J 3:360). [I thank Melvyn Sim Soon Suan, National University of Singapore mathematician, for his assistance here, and who remarks that these numbers are astronomically too huge to be of any “mathematical use.”]

³⁸ Comy glosses *vata,sīla,vattan ti vuccati sīlam eva*, “It is moral virtue itself that is called ‘devotion to virtue and vow’” (SA 1:209 f). SAPṬ: “It is a vow (*vata,bhūtam*) because it is formally undertaken, and a practice of virtuous conduct, but the two terms actually refer to one thing. Thus the commentator says, ‘It is virtue itself.’” (SAPṬ:Be 1:243)

³⁹ Comy says that, using his psychic powers, he diverted a river in to the desert, and so saved the thirsty travelers. (SA 1:211)

⁴⁰ Comy gives detailed accounts behind each of the incidents referred to in vv 575-577. See also DPPN 2:259 f. Bodhi notes: “Malalasekera errs, however, in stating that all the incidents occurred during the incarnation as Kesava. It seems [SA] ascribes v 578 alone to the life as Kesava.” (S:B 436 n390).

⁴¹ Comy: When a frontier village near Eṇī,kula was attacked by dacoits, he projected a vision of royal authorities approaching headed by himself to rescue the village. (SA 1:211)

that was your ancient devotion to virtue and vow,
that I recollect as if just awakening. 576

When a ship was seized on the Ganges currents,
by a fierce naga, craving for human flesh,
by your power you subdued it, freeing the ship⁴²—
that was your ancient devotion to virtue and vow,
that I recollect as if just awakening. [144] 577

And I was your apprentice,⁴³ Kappa,
whom you thought to be wise⁴⁴—
that was your ancient devotion to virtue and vow,
that I recollect as if just awakening.⁴⁵ 578

[Brahmā Baka:]

10 Surely you know this life-span of mine.
The others, too, you know—thus you are the Buddha!
Thus this blazing majesty of yours
shines and remains in the brahma realm! 579

—evaṃ—

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⁴² Comy: An incensed naga attacked some merry-makers in boats, but Baka assumed the form of a garuda and frightened the naga away. (SA 1:211)

⁴³ "Apprentice," *baddha, cara*, which Comy glosses as *antevasika* (SA 1:212). See S:B 412 n268.

⁴⁴ *Sambuddhivantaṃ va ti nam amaññiṃ* (PTS). Bodhi reads the verb here as *amaññi*—or *amañña* (Ee 1998)—as against *amaññiṃ*, "I thought" (Ce PTS): "Though [SA] takes the line to mean that Kappa thought thus of his teacher, I follow the Jātaka, in which the teacher Kesava esteems his pupil Kappa as intelligent and devout while Kesava himself appears almost maudlin." (S:B 436 n391). I follow Bodhi here.

⁴⁵ This stanza (and only this) refers to **Kesava J** (J 346; cf DhA 1:342-344). See also DPPN 2:259 f. Bodhi notes: "Malalasekera errs, however, in stating that all the incidents occurred during the incarnation as Kesava. It seems [SA] ascribes v 578 alone to the life as Kesava." (S:B 436 n390).