

7

(Sa,ḡāthā) Sāriputta Sutta

The (Sa,ḡāthā) Discourse on Sāriputta | S 8.6

Theme: Effective sutta teaching and listening

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2021

1 Sutta summary and significance**1.1 SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHT**

1.1.1 The (Sa,ḡāthā) Sāriputta Sutta (S 8.6) is a brief but insightful look at the elder Sāriputta teaching Dharma to a ripe and ready audience. As the elder Vaṅḡisa watches the wisest of the elders teaching Dharma, he is inspired with praises for Sāriputta in 3 verses [§§731-733].

1.1.2 Sāriputta and Vaṅḡisa

1.1.2.1 It is well known that the elder **Sāriputta** is declared by the Buddha to be the wisest of all the monks,¹ but just as prominent is the elder's **compassion**. In **the (Khandha) Devadaha Sutta** (S 22.2), for example, the Buddha states that "Sāriputta is a helper in two ways: by giving material help (*āmisānuggaha*) and by giving help in Dharma (*dhammānuggaha*)."²

The Commentary on S 22.2 elaborates on **Sāriputta's great compassion**. Early in the morning, while the monks are on their almsround, he would inspect the monastery grounds, clearing refuse and keeping things in order. Then, he would visit the sick to comfort them and attend to their needs, and so on.³

1.1.2.2 The suttas record a number of occasions when he visits the sick and admonishes them. He instructs the monk Samiti,gutta, dying of leprosy, on the 5 aggregates, with the ending of which suffering ends, too. Following the elder's instruction, Samiti,gutta cultivates insight and becomes an arhat, as recorded in **the Thera,ḡāthā** and its Commentary.⁴

The (Sotāpatti) Anātha,piṇḡika Sutta 1 (S 55.26) records his giving bedside counselling to the painfully sick Anātha,piṇḡika, reminding him that as a streamwinner, he is assured of salvation.⁵ On a later occasion, when the layman is dying, as recorded in **the Anātha,piṇḡik'ovāda Sutta** (M 143), the elder instructs him so that, upon dying, he is reborn in Tusita (as a streamwinner).⁶

The Dhānañjāni Sutta (M 97) records a curious case where Sāriputta counsels the dying brahmin Dhānañjāni on the 4 divine abodes. The Buddha then tells Sāriputta that the brahmin has died, and is reborn in a brahma heaven. This is an interesting lesson on the uncertainty of death: the Dharma should be properly taught in a practical way as soon as a person is ready to listen.⁷

¹ "Bhikkhus, the foremost of my monk disciples who have great wisdom is **Sāriputta**" (*etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvakaṇaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ mahāpaññānaṃ yad idaṃ sāriputto*, A 1.189/1:23,18). For a detailed biography, see Nyanaponika & Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 2003 ch 1.

² S 22.2/3:5-9 (SD 46.2). SA 2:256,20-257,17.

³ Sāriputta's compassion: **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,5), SD 11.11; SD 34.1 (3.2.2.1).

⁴ Tha 81; ThaA 1:186,7-23.

⁵ S 55.26/3:258-263 (SD 23.2a).

⁶ M 143/ (SD 23.9).

⁷ M 97,38/2:195 f (SD 4.9).

1.1.2.3 Sāriputta is also renowned for his **gratitude** and **patience**. Having heard the Dharma for the first time from Assaji, Sāriputta relays the teaching to Moggallāna. Having become streamwinners, they both approach their teacher, Sañjaya, informing him about the Buddha, but Sañjaya is caught up with his own sect and followers.⁸

Another case of Sāriputta's gratitude concerns the ordination of the poor old brahmin Rādha. On account of his poverty and neglect by his own children, Rādha seeks refuge in the Jeta,vana, serving as a temple hand. In due course, he wishes to go forth, but no monk would ordain him, that is, except for Sāriputta, who recalls his having put a ladleful of rice into the elder's almsbowl.⁹

1.1.3 Masters of ready wit

The Buddha speaks of 4 kinds of “**poets**” (*kavi*) or “creative artists” in the **(Catukka) Kavī Sutta** (A 4.231), thus:

SD 58.7(1.1.3)

(Catukka) Kavī Sutta

The (Fours) Discourse on Poets • A 4.231/2:230

A 4.5.3.11 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 4, Catukka Nipāta 5, Pañcama Paṇṇāsaka 3, Sucarita Vagga¹⁰ 11

Cattaro'me bhikkhave kavī.

Katame cattāro?

Cintā,kavī suta,kavī, attha,kavī, paṭibhāna,kavī.

Ime kho bhikkhave cattāro kavīti

Bhikshus, there are these 4 kinds of poets.

What are the four?

The imaginative poet, the interpretive poet, the reflective poet, the inspirational poet.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 kinds of poets.

—evaṃ—

1.1.3.1 Buddhaghosa, in his Aṅguttara Commentary, explains the 4 terms as follows:

(1) Who, having thought, composes verses:
he [this] is called an “**imaginative poet**.”

*yo cintetvā kavyaṃ karoti, ayaṃ **cintā,kavī** nāma*

(2) Who, having heard (learned) it, does (creates) it:
he is called an “**interpretive poet**.”

*yo sutvā karoti, ayaṃ **suta,kavī** nāma*

(3) Who, based on some matter,¹¹ creates:
he is called a “**reflective poet**.”

*yo ekaṃ atthaṃ nissāya karoti,
ayaṃ **attha,kavī** nāma*

(4) Who, himself [intuitively] creates spontaneously
[ex tempore], like the elder Vaṅḡsa, is called
an “**inspirational poet**.”

*yo taṃ khaṇaṃ yeva vaṅḡsa,thero viya attano
paṭibhāṇena karoti, ayaṃ **paṭibhāna,kavī** nāma*
(AA 3:211,9-13)¹²

⁸ On Sāriputta meeting Assaji: SD 42.8 (1.2). On Sāriputta & Moggallāna: Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, [2002] 2013 ch 5; Gir'agga,samajja: SD 52.2f (1.4). On Sañjaya, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,31+n), SD 8.10.

⁹ SD 51.15 (1.2.1.3); **Rādha-t,thera Vatthu** (DhA 6.1), SD 52.2e(2); AA 1:327-331; ThaA 3:101. On his arhathood, **(Arahatta) Rādha S** (S 22.71), SD 80.11.

¹⁰ Be *duccarito vaggo*.

¹¹ “Who makes sense of some matter.”

¹² DA 1:95,24 f (DAPT 1:168,5-12) = UA 205,20 f; cf Hinüber, *Handbook of Pali Literature* §81 (also §107); also Hinüber, *Untersuchungen zur Mündlichkeit früher mittelindischer Texte der Buddhisten*, AWL 5, 1994b:35.

(1) Although the Sutta uses the verb *cintetvā*, “having thought,” its idiomatic sense in English would be something like “having minded” it, or better, “having felt” it, that is, having a direct and spontaneous experience of it, in a poetic sense. We would at once think of Vaṅgīsa as being such a poet in a modern “imaginative” sense. Yet, after further examination, we should understand that secular poetry tends to appeal more to our *sensual imagination*. Vaṅgīsa is an “artist of the mind” (*cintā,kavi*); hence, he is better said to be an **imaginative poet** or inspirational poet.

The former might well have been the case with Vaṅgīsa *before his arhathood*, when he was prone to being sensually lustful.¹³ However, as an arhat, being *liberated*, even as a poet, he would be lust-free. Hence, Wordsworth’s Romantic definition of poetry [1.1.5.2] would not correctly describe the nature of Vaṅgīsa’s poetry. However, **T S Eliot**’s modernist definition of poetry would be relatively closer to characterizing it [1.1.8.2].

The imaginative poet, then, is exemplified as a **wholesomely creative person**: a scholar, teacher, writer, musician, artist, poet, dancer, actor, worker. His creativity arises from his cultivation of any of the 5 faculties: *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration* and *wisdom*. He may not be an arhat, or even reached the path, but he has joyful wise *faith*, unrelenting spiritual *effort*, habitual *mindfulness* of the impermanence of things, wholesome mental *concentration*, and insightful *wisdom* of his own being and life as a whole.

(2) **The interpretive poet** (*suta,kavi*) seems to be an “artist of learning,” since *suta* has the sense of “listening” as the basis for learning, and the terms *suta* (“heard”) and *bahu-s,suta* (“heard much”) respectively mean “learned” and “deeply learned.” Broadly, this refers to one who loves good learning for its own sake, a kind of “Renaissance man” in the positive sense. This is not some *status* we hold for our measurable level of learning, but rather a state of accessible wisdom we have and show to anyone seeking truth and beauty.

In a narrow sense, this is a **philosopher**, one who loves thinking and reasoning, not for its own sake, but as tools for better self-understanding, personal development and mental joy. I have in mind here the ideal *Buddhist* or *Dharma-spirited philosopher*. He is a Dharma teacher who teaches us to have clear reasoning (good sense) and the courage to think about the teachings for their truth, to experience them and feel their beauty, their joy: in short, to truly *live the Buddha Dharma*.

Amongst the Buddha’s noble disciple, he is exemplified by the streamwinner, **Ānanda**, a socially engaged scholar and teacher of the Dharma.

(3) **The reflective poet** (*attha,kavi*) seems to be similar to the interpretive poet; in fact, their skills overlap, since they both are masters of learning. We may perhaps see the interpretive poet as a master of sutta-based Dharma while the reflective poet is a master of Dharma-spirited meditation. If the former speaks eloquently of the teachings as truth and beauty *experienced* through our daily experience (seeing, hearing, etc), the latter inspires us with the teaching on a mental level. In either case, the poet teaches us to feel, directly experience the Dharma, to live it: through our daily life and through our thoughts and visions respectively.

Amongst the noble disciples, he is exemplified by **Sāriputta**, who is able to present the Dharma in novel ways of which the Buddha himself approves. [1.1.5.1]

(4) **The inspirational poet** (*paṭibhāṇa,kavi*) has the qualities of all the previous 4 kinds of poets, and his special quality is that of habitually engaging with whomever and whatever that shines in the Dharma, the truth and beauty of true reality. Like the Romantic poet, he is one who overflows with powerfully

¹³ See (Vaṅgīsa) **Ānanda S** (S 8.4): SD 31.7 (3.5).

beautiful feelings, and is moved to express this joyfully to others in appreciation of their goodness, to inspire joy in them. He is exemplified by the elder **Vaṅḡisa**, and also the elder **Mahā Koṭṭhita** [1.1.4.1].

1.1.3.2 Dhammapāla, in his Udāna Commentary, elaborates on these terms in his explanation of the term, “the craft of poetry” (*kāveyya,sippa*), in **the Sippa Sutta** (U 3.9),¹⁴ thus:

“**The craft of poetry**” (*kāveyya,sippa*): The craft of composing verses (*kabba*) belonging to the 4 types of poets, such as the imaginative poet and so on, by way of one’s own imagination, by way of that heard or acquired from another, by way of import such that: ‘This is its import; so I will construe it’; or by way of inspiration arising on the spot, after seeing some verse, to the effect that ‘I will compose a poem that is the counterpart thereof.’”

For, this was said by the Blessed One: “There are, bhikshus, these 4 kinds of poets: (What are the four?) The imaginative poet, the interpretive poet, the didactic poet, the inspired poet.”¹⁵ (UA 1:205,14-22). We shall continue later with our analysis of *kavi* and *kabba* below [1.1.6].

1.1.4 The 4 analytical insights (paṭisambhidā)

1.1.4.1 The foremost of the monk disciples who have **the 4 analytic skills or insights** (*catu,paṭisambhidā*) is declared by the Buddha to be **Mahā Koṭṭhita**.¹⁶ However, most arhats are said to be skilled in these 4 analytic skills, which are the hallmarks of an accomplished Dharma teacher—and we must add today: sutta translators¹⁷—that is, as follows:¹⁸

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) the analytic skill in meanings | <i>attha paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (2) the analytic skill in teachings | <i>dhamma,paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (3) the analytic skill in language | <i>nirutti,paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (4) the analytic skill in ready wit | <i>paṭibhāṇa,paṭisambhidā</i> . |

1.1.4.2 The elder Sāriputta, as the wisest of the monks, is, of course, also the one most accomplished in the analytic skills (*paṭisambhidā-p,patta*). In **the (Sāriputta) Paṭisambhidā Sutta** (A 4.173), he declares that he is able to fully master the skills within a fortnight of his ordination.¹⁹ We can essentially see, in **the (Sa,gāthā) Sāriputta Sutta** (S 8.6) how these skills apply in his teaching, thus:

- (1) the analytic skill in meanings (*attha paṭisambhidā*)
 S 731a: “wise, profoundly wise”
 S 731c: “of great wisdom”
- (2) the analytic skill in teachings (*dhamma,paṭisambhidā*)
 S 731b: “skilled in what is the path and what is not the path”
 S 732ab: “he teaches briefly, he speaks in detail”

¹⁴ U 3.9/32,3 (SD 69.5).

¹⁵ **Kaveyya,sippan**’ti attano cintā,vasena vā parato paṭiladdha,suta,vasena vā “imassa ayam attho, evaṃ taṃ yojessāmīti evaṃ attha,vasena vā, kiñcid eva kattabbaṇṇ disvā, “tap paṭibhāgaṃ kattabbaṃ karissāmīti: ṭhān’up-pattika,paṭibhāna,vasena vā cintā,kavi,ādīnaṃ catunnaṃ kavīnaṃ kabba,karaṇa,sippaṃ. Vittāṃ h’etaṃ bhagavata: “Cattaro’me bhikkhave kavī: (katame cattaro,) cintā,kavī suta,kavī attha,kavī paṭibhāṇa,kavīti). (UA 1:205,14-22)

¹⁶ A 1.218/1:24. This is owing to his skill in teaching as recorded in **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43, SD 30.2): SD 28.4 (4).

¹⁷ Such arhats are said to be “accomplished in the analytic insights” (*paṭisambhidā-p.patta*): SD 56.15 (1.2.1.5).

¹⁸ See SD 28.4 (4); SD 41.6 (2.2); SD 58.1 (5.4.2.13).

¹⁹ A 4.173/2:160 + SD 28.4 (4.5).

(3) the analytic skill in language (*nirutti,paṭisambhidā*)

- S 731d: “teaches the Dharma to the monks”
 S 732c: “his voice, like that of a mynah bird”
 S 733b: “his sweet voice”
 S 732e: “pleasant to the ear, lovely”

(4) the analytic skill in ready wit (*paṭibhāṇa,paṭisambhidā*)

- S 732d: “pours forth discourse of insightful wit”

1.1.4.3 The 3rd verse, **S 733**, focuses on the Dharma itself and its wholesome effect on the audience. “As he teaches them, they listen to his voice.” Hearing the Dharma in this manner, they are “joyful, the mind uplifted ... the monks give ear” to the Dharma. While it is true that Sāriputta is a great teacher, what makes him truly great is the Dharma that he teaches. When he teaches the Dharma, we are blessed with a clear vision of the Dharma, which, when we pursue diligently with right practice, will bring us to the path (not to merely glorify the teacher, as in the case of a cult Guru or worldly teacher).

1.1.5 Suttas showing their preacher’s ready wit

1.1.5.1 In the case of **Sāriputta**, this skill in ready wit (*paṭibhāṇa,paṭisambhidā*) is characterized by the elder’s penchant for presenting teachings in a novel insightful manner, as exemplified in **the Mahā Hatthi, padōpama Sutta** (M 28), a masterpiece in Dharma discourse, where he shows how the 5 aggregates arise through each of the 4 elements by way of dependent arising, and then declaring how, “he who sees dependent arising sees dharma; he who sees dharma sees dependent arising.”²⁰ [1.1.3.1]

1.1.5.2 The elder **Vaṅgīsa**, declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of those with ready wit (*paṭibhāṇavāntānaṃ*) (A 1:24,21), is gifted with the ability to spontaneously compose inspired verses, such as on the occasion of this Sutta.²¹ This quality is, like that of Sāriputta’s mentioned [1.1.5.2], skill *in ready wit*, one of the 4 analytic skills [1.1.3.1]. In the case of Vaṅgīsa, his ready wit takes the form of spontaneous versifying.²²

The elder Vaṅgīsa’s 71 verses form the longest chapter of **the Thera, gāthā** (Tha 1209-1279). They closely correspond with the verses in **the Vaṅgīsa Saṃyutta** (S 8), “the connected teachings on Vaṅgīsa.”²³ The Sutta Nipāta preserves the verses of **the Vaṅgīsa Sutta** (Sn 2.12/59,12-62) which corresponds with Tha 1263-1278 (that is, Sn 343- 358, without the prose).²⁴

1.1.5.3 Vaṅgīsa’s verses are not merely sayings in verse (like many other verses in the Saṃyutta, especially those in its 1st chapter, the Sa, gāthā Vagga). They are poetic works of great aesthetic skill and beauty, worthy of its own honoured place in Indian poetry and religious literature. The suttas recount his worldly life as a poet and “skull-tapper” even before he was a monk.²⁵

Even as a monk, he still struggles with sexual feelings, as recounted in **the (Vaṅgīsa) Ānanda Sutta** (S 8.4).²⁶ However, after becoming an arhat, these raw lust and exuberant sensuality sublimate into natural

²⁰ M 28/1:184-191 (SD 6.16).

²¹ A 1.212/1:24,21.

²² See SD 16.12 (1).

²³ It is also called **Vaṅgīsa Vagga**, the chapter on Vaṅgīsa,

²⁴ For the full list of Vaṅgīsa’s suttas and verses, see SD 16.12 (1.3.2).

²⁵ SD 16.12 (1.1).

²⁶ On his struggle with sexual desires, see Tha 1223-1226 = **(Vaṅgīsa) Ānanda S** (S 8.4), SD 16.12.

and subtle beauty and profound truth. Hence, the first few suttas of **the Vaṅḡisa Saṃyutta (S 8.1-4)** relate his struggle with sensual lust, his vulnerability for female charms, and his firm courageous dedication to the path of training.

His poems also unabashedly relate his tendency to self-pride (like any talented poet), and his efforts to gain self-mastery. As he matured in his monastic life, he often extolled the Buddha in verse. On one occasion, the Buddha requested him to compose a verse ex tempore (**the Paro,sahassa Sutta**, S 8.8). His other poems praise the great elders whom he himself admires: Sāriputta (**the (Vaṅḡisa) Sāriputta Sutta**, S 8.6), Moggallāna (**the (Vaṅḡisa) Moggallāna Sutta**, S 8.10) and Koṇḡaṇḡa (**the Koṇḡaṇḡa Sutta**, S 8.9).

The last sutta in **the Vaṅḡisa Saṃyutta**, is a long poem, **the (Arahatta) Vaṅḡisa Sutta** (S 8.12), also found in the Sutta Nipāta (Sn 2.12). Partly autobiographical, it ends with Vaṅḡisa declaring that he has become an arhat of the 3 knowledges.

1.1.5.4 We can see Vaṅḡisa's **ready wit** (*paṭibhāna*) working with the Dharma from his 3 verses in the (Sa,ḡāthā) Sāriputta Sutta [§§731-733] below. In the 1st verse, he praises the teacher, the 2nd verse the teaching, and the 3rd the effect of the teaching on us (the audience).

The 1st verse [§731] praises Sāriputta as an arhat and **teacher**. He is profoundly wise in the liberated sense. Hence, he knows the true path from the false one, and teaches the true path for the benefit of his audience. Although the teacher is praised here, this is on account of the teaching that he is giving. In other words, the teacher is not a person, but the wholesome action (teaching) that he does, the good that he does and shows others. This is the essence of the teaching of non-self.

The 2nd verse [§732] is about how Sāriputta teaches: sometimes he gives a brief teaching, sometimes a detailed teaching. Whichever way he teaches, his voice is sweet and captivating (attention-grabbing). Even when we are not drawn to his voice, when we listen carefully, we have the benefit of his insightful wit: he teaches pure Dharma. When we listen to this, we feel "**the joy of Dharma**" (*dhmma,veda*) [1.1.5.5].

In the 3rd verse [§733], we see the effects and benefits of listening to the teaching. As they listen to his captivating voice, their minds are engaged with the teaching. They are joyfully uplifted by this meeting of truth and beauty, directly engaged with a vision of true reality since their minds are fully focused on what they are hearing: the true teaching. This is "**the joy of purpose**" (*attha,veda*), that is, the joy of a vision of the path and knowing that we are heading that very same way. [1.1.5.5]

1.1.5.5 For a better understanding of what has just been explained about Sāriputta's verses [1.1.5.4], we should examine (or review) **the attha,veda dhmma,veda pericope**, such as that found in **the (Chakka) Mahānāma Sutta** (A 6.10), that is, this passage:

1	Mahānāma, a noble disciple whose mind is straight ,	<i>uju,gata,citta</i>
2	gains inspired knowledge in the goal [the meaning of Dharma],	<i>attha,veda</i>
3	gains inspired knowledge in the truth [the Dharma],	<i>dhmma,veda</i>
4	gains <u>gladness</u> connected with the Dharma;	<i>pāmuja</i>
5	when he is gladdened, <u>zest</u> is born;	<i>pīti</i>
6	when the mind is zestful, the body is <u>tranquil</u> ;	<i>passaddhi</i>
7	the tranquil body feels <u>happy</u> ;	<i>sukha</i>
8	when one is happy the mind becomes concentrated . ²⁷	<i>samādhi</i>
9	This, Mahānāma, is called <u>a noble disciple</u> (<i>ariya,sāvaka</i>): ²⁸	

²⁷ On this *attha,veda* passage, cf the *nīvaraṇa,pahīna* passage at **Sāmaṇḡa,phala S** (D 2,76/1:73), SD 8.10n for other refs.

- 10 he dwells impartial (*sama-p,patta*) amongst partial [vicious] people;
 11 he dwells unafflicted (*avyāpajjha*) amongst afflicted people;
 12 as one who has entered upon the Dharma stream,²⁹
 13 he cultivates ⟨the recollection of *the 3 jewels* and on *moral virtue*⟩. (A 6.10), SD 15.3³⁰

- (1) The Sutta speaks of us as the “noble disciple” (*ariya,sāvaka*), spiritual models, as those with “a **straight mind**,” that is, we keep our mind on the practice. In this case, we reflect on the qualities of the Buddha (our teacher), the Dharma (the true teaching), the noble sangha (those who have reached the path, that is, the arhats and those who have reached the path), and the goodness of moral virtue.
 (2) The disciple reflects on the **meaning** (*attha*) of this and rejoices. Those on the path who are not yet arhats, see themselves as keeping to the **goal** (*attha*), and rejoice in the truth that they are sure of awakening. Here, *attha* is polysemous: it means *both* “meaning” and “goal.” Knowing this—the meaning and the goal that is Dharma—is inspired knowledge.
 (3) This also refers to the Dharma as **truth**, we know that it reflects true reality. This, too, is inspired knowledge.
 (4) Such inspired knowledge—the joy of knowing what is true and beautiful—arouses **gladness** (*pāmuja*): simply a joy in knowing the Dharma.
 (5) As we mentally hold this joy, it grows exuberantly into **zest** (*pīti*).
 (6) Our whole body is filled with joy, yet calmed by this inner **tranquillity** (*[assaddhi]*),
 (7) which settles further, clearing up our mind until it is fully **concentrated** (*samādhi*).
 (8) This is not just a passing phase, but a pervasive and persistent **happiness** which opens our heart
 (9) as **noble disciples** who accept ourself, and
 (10) others unconditionally, **impartially** (*sama-p,patta*).
 (11) Hence, we are able to live and work in an **unafflicted** (*avyapajjha*), fully wholesome way,
 (12) those who live in the Dharma joyfully,
 (13) habitually mindful of the 3 jewels, living in **wise faith**, morally virtuous [*going back to 1*].

1.1.6 *Kavi* and *kabba*

1.1.6.1 The terms *kavi* or *kavī* [1.1.6.1], and *kabba* [1.1.6.2] need further analyses. We will first examine the word *kavi* (*kavī*) [ts]. The Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD) only says that *kavi* means “poet”; Cone’s Dictionary of Pali defines it as “a thinker; a poet; a maker of verse.” The point remains, then, that we cannot render *kavi* simply as “poet,” since, as we shall note, there are secular poets and poetry [1.1.8] and **Buddhist poets and poetry** [1.1.8].

1.1.6.2 Now let us look deeper to see if we can further define what a kavi is, especially in terms of the 4 kinds of “poets” (*kavi*), according to **the (Catukka) Kavī Sutta** (A 4.231) [1.1.3]. The fact that this Sutta uses the word *kavi* in this broad sense shows that we cannot apply to Vaṅṅīsa or any of the arhat poets, or even Buddhist poetry, especially early Buddhist poetry.

²⁸ “Noble saint” refers to any of the 4 kinds of aryas, viz, the streamwinner (*soṭ’āpanna*), the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), the non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and the arhat. Here the streamwinner is meant. On the saints, See **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70), SD 11.1(5).

²⁹ “The Dharma stream,” *dhmma,sota*. Obviously here, the Buddha is referring either to streamwinning or one on the way to become one. For details, see SD 3.2 (A 5.202) n & SD 3.14 (A 6.44) n.

³⁰ See **(Agata,phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.10,2.3 f) + SD 15.3 (4); SD 10.16 (3.4.3.2); SD 16.7 (2).

Let us look again at the 4 kinds of poets and explore our definitions and ideas further, and perhaps, in that process, refine them, too. Now, we have the following kinds of poets, of whom we can define or describe further as follows:

	<u>literal meaning</u>	<u>figurative translation</u>	<u>descriptive translation</u>
(1) <i>cintā,kavi</i>	the mind poet	“imaginative poet”	poet; philosopher; artist
(2) <i>suta,kavi</i>	the “heard” poet	“interpretative poet”	scholar; writer
(3) <i>attha,kavi</i>	the meaning poet	“reflective poet”	lexicographer; mystic
(4) <i>paṭibhāna,kavi</i>	the poet of ready wit	“inspirational poet”	the Buddhist poet

(1) **The “mind/heart poet”** (*cintā,kavi*) uses his mind or heart to explore his field and expresses him imaginatively, through ideas, images, figures, visions, or any of the physical senses, that is, as the tools of his imagination and expression. We would classify the secular poet in this category. However, if his explorations and expressions are limited to his mind, then, he would be a philosopher, a thinker, one who investigates ideas and tells us about them. The most imaginative person or type in this category would be **the artist**, that is, one who studies *truth and reality*, and creates or expresses *beauty*; this, of course, includes the painter, the musician, the dancer and the actor.

(2) **The “heard” poet** (*suta,kavi*) works with knowledge and tradition which he interprets in educational, entertaining, even healing, ways. In fact, *suta*, “the heard,” simply signifies any kind of learning, especially educational learning. Hence, he is the scholar, especially one who loves learning and teaching. Hence, he works with what he hears, with words and language. If he loves writing and relating stories, then, he is a bard, a writer.

(3) **The “meaning” poet** (*attha,kavi*) tries to “make sense” of whatever he experiences. He reflects the true reality that he sees and senses around (his experiences) and within himself (his thoughts and feelings). Narrowly, he is the lexicographer, who defines, or rather records, the way we use words: he sees what is *behind* words and language. If he relates to us what he sees and senses *beyond* words, some higher meaning or purpose in our lives, then, he is a mystic. If he does this in a wholesome way, he is a Dharma teacher, a meditator who teaches.

(4) **The poet of ready wit** (*paṭibhāna,kavi*) is the traditional Buddhist poet, especially one who expresses truth and beauty in words, and does so spontaneously, like the arhat Vaṅḡisa. In this case, we define such a poet by his verses. However, we can also include eloquent speakers of Dharma whose prose teachings have a poetic beauty, which he expresses naturally and wholesomely. In either case, This is the kind of poet who readily inspires us with Dharma joy and induces us to practice the Dharma.

Clearly, none of these are *definitions*, but rather **descriptions** of truth and beauty are expressed in some “poetic” way, that is, as truth and beauty that move us in good or towards good. It is, of course, possible that, often enough—more often outside of the Buddha’s teaching or against it—we may see secular, even worldly, versions of such poets, especially when they use Buddhism merely as the tool of their poetry and expression.

Historically, this classification is of technical interest to modern scholars. They see this classification of poets as an early attempt to form a theory of poetics. [1.1.7]

1.1.6.3 All that we have discussed in connection with *kavi* may be summed up as ***kabba*** (Skt *kavya*), “poetry,” or technically, “ornate poetry.” This abstract noun has a broad sense covering poetry, whatever is versified, expressed poetically, or whatever is considered “creative.” Although we have described the 4

kinds of poets in wholesome terms, *kabba* is not naturally used in that sense. It usually has a vaguely pejorative sense of something worldly.

The Subodhālaṅkara [1.1.7.1] has this bahuvrihi (P *bahu-b, bīhi*, a possessive compound):³¹ *kabba, nāṭaka, nikkhitta, netta, citta* (mfn), “whose eyes and mind are inclined towards, or occupied with poetry and dance, or dramatic performance; *kabbā kavi, janā yaṁ kiñci racayant'etaṁ na vimhaya, karaṁ paraṁ* (Subodh 6).³² This is clearly not the domain of Vinaya-based and Dharma-spirited monastic Buddhism, but is clearly a secular field of the arts for the laity.

1.1.7 Buddhist poetry, poetics and prosody—an overview

1.1.7.1 Pre-modern Indian poetry may be broadly categorized into 3 overlapping periods:

- (1) the Vedic period (c2000-500 BCE),
- (2) the Middle Indo-Aryan period (600 BCE-400 CE), and
- (3) the classical period (400-1200 CE).

Early Buddhist poetry falls under (2).³³

In traditional Indian literature and poetry, there is neither a collective nor a special term for poetics or prosody³⁴ [1.1.7.10]. Such works are simply known by their titles, such as **the Subodhālaṅkāra**, on poetics, and **the Vuttodaya**, on prosody,³⁵ both by Saṅgharakkhita of Sri Lanka (late-12th century). The latter is the only traditional work on Pali metre extant. They can, however, be all conveniently subsumed under the broad category of the Sanskrit term *kāvya* (P *kabba*)³⁶ [1.1.6.3]. These are, however, late Sri Lankan works from the mediaeval period.³⁷

1.1.7.2 In almost every sutta or early Buddhist text there is likely to be at least a verse, usually more. Early Buddhist poetry often represents not only the most ancient of Indian poetry, but also their most beautiful and spiritual. The oldest poetic Pali works are preserved in **the Sutta Nipāta**, that is, the 16 suttas of **the Aṭṭhaka, vagga** (Sn ch 4) and the 16 suttas of **the Pārāyaṇa, vagga** (Sn ch 5); and **the Khagga, visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3), on the early Buddhist eremites. It also has **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2), renowned for its great rustic beauty.

Early suttas in verse, such as those preserved both in the Sutta Nipāta and the Majjhima Nikāya, include **the Sela Sutta** (Sn 3.9 = M 92) and **the Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (Sn 3.9 = M 98).³⁸ **The Sa, gāthā, vagga** (S ch

³¹ A bahuvrihi (Skt *bahuvrihi*; P *bahu-b, bīhi*, “having much rice”) is a possessive compound arising from the formula, “(one) having a B that is an A,” eg, one whose (A) whose feet (B) are bare, ie, “barefoot”; also blockhead, gray-beard. Pali examples are *khīṇ'āsava* (*yassa so*), “one whose influxes are destroyed,” an arhat; *dīgha, jānu*, “one whose knees are long, long-kneed.”

³² CPD: *kabba*.

³³ For a description of the metres used in early Buddhism, see “An Outline of the Metres in the Pāli Canon”: <http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Textual-Studies/Outline/index.htm>.

³⁴ Jens-Uwe Hartmann, “Hymns and Short Poetry: South Asia,” in Brill’s *Encyclopedia of Buddhism Online*, 2020. 11 June 2021. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2467-9666_enbo_COM_0049.

³⁵ See Anandajoti, *Vuttodaya: The composition of metre by Ven Saṅgharakkhita*, tr & comy, 2016: Intro, <https://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Textual-Studies/Vuttodaya/Vuttodaya.pdf>.

³⁶ See A K Warder, *Pali Metre: A contribution to the history of Indian literature*, 1967, esp §§22-30 Nature of Indian verse. Also S Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit-Pali-Prakrit*, 1984.

³⁷ See Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1985b:167 f.

³⁸ Norman 1983b:63-70.

1), which opens the Saṃyutta Nikāya,³⁹ are closely related to Vedic verse, and most of them are pre-Buddhist that are used to express or reflect Buddhist teachings.⁴⁰

1.1.7.3 Vaṅḡisa's spiritually open and moving poems, preserved in his **Thera,gāthā** (Tha 1209-1279), are also found in **the Saṃyutta** (S 8) and **the Sutta Nipāta** (Sn 1.12) [1.1.5.2]. These verses give us rare glimpses into very early Indian poetry otherwise totally lost. It seems that these verses often mirror the secular poetry of the times, and in some cases, images from love lyrics were replaced with religious imagery.⁴¹ Poetical embellishments (*alaṅkāra*) found in much later poetry are found here for the first time.

The Therī,gāthā, the verses of the elder nuns, are especially known for their poignant humanity and natural beauty (such as those of the elder Subhā Jīvak'amba, vanika, **the Subhā Thī**, Thī 366-399).⁴² Historically and culturally, it is the first surviving poetry composed by Indian women, such as the lament of Ambapālī, courtesan turned nun (Thī 252-270), which, with dark humour, speaks of the decay of her beauty; and Muttā, of the joy in being rid of an unpleasant husband (Thī 11). The quality of these poems is unmatched by any later works.⁴³

According to Hinüber, the form of the single stanzas of the early Buddhist verses is not only the precursor of later *muktaka*-poetry as found in the Mahārāṣṭrī verses of Hāla (2nd/3rd century), but is also completely different from Vedic literature. This again testifies to a very abrupt break between Vedic and the Middle Indic traditions. It gives us some idea of the highly valuable and beautiful poetry that once flourished in ancient India.⁴⁴

1.1.7.4 The canonical **Jātakas** are all in verses, and their stories, related in its Commentary, constitute a huge collection of the earliest of Indian fables and folk tales. The prose commentary is essential to relate the story behind the verses for the 1st 500 jatakas. From the Visati Nipāta (the book of twenties) onwards, a new type of jataka begins. They are small epics long enough to be understood without any help of the prose commentary. Some of these longer jatakas recur in the Sanskrit epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana, "They are of utmost importance far beyond Theravāda for the literary history particularly of the epics in ancient India."⁴⁵

1.1.7.5 The Dhammapada is a collection of 423 verses (in slokas, 4 lines with 8 syllables each), and is popularly quoted—and translated, often badly—on account of its apparent simplicity and pithiness.⁴⁶ However, it contains verses that exemplify the "intentional" use of language.⁴⁷ Of special interest and difficulty is **Dh 97**.⁴⁸ This kind of language is a kind of "literary shock therapy," of which another example is found in **Dh 294**. Words take on an opposite sense to jolt us into a spiritual sense of things, a profound joy or an uplifting vision. Figurative language of great beauty and spirituality to express freeing the mind of thoughts and views is found in **Dh 348** and **283**.

³⁹ On the Saṃyutta Nikāya, see Norman 1983b:49-54; Hinüber 1996:35-38.

⁴⁰ Norman 1983b:50-52; Hinüber, "The *Sagātha-vagga* in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*: Formation and Vedic background," 2020:5-51.

⁴¹ See Lienhard 1975; cf 1989:75-79.

⁴² Thī 366-399 (SD 20.7).

⁴³ For an impressive survey of Skt works by women, see Chaudhuri 1939-43.

⁴⁴ See the series of articles in H Lüders, Göttingen: *Philologica Indica*, 1940; Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:57.

⁴⁵ Hinüber 1996:57. On the Jātaka, see op cit 54-58.

⁴⁶ For a philological guide to Dh, see K R Norman, *The Word of the Doctrine*, 1997. Tr with notes Carter & Paliha-wadana, 1987.

⁴⁷ SD 26.11 (6.5).

⁴⁸ See **Dh 97** SD 10.6 esp (5).

Besides the **Pali Dhammapada**,⁴⁹ this popular verse anthology is found in a number of other canonical languages:

- **the Gāndhārī Dharmapada**, edited Brough, 1962, also called the Khotan Dhammapada;
- **the Prakrit Dharmapada**, based on Senart's Kharoṣṭhi MS, with text, translations and notes by Barua and Mitra, 1921;
- **the Patna Dharmapada**, edited by Roth, 1980:98-135; ed Cone, JPTS 13 (1989:101-217).
- **the Udāna,varga**, edited Bernhard, 1965.⁵⁰

1.1.7.6 The Udāna,varga is a Sanskrit work of the Sarvāstivāda with about 1050 verses, including scholia (*uddāna*), in 33 chapters (*varga*). It is probable that the Pali Dhammapada, the Sanskrit Udāna, varga and the Gāndhārī Dharmapada had originally about 360 verses in common.⁵¹ However, they also have their own unique differences.⁵²

It is interesting that the commentator Dhammapāla says (UA 3,23-28) that the majority of the Buddha's verses of uplift (*udāna*) are in the Dhammapada [1.1.7.5]; and we have noted that the Sarvāstivāda version of the Dhammapada is entitled Udāna,varga. Dhammapāla also states (UA 3,12) that the verses of the elder monks (*thera*) and elder nuns (*therī*) are not *udānas*, but "lion-roars" (*sīha,nāda*).

The Iti,vuttaka (thus said) was said to have been compiled by a laywoman, Khuji'uttarā.⁵³ It has 112 suttas arranged in 4 books (*nipāta*), subdivided into chapters (*vagga*); and, like **the Udāna** (with 8 vaggas of 10 udanas each), is a mixture of prose and verse. The Iti,vuttaka prose is not intended as a narrative, as in the Udāna, but the prose and verse complement one another, so that the teaching (doctrine or admonition) is present *partly* in the prose, *partly* in the verse.⁵⁴

1.1.7.7 The last few canonical texts in verse we will consider are the Apadāna, the Buddha,vaṃsa and the Cariyā,piṭaka, the last 3 books of the Khuddaka Nikāya, the 5th and last canonical Pali collection. These 3 works are all hagiographical, dealing with the past lives of the Buddha and the arhats. The details to the verses are given in their Commentaries: the Visuddha,jana,vilāsinī (author unknown), the Madhur'attha,vilāsalīnī (bu Buddha,datta) and the Param'attha,dīpanī 7 (by Dhamma,pāla).

While the Jātakas relate past lives of the Buddha, **the Apadāna** relate the past lives of the arhat monks and arhat nuns, thus:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| (1) Buddhâpadâna | a praise of the Buddha and their respective fields ⁵⁵ |
| (2) Pacceka,buddhâpadâna | the Buddha answers Ānanda's questions of buddhas who do not teach ⁵⁶ |
| (3) Therā,apadana | 55 vaggas of 10 Apadanas each spoken by monks |
| (4) Therī,apadana | 4 vaggas of 10 Apadanas each spoken by nuns |

This collection is a kind of supplement to the Thera,gāthā and the Therī,gāthā, and also parallel the Jātaka relating the Buddha's past lives. The last 2 poems of the Thera,gāthā—those of Moggallāna (Tha 1146-1208) and of Vaṅḡisa (That 1209-1279) are, in fact, of Apadāna nature.

⁴⁹ Ed Sumangala 1914; ed & tr C A F Rhys Davids 1931; ed Hinüber & Norman, 2014.

⁵⁰ See also Schmithausen, "Zu den Rezensionen des Udānavargaḥ," WZKSO 14 1970:47-124,

⁵¹ See Brough, *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, 1962:23.

⁵² See Norman 1983b:59; on the Udāna: 60 f and Hinüber 1996:46.

⁵³ See SD 8.6 (8.2); SD 15.11 (1.3.3.1); SD 57.19b (1.2.2).

⁵⁴ See Norman 1983b:62 f; Hinüber 1996:46 f.

⁵⁵ This content betrays Mahāyāna influence; hence, the text's lateness. See Bechert, "Buddha-field and transfer of merit in a Theravāda source," 1992a:102.

⁵⁶ Only the verses in this section are in *triṣṭubh*.

Its Sanskrit version, the Avadāna, is found in Tibetan and Chinese, indicating that it was common to both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda. Hence, they are quite early or based on early sources, since they show signs of Mahāyāna influence.⁵⁷

The Buddha,vaṃsa is a hagiography of 24 buddhas leading up to that of the historical Gotama Buddha. The narratives of these buddhas are basically the same, differing only in the details, such as, how they renounce, the kind of tree they awaken under, their chief disciples, and so on. This is a “narrative serialization” of the buddhas, that is, they (more or less) follow one another in different times (*buddha,kāla*) but never encounter one another.⁵⁸

Like the Apadāna, the Buddha,vaṃsa, too, is found in the Sarvāstivāda, which means that they are early in the pre-Mahāyāna sense. However, we see the development of the Bodhisattva and the Buddha doctrines in them. The text closes with details of the Buddha’s early life, especially the events of the 1st 7 weeks.⁵⁹

The Cariyā,piṭaka, the last book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, consists of 35 Jātaka-type stories given in verses, arranged in 3 chapters (*vagga*), to illustrate each of the 10 perfections (*pāramī*): those of giving (*dāna*), moral virtue (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), truth (*sacca*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Apparently, accounts related to the last 3 perfections were lost, or perhaps, the idea was aborted. Anyway, this idea seemed to have been influenced by the 6 perfections (*pāramitā*) of early Mahāyāna.⁶⁰

1.1.7.8 Here, we will briefly look at 2 works of popular religious stories, clearly aimed at instilling a diligence in not committing keeping any bad karma that would fruit in some suffering state, such as that of the pretas, as exemplified by the stories of the Peta,vatthu, and to live a morally virtuous life of goodness and charity, as exemplified by the heavenly beings in the Vimāna,vatthu. These 2 works were clearly late, considering their contents of almost simplistic piety, and their literary quality is not as high as the verse works mentioned earlier.⁶¹

In the Khuddaka Nikāya, **the Vimāna,vatthu** appears first as book 6 (in the Burmese listing). From the unremarkable metre, scholars conclude that the work (probably post-Buddha) is likely to be one of the last to be admitted into the canon.⁶²

The theme of the stories is clearly old—do good and we go to heaven—and also simplistic, but useful for the edification of those who, for any reason, may not appreciate the older suttas and stories. Out of this dark heaven of tiny twinkling stars that are heavenly mansions (*vimāna*), at least one star does shine brilliantly, that is, **the Chatta Māṇavaka Vatthu** (Vv 5.3/881*-904). Its first 2 verses are popularly sung to a “goose-step” tune, by the laity in Sri Lanka as a hymn of the 3 refuges, even put to music.⁶³

The Peta,vatthu, the 7th book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, like *Vimāna,vatthu*, with which it is often paired, was probably added during Asoka’s time, before the canon was closed.⁶⁴ Many of the stories relate the painful fruits of wicked deeds that turn us into pretas. Here, the term *peta* takes on more than just

⁵⁷ Norman 1983b:89-92; Hinüber 1996:60 f.

⁵⁸ On the development of this belief, see Brill’s Ency of Buddhism Online (BEB): Buddhas of the past and of the future: Southeast Asia.

⁵⁹ Norman 1983b:92-94; Hinüber 1996:62.

⁶⁰ Norman 1983b:94 f; Hinüber 1996:63 f.

⁶¹ Winternitz does not think highly of them: “Die beiden höchst underfreulichen, glücklicherweise wenig umfangreichen Werke” (the 2 most unpleasant, fortunately, not very extensive works). 1912:77. Sentiments not repeated in the tr 1933:98.

⁶² Norman 1983b 70 f; Hinüber 1996 50.

⁶³ <https://dev.ytapi.com/embed/GvIQzBTRNUc?autoplay=1>.

⁶⁴ See Norman 1983b:71 f; Hinüber 1996:50 f.

the sense of “departed one,” but suggests a state of suffering that we are caught in karmically.⁶⁵ At least one story stands out as instructing the Dharma-spirited way of regarding the departed, that is, **the Tirokuḍḍa Sutta** (Pv 1.5/14*-25*),⁶⁶ and is incorporated into the Khuddaka,pāṭha [1.1.7.7].

1.1.7.9 Finally, there are the late canonical verses, known as **the Khuddaka,pāṭha**. Although this book is placed *first* in the Khuddaka,pāṭha, since they represent what a novice should *first* learn and know. It is simply an anthology of existing materials (except for one), that is, the following 4 topics and 5 suttas:

(1) the 3 refuges for “refuge-going” (<i>saraṇa,gamana</i>)	V 1:22,15-20, etc	SD 45.11 (3)
(2) the 10 training rules (<i>dasa,sikkhāpada</i>) for monastic novice	V 1:83,32-84,2, etc	
(3) the 32 parts of the body (<i>dva-t,timś’ākāra</i>) for meditation	Pm 1:6.31-7.7	SD 19.16 ⁶⁷
(4) the boy’s questions (<i>kumara,pañha</i>), the 10 key teachings	A 10.27/5:50,22-54,13	SD 58.1 ⁶⁸
(5) the Maṅgala Sutta, on blessings	Sn 46 f258*-269*)	SD 101.5
(6) the Ratana Sutta, recollections on the 3 jewels	Sn 2.1 (222*-238*)	SD 101.2
(7) the Tirokuḍḍa Sutta, on dealing with the departed	Pv 1.5 (14*=25*)	SD 2.7
(8) the Nidhi,kaṇḍa Sutta, on the treasure trove (good karma) ⁶⁹		
(9) the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta, cultivating lovingkindness	Sn 1.8 (143*-152*)	SD 38.3

The suttas seem to have a liturgical purpose; perhaps. For the instruction and edification of the laity in terms of rituals in some organized form. Khp 1-6 and 9 are found in the same sequence in **the Paritta**, where there are 2 texts placed between texts 4 and 5, placing the Tirokuḍḍa Sutta and the Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta as Paritta 8 and 9. We may thus assume that both Khp and Parit originated by expanding a common urtext in different ways.⁷⁰ Unlike the Khuddaka,pāṭha, the Paritta is still used in popular Buddhism.⁷¹

1.1.7.10 With such a wealth of beautiful and inspiring poetry, understandably the Buddhists would produce works on **poetics and prosody**. Unlike hermeneutics, which is about the meaning and interpretation of a text, **poetics** pertains to understanding how a text’s different elements come together and produce certain effects on the reader: it is the theory of literary forms and literary discourse. In a narrow sense, it is the literary criticism that deals with the nature, forms and laws of poetry.⁷²

The Buddhist classic on poetics is Saṅgharakkhita’s **Subodhālaṅkāra**⁷³ [1.1.7.1] in 370 verses. It deals with the art of poetry under 5 heads: faults in composition; their avoidance; verbal ornamentation; rhet-

⁶⁵ On the evolution of the *petā*, see SD 57.10 (3.2.5).

⁶⁶ Khp 7 = Pv 1.5 (SD 2.7).

⁶⁷ Only 31 parts are listed in the suttas, eg, **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60,6), SD 19.16.

⁶⁸ “The great questions (*mahā,pañha*), SD 58.1 (5.2.7.2).

⁶⁹ Khp 8,9* is qu by Kvu 351,18*-21* (§148). This seems to show that (8) is an old independent text only found in this collection.

⁷⁰ Norman 1983b:57 f; Hinüber 1996:43 f.

⁷¹ The Parittas are listed in CPD I (Epi) p93* f. Other protective texts incl **Jayamaṅgala Gāthā** [Hinüber 1996 4.5.2], **Mahā,dibba,manta** (BSOAS 28, 1965:61-80) and **Jina,pañjara** [SD 54.18 (2.3.1.4)]. See Skilling 1992, biblio. The Paritta is also discussed in Schalk 1974. Comy: **Sār’attha,samuccaya** (ParitA: Hinüber 1996 2.9.1,1). Ce (SHB XXV) 192; also called Catu,bhāṇa,vār’aṭṭhakathā seems to be extracted from the Comys on the respective texts. On the date of ParitA: Upasaka,janālaṅkāra, ed Saddhatissa, 1965:35.

⁷² See Gérard Genette, *Essays in Aesthetics*, vol 4, 2005:14.

⁷³ Gandhv 61,15-19; the Vuttodaya author is generically said to be Vuttodaya,kara, “the Vuttodaya creator.” *Subodhālaṅkāra*, ed & tr G E Fryer, JAS 44 1875:91-125.

orical figures; elegance of sound (*rasa*) and the art of making verse sound pleasant. There is a *ṭīkā* (sub-commentary) on the Subodhalankara, ascribed to Vacissara.⁷⁴

Saṅgharakkhita also wrote a book on Pali prosody, entitled **Vuttodaya**.⁷⁵ It seems to be the only original work on Pali metre extant.⁷⁶ It consists of 136 verses, or sections of stanzas, arranged in 6 chapters, first dealing with general definitions and symbols, and then with all the metres known to him, including *mattā, chanda, gaṇa-c, chanda* and all the varieties of *akhara-c, chanda*. However, he does not seem to have been aware of the Old *āryā* metre. He relied entirely on Sanskrit prosody, borrowing their terms and adapting them. Occasionally, he uses a sentence from Pingala turning it into Pali with little change.⁷⁷ There were several commentaries on the Vuttodaya, including a *ṭīkā* by Vepullabuddhi of Pagan (Gandhv 64,27).⁷⁸

1.1.8 Secular poetry and Buddhist poetry

1.1.8.0 We have briefly discussed the nature of early Buddhist poetry and of *kabba* [1.1.6]. Here, we will very briefly take a couple of glimpses at **secular poetry**, especially western poetry [1.1.8.1] and modernist poetry [1.1.8.2]: how these two differ, and how they both differ from early Buddhist poetry.

1.1.8.1 One of the leading Romantic poets, **William Wordsworth** (1770-1850), writes in his introduction to the 2nd edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800): “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.”⁷⁹ Since poetry deals with feelings, it is always tricky when it comes to definitions, since feelings are to be directly *felt*; they are subjective, and thus defy any technical definition.

Hence, it’s easier to speak of “descriptions,” rather than definitions, of artistic creation. Even then, Wordsworth’s descriptions of the process of poetry seemingly contradict one another. The description above suggests that poetry comes from feelings and emotions rather than conscious effort. However, he later gives another description of poetry which highlights the importance of *conscious reflection*, that poetry is “emotion recollected in tranquility” (307).

In contrast to his 1st description, which says that poetry arises spontaneously, this 2nd description implies that poets must enter a calm, rational state of mind in order to write poetry. The ambiguous use of language in Wordsworth’s poems, particularly in “Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” and “Lines Written in Early Spring,” both written in 1798, show the tension between rationality and imagination. The apparent contradictions between rational thought and non-rational feelings in Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads* thus suggest that we must reconcile, or simply accept, both these views on the creation of poetry. After all, we are supposed to simply *enjoy* poetry.

1.1.8.2 The Irish poet, **T S Eliot** (1888-1965), a central figure in Modernist poetry, in his *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919) rejects Wordsworth’s definition or description of poetry. He holds the view that a writer should be impersonal and his writings should be devoid of personal emotion and feelings. Powerful emotions may arise in the mind, but the poet doesn’t react immediately.

⁷⁴ Gandhv 62,6; Malalasekera, *Pali Literature of Ceylon*, 1928:204.

⁷⁵ Ed and tr G E Fryer, Calcutta 1877. See also R Siddhartha, “Sangharakkhita’s Vuttodaya: a study of Pali metre,” *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Univ of Calcutta, vol 18,7 1929 (repr Dehli 1981).

⁷⁶ Malalasekera 1928:198.

⁷⁷ Malalasekera id.

⁷⁸ See Fryer, *Vuttodaya*, 1877:4. Norman notes that the date there for Vepulla (c 1212) seems too early (1983b: 168 n351).

⁷⁹ The 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (Wordsworth & Coleridge, 1800:291).

Eliot, in his most famous poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), uses the Buddhist imagery of the fire sermon, the Āditta Pariyāya Sutta (S 35.28), to depict the dark sentiments of post-World War 1 Britain. In Eliot's view, our emotions burn us like the fires of lust, hate and delusion in the Sutta, and we are helpless to put them out. To do that we have to return to early Buddhism.⁸⁰

1.1.8.3 James Joyce (1882-1941) heavily uses Buddhist ideas in his most difficult and final work, *Finnegans Wake* (1939). It is framed in a samsaric cycle: the book's very last sentence hooks back to its first word, so that reading simply starts over. At the book's opening, Joyce versifies the 12 links of dependent arising, thus:

"In the ignorance that implies impression that knits knowledge that finds the nameform that whets the wits that convey contacts that sweeten sensation that drives desire that adheres to the attachment that dogs death that bitches birth that entails the ensuance of existentiality."⁸¹

1.1.8.4 It's often fascinating, at least exotic, to see how great literary luminaries apply Buddhist ideas and teachings in their work. However, we should not have the naïve notion it is really Buddhism that we are reading in the great literary work. Buddhist aspects have been relegated, seconded, to convey an idea or sentiment of the author.

In Eliot's *The Waste Land* [1.1.8.2], for example, the "fire sermon" is appropriated by him not to piously present the dangers of the effects of greed, hate and delusion, but to highlight the consuming darkness of the aftermath of World War 1 on Britain expressed through poetry. The effect is dramatic and compelling. However, it is not Buddhism: it is T S Eliot.

Similarly, when Joyce uses the samsaric effect of the 12 links of dependent arising in the opening of *Finnegans Wake* [1.1.8.3], adjusting the cycle, putting **ignorance** in the 1st and the last link (it is suffering that is the original last link); in fact, the last 3 links are reversed, giving the effect of an unending cycle. This is samsaric in the Joycean sense, but it is not actually in the early Buddhist texts.

We fairly tolerate all this as literary licence; we may even peddle such literary cameos as overtures to the real thing. But that's the point: we need to present the original teachings in their fullness. It's fine for Buddhism to serve as Cinderella, and pumpkins may turn into carriages, and mice into footmen, but the wicked stepmother and ugly stepsisters remain as they are. Cinderella has to be with Prince Charming to live happily ever after. This is called **the Cinderella effect**.

If literature engages the services of Buddhism with a literary sense of respect, modern **psychology** tends to conscript Buddhism to serve the Emperors of Psychology. Buddhism is that little boy who keeps shouting that the Emperor is naked, but who dares laugh at an Emperor. The boy is sent for therapy and then thrown into the scullery. The exploitation there is sadder and the Buddha often ends up being killed by Zennists.⁸²

1.2 THE AṬṬHI, KATVĀ PERICOPE

1.2.1 Deep listening

1.2.1.1 The highlight of the (Sa,gāthā) Sāriputta Sutta is "**the aṭṭhi,katvā pericope**," a stock passage that describes the nature of "deep listening" or *fully engaged attention* to the Dharma, "**He listens to the Dharma, fully attentive, fully receptive, all ears, minding it, directing his whole mind [heart] to it**" (aṭṭhi,katvā [aṭṭhim katvā] manasi katvā sabba,cetaso samannāharitvā ohita,soto dhammam suṇāti).

⁸⁰ A 35.28/4:19-20 = Mv 1.21 (V 1:34 f): SD 1.3 (1.2.3).

⁸¹ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, NY: Viking Press, 1967:18. See SD 5.16 preamble.

⁸² On psychotherapy and Buddhism, see SD 7.9 (1.3.2).

Literally, this reads: “he listens to the Dharma, driven by purpose [intent on the meaning], gives ear, fully attentive, directing his mind totally to it.”⁸³

1.2.1.2 The Sutta describes the Dharma being taught by an experienced Dharma teacher, a true practitioner, an awakened renunciant, an arhat, the elder **Sāriputta**, the wisest of the monks (other than the Buddha himself). The Buddha declares him to be the foremost of those disciples with great wisdom (A 1:189/1:23). [1.1.2.1]

However, it is not the teacher that defines this pericope, but the teaching. Hence, even when an ordinary teacher teaches the sutta with respect and wisdom, the wholesome effect is still there, that is, when we “**listen to the Dharma, fully attentive, fully receptive, all ears, minding it, directing his whole mind [heart] to it.**”

This phrase is analysed as follows:

		faculty (indriya)
<i>aṭṭhi, katvā [aṭṭhim katvā]</i>	making (the Dharma, the goal) his purpose	faith
<i>manasi katvā</i>	minding it	effort
<i>sabba, cetaso samannāharitvā</i>	attending to it with all his mind [heart]	mindfulness
<i>ohita, soto</i>	(“with ear directed,” from <i>odahati</i> ⁸⁴) all ears	concentration
<i>dhammaṃ suṇāti</i>	he listens to the Dharma	wisdom

1.2.2 Cultivating the 5 faculties

1.2.2.1 Through this “deep” listening of the Dharma, especially when it is taught by the arhats, the audience will surely benefit in terms of cultivating their **spiritual faculties** (*indriya*) of faith (*saddhā*), effort (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). These will, in turn, help them progress to attain the path in this life itself.

The **faith** of the audience inspires them with a deep sense of purpose. **Effort** arises in them even as they keep their mind focused on the teaching. With **mindfulness**, the audience receives the flow of Dharma into their hearts since they are “all ears,” listening without any distraction. As a natural fruit of this mental openness and spiritual readiness, **wisdom** arises in them even as they listen, and grows in due course.

1.2.2.2 A more detailed description, in practical terms, of how this **deep listening** of the Dharma helps in our spiritual development is by way of the stages of discipleship (*sāvakaṭṭa*), described in SD 58.1 (1.2.1.3).

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⁸³ M 65,32/1:445 (SD 56.2), 134,6/3:201 (SD 109.11); S 4.16/1:113 (SD 61.11), 8.6/1:189 (SD 58.7, qv), 46.38/-5:95 (SD 41.10).

⁸⁴ *Odahati* (+ *odheti*), “places (in); lays down; applies; directs, *odahati sotam*, “gives ear attentively,” V 1:9,14). Cf *oharati* which also gives *ohita* but with a different sense (as in *ohita, bhāra*, “laid down the burden”).

(Sa,gāthā) Sāriputta Sutta

The (Sa,gāthā) Discourse on Sāriputta

S 8.6

1 At one time, the venerable **Sāriputta** was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park monastery in Jeta’s grove, outside Sāvattihī.

2 Now, at that time, the venerable Sāriputta was instructing, inspiring, rousing and gladdening the monks with a Dharma talk,⁸⁵ speaking in a polished, fluent, articulate manner, expressing well its meaning.⁸⁶

And those monks were listening to the Dharma, fully attentive, fully receptive, all ears, minding it, directing their whole mind to it.⁸⁷

3 Then, it occurred to the venerable **Vaṅgīsa**: [1.1.5.2]

“This [190] venerable Sāriputta is *instructing, inspiring, rousing and gladdening the monks with a Dharma talk, speaking in a polished, fluent, articulate manner, expressing well its meaning.*

And those monks are listening to the Dharma, fully attentive, fully receptive, all ears, minding it, directing their whole mind to it.

What now if I were to praise the venerable Sāriputta to his face with suitable verses.”⁸⁸

4 Then, the venerable Vaṅgīsa rose from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder and, raising his hands joined in lotus gesture towards the venerable Sāriputta, said to him:

5 “An inspiration has come to me, avuso Sāriputta! An inspiration has come to me, avuso Sāriputta!”

“Then, express your inspiration, avuso Vaṅgīsa.”

6 Then, the venerable Vaṅgīsa praised the venerable Sāriputta to his face with suitable verses, thus:

731	Wise, profoundly wise, skilled in the path and what is not the path. Sāriputta, of great wisdom, teaches the Dharma to the monks.	<i>gambhīra,pañño medhavī maggāmaggassa kovido sāriputto mahā,pañño dhammaṃ deseti bhikkhunaṃ</i>	(Tha 1231)
732	He teaches briefly, he speaks in detail. His voice, like that of a mynah bird, ⁸⁹ pours forth discourse of insightful wit. ⁹⁰	<i>saṅkhittena pi deseti vitthārena pi bhāsati sālikāy-iva nigghoso paṭibhānaṃ udīrayi</i>	(Tha 1232)

⁸⁵ On this stock phrase, see **Pārileyya S** (S 22.81,9+ n) SD 6.1.

⁸⁶ “Speaking in as polished ... the meaning,” *poriyā vācāya visutthāya aneḷagaḷāya atthassa viññāpaniyā.*

⁸⁷ *Te ca bhikkhū aṭṭhi, katvā* [Be *aṭṭhim katvā*] *manasi katvā sabba, cetaso samannāharitvā ohita, sotā dhammaṃ suṇanti*: **M 65**,32/1:445 (SD 56.2), **134**,6/3:201 (SD 109.11); **S 4.16**/1:113 (SD 61.11), **8.6**/1:189 (SD 58.7), **46.38**/-5:95 (SD 41.10). DPI 37 *aṭṭhī katvā* ... *suṇāti*: “Making himself a seeker of meaning, he gives ears [sic] and listens to the Dhamma with full attention, directing his mind totally towards it.” On how this builds up the 5 faculties (*indriya*), see SD 58.2 (1.2.1.2).

⁸⁸ *Yaṃ nunnāhaṃ ayasmantaṃ sāriputtaṃ sammukhā sarūpāhi gāthāhi abhitthaveyyan’ti.*

⁸⁹ “Mynah” or “myna,” *sālika* (also *sālika*, *sāliya*, or *-ā*), the mynah or thrush, *Turdus salica* (Skt *sārikā*), or Common myna, *Acridotheres tristis* (J 1:421, 429, 3:202, 203, 5:8 *madhu, sāliya*, 6:425 *sāliyā*).

733	As he teaches them, they listen to his sweet voice. Joyful, the mind uplifted by his delightful voice, pleasant to the ear, lovely, the monks give ear.”	<i>tassa taṃ desayantassa suṇanti madhuraṃ giraṃ sarena rajanīyena savanīyena vaggunā udagga,cittā muditā sotaṃ odhenti bhikkhavo’ti</i>	<i>e c d</i>	(Tha 1233)
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— evaṃ —

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⁹⁰ Comy paraphrases line c as if it contained an inherent verb *hoti* and treats line d as an independent sentence with *paṭibhānaṃ* as subject. It seems more fitting, however, to take *nigghoso* in line c as the subject of *udīrayi* and *paṭibhānaṃ* as its object. Comy explains the simile: “The elder’s sweet voice, as he teaches the Dharma, is like the voice of a mynah bird when, having tasted a sweet ripe mango, it strikes up a breeze with its wings and emits a sweet sound.” Comy glosses the verb with *uṭṭhahati*, and paraphrases with an intransitive sense: “Inspired discourse rises up (from him) endlessly, like waves from the ocean.” This implies that Comy reads *udīyyati*, the Be reading of Tha 1232.