

4a

Kesa,puttiya¹ Sutta

The Discourse to the Kesa,puttiyas | **A 3.65**

Or, the Kesaputta Discourse; popularly known as **Kālāma Sutta** the Discourse to the Kālāmas

Be **Kesa,mutti(ya) Sutta** The Discourse to Those of Kesamutti

Theme: True religious worth and spiritual assurance

Translated with notes by Piya Tan ©2004, 2006, 2011

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We don't need to take drugs to hallucinate:
Blur thinking, blur info, blur friends—
and those who claim to know God—can do worse.

[**Note prefixes:** “§” before a number refers to passages in the Sutta itself. “**Intro**” refers to an Introduction section. “**Comy**” here usually refers to the Commentarial Notes at the end of this chapter. A parenthesized cross-reference without a prefix, eg [8], refers to the section in the same chapter.

- SD 35.4a(1)** Introductory notes
- SD 35.4a(2)** The Sutta
- SD 35.4a(3)** The Commentary
- SD 35.4b** Comparative study: A 3.65 & MĀ 16 (Chinese version)

Sutta Synopsis

- §§1-2 1 The Kālāmas approach the Buddha.
- §§3-14 2 The moral worth of statements.
- §15a 3 The 4 divine abodes.
- §§15b-16 4 The 4 self-assurances.
- §17 5 The Kālāmas' exultation.
- §18 6 The Kālāmas go for refuge.

¹ So Ce Ee Se; Be *Kesa,muttiya*.

Part 1. Introductory notes

1 The 10 doubtful points: An introduction

1.1 MISINTERPRETATION OF THE SUTTA

1.1.1 Not a “charter of free inquiry”

1.1.1.1 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (A 3.65), popularly known as the Kālāma Sutta, is about how to know things rightly for personal, social, spiritual and universal good, based on the 10 “doubtful points.” Moral good is not beliefs, rituals or vows dictated by any kind of authority, but experienced for oneself. It has very much to do with how we develop our minds so that it is characterized with love, ruth, joy and peace. Finally, the Sutta teaches us why doing good is clearly better than doing bad. (SD 35.4).

1.1.1.2 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (better known as the Kālāma Sutta) is perhaps the most misquoted and misused Buddhist text. **Soma Thera**, in his translation of the Sutta, promisingly subtitled it as “the Buddha’s Charter of Free Inquiry” (1981). Alongside the Sutta is quoted Śāntarakṣita’s famous statement from **the Tattva,saṅgraha**,

Bhikṣavaḥ [sambuddhau] mat-vacaḥ grāhyam paṇḍitaiḥ parīkṣya’īkṣ tu na gauravāt iva suvarṇam tāpāt chedāt nikaṣāt.

O bhikshus [said the self-awakened one], my word should be accepted by the wise only after investigation, not out of respect (for me)—just as gold (is accepted) only after heating, cutting and rubbing. (Tttvs ch 26/3588) [6]

Those who summarily or vaguely take the Kesa,puttiya Sutta to be a carte blanche for “free thinking,” agnosticism or plain intellectual laziness, would be sorely disappointed to see, after a careful study of the discourse, that it is much more than a “charter of free inquiry.” In fact, it is better described as “**a guide for the perplexed**,” climaxing in a guarantee of spiritual liberation.

1.1.1.3 We are born **free from religion**, without any idea of religion. We grow, first of all, by working with our senses, avoiding pain and discomfort, enjoy pleasure and comfort. As we grow into adults, we learn to tolerate discomfort, even hardship and lack, understanding that there will be the fruits of our labours. As we live and connect with others in more meaningful and purposeful ways, we learn to conduct ourselves so as to incur minimum disadvantage and loss to ourself and others, with maximum goodness for all. Essentially, this is what the Kesaputtiya Sutta is about.

1.1.2 Main points

The Sutta opens with the Kālāmas of Kesa,puttiya inviting the Buddha to counsel them on the muddle and pain caused by the evangelistic zeal of visiting teachers [§§1-3]. The Buddha begins his admonition by speaking on the moral worthiness of a religion [§§4-14], and goes on to show how to cultivate positive emotions by way of the 4 divine abodes [§§15-16]. The Buddha closes his discourse with a guarantee that whether one believes in rebirth and karma or not, as long as one’s “mind is without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus,” one would enjoy 4 self-assurances or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*) [§§16-17]. [2]

1.1.3 The 10 sources of knowledge

The Kesa,puttiya Sutta even made it into the online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia.² However, as **Bodhi** has observed in his essay, “A look at the Kālāma Sutta”:

though the discourse certainly does counter the decrees of dogmatism and blind faith with a vigorous call for free investigation, it is problematic whether the sutta can support all the positions that have been ascribed to it. On the basis of a single passage, quoted out of context, the Buddha has been made out to be a pragmatic empiricist who dismisses all doctrine and faith, and whose Dhamma is simply a freethinker’s kit to truth which invites each one to accept and reject whatever he likes.

(Bodhi, 1988)

That “single passage” that has been misconstrued as a carte blanche for a “self-assembled” Buddhism actually refers to the 10 doubtful points (*dasa kaṅkhāniya-ṭṭhāna*),³ or unreliable sources of knowledge, or inadequate criteria for truth [§§3, 8, 9, 14]. The Buddha’s intention is gradually but clearly and fully revealed as the Sutta unfolds. The Sutta opens with the oft quoted **10 “doubtful points”**:

Come Kālāmas:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| (1) Do not go ⁴ by tradition [aural revelation]. ⁵ | <i>mā anussavena</i> |
| (2) Do not go by lineage [received wisdom]. | <i>mā paramparāya</i> |
| (3) Do not go by hearsay. | <i>mā iti,kirāya</i> |
| (4) Do not go by scriptural authority. | <i>mā piṭaka,sampadānena</i> |
| (5) Do not go by pure reason [by logic]. | <i>mā takka,hetu[,gāhena]</i> |
| (6) Do not go by inference (and deduction). | <i>mā naya,hetu[,gāhena]</i> |
| (7) Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning]. | <i>mā ākāra,parivitakkena</i> |
| (8) Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of]
a view after pondering on it. | <i>mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā</i> |
| (9) Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability. | <i>mā bhavya,rūpatāya</i> |
| (10) Do not go by the thought, “This recluse [holy man]. ⁶
is our teacher” [“This recluse is respected by us”]. | <i>mā samaṇo no garu</i> |

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,
‘These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.’
—Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them. [§3]

² Accessed 30 Nov 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalama_Sutta.

³ *Kaṅkhāniya-ṭṭhāna* (eg Prayudh, *Dictionary of Buddhism* §305, 1985:274) is a formation from the 2 components in the sentence, *kaṅkhaṇiye ca pana vo ṭṭhāne vicikicchā uppannā* (A 65.3/1:189).

⁴ Comy interprets as *mā gaṇhiṭṭha* or *mā gaṇhittha*, “do not accept (lit, ‘take hold of’) (a notion)” throughout (AA 2:305).

⁵ Incl revelations and prophecies. In the Buddha’s time (and earlier), this refers to an aural/oral tradition, “secret teachings” handed down directly from guru to chela. Examples from our own times would be a “whispered” tradition. Broadly speaking, this also includes what we have heard and read. More broadly, it implies some kind of lineage that authenticate itself with knowledge shared only amongst initiates.

⁶ *Samaṇa* is usually tr as “recluse,” even “holy man,” but here also refers to both monk and nun, or any religious teacher.

This passage, like the Buddha's teachings as recorded in the Pali texts, has its context—that is, a particular audience and situation—and the teaching should be understood in that context.

In none of these passages or anywhere in the Sutta does the Buddha, as often misquoted by proponents of “vague Buddhism,”⁷ state that his teachings should not be accepted, or that one could shape Buddhism according to one's likes and biases—“rather, he counsels that the words of the wise should be heeded and taken into account when deciding upon the value of a teaching.”⁸

1.1.4 The 3 classes of propositions [For a threefold categorization: 3.2]

1.1.4.0 Philosophically—and for the purposes of easier and helpful discussions—we can group these 10 worldly sources of knowledge into 3 classes, that is, by: I. tradition (1-4); II. reasoning (5-8); and III. Personal authority (9-10). These classes of knowledge are very briefly summarized here. For details, please refer to their reference numbers in the **Sutta Commentary** following the sutta translation.

1.1.4.1 I. The 4 traditional propositions refer to the teachings and views of the numerous teachers from ancient times to the Buddha's own times, and, by extension, to our own times. This encompasses not only other religions, but also the various forms of Buddhism that exist today. There are 4 kinds of traditional propositions, which do *not* measure up to being any true criteria for real knowledge or liberating truth, thus:

(1) **The “oral tradition”** (*anu-s, sava*) mentioned here is that of the Vedic tradition. Basically, this refers to teachings directly heard from the various living teachers of the time. In our own time, this would include any teachings we hear or have heard from any teacher, no matter how old, famous, qualified or titled. This also includes sutta translations, interpretations of suttas, even our own reading and theoretical understanding of original texts that we have read. [§3.1 (1): see Part 3, comy]

(2) **“Lineage”** (*paramparā*), an unbroken succession of teachings or teachers, that is, those who have heard and memorized the teachings of those teachers from various religions, groups or authorities. We may call these “sectarian teachings.” Today, this would include any teaching from those who represent any teacher, religion, centre or source. [§3.1 (2): see Part 3, comy]

(3) **“Hearsay”** or “report” (*iti, kirā*) refers to popular opinion or general consensus. Other than listening to teachers and their disciples, we often hear talks from others, especially people we know or associate with. Very often a person, especially a strongly self-opinionated one, will have his own ideas, or misheard or misinterpreted them. This is 2nd hand information (even 3rd hand), and we, in turn, hear them. Hence, this is more of private views and personal gossips, and should be treated thus. [§3.1 (3): see Part 3, comy]

(4) **“Scriptural authority”** (*piṭaka, sampadā*), that is, regarding a collection of texts, especially religious or sacred scriptures, as authoritative and infallible. “Texts” here broadly refers to any kind of religious teaching that compiled in some form (other than what have been mentioned here). Up to the Buddha's time, such texts were orally transmitted and sacred texts were not written down. [§3.1 (4): see Part 3, comy]

1.1.4.2 II. The 2nd class of sources of knowledge comprises **the 4 types of reasoning** known in the Buddha's time. Unlike the Buddha, who, speaks from his awakened experience, and presents his teachings of them in a reasoned and reasonable manner based on direct, empirical observation, the “reasonings” listed here are clearly those based on hypothetical or speculative arguments.

⁷ On “vague Buddhism,” see SD 4.6 (1).

⁸ Accessed 30 Nov 2006 from <http://www.answers.com/topic/kalama-sutta>.

(5) **“Pure reason(ing)”** (*takka,hetu*) may be taken simply to mean “logic.” It works almost in a predictable way, in machines and computers. However, human conduct, although more predictable when we are controlled and compelled by unwholesome thoughts, are less predictable when our mind is wholesome, leading to wholesome conduct. In other words, it goes “against the currents” (*paṭisotā,gamī*) of the world, which is essentially guided by greed, hate and delusion. The awakening and awakened minds, as a rule, do not act by way of these 3 unwholesome roots, but through charity, compassion and wisdom. [§3.1 (5): see Part 3, comy]

(6) **“Inference (and deduction)”** (*naya,hetu*) refers to a prevalent technical Indian philosophical or sectarian view of “standpoint,” In the suttas, these mostly refer to views (*diṭṭhi*) regarding cause and effect, that is, causality. Against like logic, causality works in a predictable manner dependning on the nature of the causes and their effects, and how we see them. In other words, this is “reason” applied broadly to how things happen. We often hear people saying: “Things happen for a reason.” But who decides what that “reason” is (if there is one). Moreover, such a statement is made by some of us, without really saying anything new or useful about the situation. Moreover, not everyone would agree that such a statement is even true. [§3.1 (6): see Part 3, comy]

(7) **“Specious reasoning”** (*ākāra,parivitakka*) simply means “imaginative reasoning. We reason from our own inclinations, visions and desires. We can give such reasoning big philosophical names, but it remains that they are purely circumstantial, and serious misses certain vital points. For example, we can say that we found a watch in a desert: we conclude obviously someone has left it that, that it belonged to some, and someone had made it. Now, here is our world in the universe: someone must have put it there; someone must have made it.⁹ It must be God! Even the God-believers wisely would not quote such a “proof” of God’s existence. Think for yourself of the flaws in such a reasoning. [§3.1 (7): see Part 3, comy]

(8) **“After pondering on it”** (*diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*) means we give a proposition some thought, and we find no reason to disagree with it (for example); hence, we accept it as right. We may simply find it agreeable because we do not really know all the reason for doing so! We *feel* that it must be true or right. Or, perhaps because most others, or everyone else thinks so. Of course, we may accept a proposition *provisionally*—without taking it to be right or true, and for some good reason—but this is a different matter altogether. [§3.1 (8): see Part 3 comy, 4b]

1.1.4.3 III. The 3rd class of sources, consisting of the last two items, contains **the 2 types of personal authority**: the first, “seeming competence” (*bhabbarūpatā*), is the personal charisma of the speaker (perhaps including his external qualifications); the second is the authority of the speaker as one’s Guru (Pāli *garu* being identical with Skt *guru*).

(9) **“(Another’s) seeming ability”** (*bhavya,rūpatāya*) refers to our view that someone is an expert, or well qualified in the matter, or well titled, or even looks good and kind. This includes being biased or blinded by the charms or charisma of another. A common example is when we declare that a certain movie star is a “Buddhist.” We are left to your own level of intelligence to make out what this means, if anything at all. Moreover, we can ask, “What kind of Buddhism, or Buddhist, is he or her?” “Why should we be a Buddhist simply because someone else, especially a movie star, is one?” [§3.1 (9): see Part 3, comy]

⁹ It’s a clear fact that, as a rule, it takes more than 1 person to make a watch. First, there are those who have to produce the raw materials for the various parts of a watch. Secondly, the watch-maker needs many other instruments (each of which has their own series of origins) to work with. Moreover, the watch could have simply fallen there without anyone putting it there, and so on.

(10) “**This recluse is our teacher [respected by us]**” (*samaṇo no garu*): this criterion is doubtful because we are putting the teacher above the teaching. In early Buddhism it is the Dharma that defines the Buddha; hence, the Buddha himself respect the Dharma.¹⁰ Again here, it is not that we should not respect the teacher, but we do so for the right reasons and at the right time: when he is morally virtuous (wholesome in action and speech), and when he teaches us with wisdom, so that we are self-reliant.¹¹ In fact, the Buddha warns us that even very senior, famous, wealthy, learned teachers can have wrong views.¹² We should then learn from those mistake. Even more so, we should learn from our own mistakes. In either case, we should, in doing so, better ourself. It thus boils down to self-reliance and the respect for learning. [§3.1 (10): see Part 3, comy]

1.1.4.4 This is not to say that the early Buddhist texts and the Theravāda who rely on such texts hold that the Buddha, too, should be examined and questioned. Interestingly, the Buddha actually insists on just that: he, too, should be examined whether he measures up to the moral virtue he often speaks of, that his actions, speech and mind are all free from defilements. We are all instructed to observe him to the best extent of our own ability.¹³

Furthermore, this also does not mean that we are automatically or habitually rejecting all teachings. Rather, it means that we should take all teachings provisionally until we know them for certain, from our own experiences, that they are not rooted in any of the 3 unwholesome roots. Even then, we are not to be attached to them as “dharma”¹⁴—teachings, mental states, truths, even realities—but we should let them go to seek higher states,¹⁵ until we reach the path of awakening, attain at least streamwinning,¹⁶ if not arhathood itself.¹⁷

1.2 BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGY

1.2.1 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta is a classic discourse on Buddhist epistemology, that is, *theory of knowledge*, or an investigation into what constitutes valid knowledge and what does not. It is interesting to see here how Buddhist epistemology is different from its Western philosophical counterpart, as **P D Premasiri** notes:

The classical epistemological theories of the West fall into one of two principal traditions, viz, rationalism and empiricism. The consequence of the rationalist-empiricist dichotomy has been that philosophers have attempted to search a single paradigm to which all knowledge could conform.

The rationalist has adhered to the view that knowledge has the nature of a deductive¹⁸ system while empiricists have insisted on the view that the most certain and indubitable knowledge claims are those about our immediate sense data. Both points have led to skepticism with respect to many legitimate areas of human knowledge. The attempt to search for an absolute has also led to many an

¹⁰ See eg **Gārava S** (S 6.2/1:138-140), SD 12.3.

¹¹ See **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1 (3.2); SD 27.3 (3.1.1).

¹² See **(Pañcaka) Thera S** (A 5.88), SD 40a.16.

¹³ See esp **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 47), SD 35.6.

¹⁴ On the polysemy of *dhamma*, see SD 51.25 (2.2.2.5).

¹⁵ On *atthi c’ev’ettha uttarim karaṇīyam*, “but there is here something more to be done”: (**Ānanda**) **Subha S** (D 10,1.31 + passim), SD 40a.13; **Assa,pura S** (M 39,3.5/1:271), SD 10.13; (**Gaha,pati**) **Potaliya S** (M 54,14), SD 43.8; **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114), SD 39.8 (1.1.1.8); SD 51.17 (3.4.2.5).

¹⁶ On attaining streamwinning, even for the laity: SD 4.9 (1.2).

¹⁷ This is, in fact, the themes of **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22/1:130-142), viz, in the parable of the water-snake (§§10-12: *right grasp* of teachings and truths) and of the raft (§§13 f: Dharma as *state*, not status; highest renunciation), SD 3.13.

¹⁸ On deductive reasoning, see SD 35.4a (3.1.1).

elusive metaphysical claim which [has] diverted the human mind from all that is practically relevant and useful.

The admission of the mind in Buddhism as a sixth sense enables it to see reason as a function of the mind and consequently the opposition between sense and reason finds no place in Buddhism.

(Premasiri 2006b:172; also 2006a:146 f)

1.2.2 The early Buddhist conception of knowledge is that it has no absolute paradigm, no enduring forms. Knowledge arises not only through the 5 physical senses, but more importantly, such data are actually interpreted by the 6th sense, the mind, which additionally presents its own sense-data or form of knowledge. Early Buddhist philosophy and psychology do not view reality as being out there, but as being *in here*, that is, *it is how we view the world that creates and sustains our ideas and philosophies, and motivates our actions.* And we face the consequences of such actions.

Early Buddhism sees knowing as a value-laden process, and we create that value. We give meaning to things: that is why such ideas as “God” are meaningful (or useful) to some but meaningless (or useless) to others [5.2]. Very often, we add on the wrong and negative value. The most basic level of knowing, as such, is *to know the mind*. The mind can be compared to the lens through which we view the world. Very often, this lens is smudged by wrong view, coloured by craving, and blurred by ignorance. The lens-cleaning begins with the restraint of body and speech, that is, moral training, which provides a conducive environment for us *to train the mind*.

1.2.3 Both moral training and mental training are the vital bases for clearing the mind totally and finally (albeit gradually) of all defilements. This is the stage when we begin to truly understand how the senses work and how we know things. When this knowledge becomes holistically systematized, it is called wisdom (*paññā*), when the knowing is clear and total, it is “full understanding” (*pariññā*), and when it liberates, it is called “direct knowledge” (*aññā*). One then becomes an arhat.

The purpose of life, then, is not merely to know; for, knowledge is not the end, but the means. When knowledge is *valued for itself*, it becomes itself a view (*diṭṭhi*), a fetter (*saṃyojanā*) [Comy 3a(4)2]. When we begin to understand *how we know*, then we see only mental constructs. As such, we have to see beyond knowing and knowledge: the Kesa,puttiya Sutta is an important discourse on how to do this. [4.1]

2 Sutta summary & highlights

2.1 The Kālāmas are the inhabitants of the town of **Kesa,putta** which, says the Commentary, is located on the edge of a forest. Various groups of wanderers would stop there to spend the night before crossing the forest (or on emerging from the forest). During their stay, they would give talks to the Kālāmas, so that they are exposed to a wide range of religious and philosophical ideas (AA 2:305). Understandably, such a bewildering range of views causes doubt and perplexity¹⁹ in the minds of the Kālāmas.

2.2 From the Sutta [§1], we can surmise that the Buddha’s fame precedes him, and (according to the Commentary) the Kālāmas eagerly welcome him, and “approach him, holding medicines such as ghee and fresh butter, and the 8 kinds of drinks.”²⁰ Having approached the Buddha, they declare their predicament to the

¹⁹ On doubt (*vicikicchā*), see **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (6) & **Vicikicchā**, SD 32.8.

²⁰ *Sappi,nava,nīt’ādi,bhesajjāni c’eva aṭṭha,vidha,pānakāni ca gāhāpetvā upasaṅkamimsu* (AA 2:304). **Vinaya** allows the following 8 kinds of drink (even outside the permitted meal hours), viz: (1) mango drink, rose-apple drink, coconut milk, banana drink, honey drink, grape drink, lotus-root drink, and berry drink (*amba,pānaṃ jambū,pānaṃ coca.pānaṃ moca,pānaṃ madhu,pānaṃ muddhika,pānaṃ sālūka,pānaṃ pharusaka,pānaṃ*, V 1:246). **Mahā Niddesa** mentions this set and also another set of 8: (2) *kosamba* fruit drink, *kola* jujube drink, *badara* jujube drink, ghee, oil, congee, fresh

Buddha so that he might dispel it [§2]. The Buddha immediately consoles them by saying that *their doubt is justified*, and goes on to list the 10 doubtful sources of knowledge or criteria for truth that are doubtful [1, §3]. He admonishes them to examine whether such statements are morally wholesome or unwholesome, and to reject them if they are unwholesome.²¹

2.3 It is obvious here that the Kālāmas, the Buddha's audience, have some level of ethical sensibility: after all, they have themselves approached the Buddha requesting his admonition. Clearly, such an advice to judge things for oneself would not work if the listener lacks ethical integrity or moral sense. But this is only the start of the admonition.

2.4 The Buddha continues by questioning the Kālāmas if they understand and reject the 3 unwholesome roots that are the bases for immoral acts because these are *blamable* and *self-harming* [§§4-7]. Having understood these points, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has pointed out the 10 doubtful points [§8].

2.5 Then he questions them if they understand and cultivate the three wholesome roots that are the bases for moral acts because these are "*praised by the wise*" (that is, the arhats) and are *beneficial* [§§8-13]. When the Kālāmas have understood these points, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has pointed out the 10 doubtful points [§14].

2.6 The Buddha next explains **the 4 divine abodes**, that a "noble disciple, freed from covetousness, without ill will, unconfused, clearly comprehending, mindful," dwells pervading the world with lovingkindness, with compassion, with gladness, and with equanimity [§§15-16]. Thus with a mind that is purified, free of hate and malice, he enjoys right here in this life these 4 "**self-assurances**" (*assāsa*) [§17]:

If there is an afterlife and karmic result,	then, he will undergo a good rebirth.	
Or, if there is none,	still, he lives happily right here in this life.	
Or, if bad results befall a bad-doer,	then, no bad will befall him.	
Or, if bad results do not befall a bad-doer,	he is purified anyway.	[Comy 15.2-16]

The Kālāmas express their appreciation of the Buddha's discourse and go for refuge to the 3 jewels [§18].

2.7 A remarkable feature of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta is the comprehensive manner in which it covers the range of human knowledge and experience, that is, the cognitive, the conative, the affective and the spiritual. The cognitive aspect of the Sutta is covered by the Buddha's reassuring the Kālāmas they it is right for them *to doubt the doubtful* and exhorting them to examine the 10 doubtful points.

The conative side of the Sutta is not merely about personal will, but that of *moral will*, that good is possible, and is interlinked with our affective qualities, brought to spiritual heights by *the 4 divine abodes*. Above all, this Sutta is remarkable in not being an intellectual or academic exercise but a study in *practical wisdom*, one that leads to spiritual liberation.

milk, essence drink (*kosamba, pānaṃ kola, pānaṃ badara, pānaṃ ghata, pānaṃ tela, pānaṃ yāgu, pānaṃ payo, pānaṃ rasa, pānaṃ*, Nm 372). Set (1) is canonical, but set (2) is probably late, and may need the consensus of the Sangha or Vinaya masters for approval for consumption outside the permitted time.

²¹ **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193/2:190-194), SD 35.10 contains the same 10 doubtful points & the section on the roots (§§3b-15a). Comy says that in the midst of the discourse, Bhaddiya becomes a streamwinner. (AA 3:173)

3 Significance of the Sutta

3.1 THE KĀLĀMAS' PREDISPOSITION

3.1.1 Bodhi, in his essay on “A look at the Kālāma Sutta,” makes this helpful observation:

Partly in reaction to dogmatic religion, partly in subservience to the reigning paradigm of objective scientific knowledge, it has become fashionable to hold, by appeal to the Kālāma Sutta, that the Buddha's teaching dispenses with faith and formulated doctrine and asks us to accept only what we can personally verify. This interpretation of the sutta, however, forgets that the advice the Buddha gave the Kalamas was contingent upon the understanding that they were not yet prepared to place faith in him and his doctrine; it also forgets that the sutta omits, for that very reason, all mention of right view and of the entire perspective that opens up when right view is acquired. It offers instead the most reasonable counsel on wholesome living possible when the issue of ultimate beliefs has been put into brackets. (Bodhi 1988:2 f)

3.1.2 Now, let us examine, from internal evidence (from the Sutta itself), whether it actually admonishes us to dismiss *all* doctrine and faith, and whether it invites us to accept or reject *whatever we like* in a teaching (as some proponents of vague Buddhism hold). Now, as Bodhi has observed, it should be noted that at the start of the discourse, the Kālāmas are *not* followers of the Buddha. They have approached him simply for some sort of spiritual counselling as troubled clients (especially a non-practitioner) would approach a monk or nun today for spiritual help. In fact, there is no hint at all that the Kālāmas are seeking how to awaken, or even to be practitioners. Their question is almost of an intellectual nature:

“Bhante, there are some recluses and brahmins who come to Kesa,putta. They expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

And then some recluses and brahmins come to Kesa,putta and they, too, expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

Bhante, we are uncertain and in doubt: Which of these good recluses speak truth and which speak falsehood?” [§2]

3.1.3 However, despite their desperation (with a broad hint of annoyance and perplexity), they will be getting more than they have hoped for. This is clearly because of the Buddha's “good report” (that is, charisma) that has preceded him, and the Kālāmas' own readiness to listen. Also significant is the fact that the Buddha does not give them a progressive talk or gradual discourse, which would be the rule if they were ready for spiritual training leading to sainthood. **The progressive talk** (*ānupubbī,kathā*) stock passage runs thus:

Then the Blessed One gave him a progressive talk—that is to say, he spoke on giving (*dāna*), on moral virtue (*sīla*) and on the heavens (*sagga*). He explained the danger, the vanity and the disadvantages of sensual pleasures (*kām'ādīnava*), and the advantages of renunciation (*nekkhamm'ānisaṃsa*). When the Blessed One perceived that the listener's mind was prepared, pliant, free from obstacles, elevated and lucid, then he explained to him the teaching peculiar to the Buddhas (*buddhānaṃ sām-ukkaṃsikkā desanā*), that is to say, suffering (*dukkha*), its arising, its cessation, and the path.

(V 1:16; D 1:148; A 3:184 etc), see SD 9(10d)

3.1.4 There is a very good reason why the progressive talk is not given to the Kālāmas here: they have not been established in faith towards the 3 jewels. We are not even sure if they are seeking any spiritual truth. The best we can say is that they are simply seeking clarification to judge who amongst the various teachers

and speakers are right and who are wrong. Perhaps, some of them might even remain perplexed despite the Buddha's clarification. However, we are quite certain there are many of those who truly benefitted from the Buddha's admonition.

3.1.5 Another important conclusion that we can safely make of the Kālāmas is that they do have some sort of **moral integrity**. This is clear from their statement, "It is good to see such arhats" [§1], from the way most of them respectfully approached the Buddha,²² and from the sincerity of their question. Although still confused by the various conflicting claims they have referred to, they apparently have a good sense of moral virtue. After all, they have taken the trouble to seek the Buddha's counsel.

3.2 THREEFOLD CATEGORIZATION OF THE 10 POINTS [ON THE 3 CLASSES OF PROPOSITIONS: 1.1.4]

3.2.1 Briefly stated, we can say that the Buddha admonishes that no idea or teaching should be accepted simply on the basis of tradition, of personal authority, or of reason, and the 10 doubtful positions [§3.1] can be thus categorized doctrinally in the following way:²³

By way of tradition ²⁴	By way of reasoning ²⁵	By way of authority ²⁶
1 tradition, aural revelation, or oral tradition (<i>anussava</i>)	5 pure reason [logic] (<i>takka,hetu</i>)	9 another's seeming ability (<i>bhavya,rūpatā</i>)
2 lineage or received wisdom (<i>paramparā</i>)	6 inference + deduction (<i>naya,hetu</i>)	10 the thought, "This recluse is our teacher," or "This recluse is respected by us." (<i>mā samaṇo no garūti</i>)
3 hearsay (<i>iti,kira</i>)	7 reasoned thought or specious reasoning (<i>ākāra,parivitakka</i>)	
4 scriptural authority (<i>piṭaka,-sampadā</i>)	8 acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it (<i>diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā</i>)	

Table 3.2 The threefold categorization of the 10 doubtful points (*kaṅkhāniya-ṭ,ṭhāna*)

This threefold categorization of the 10 doubtful points is based on an important principle—that of **the 3 kinds of wisdom**—namely, the wisdom through hearing (*suta,mayā paññā*), the wisdom through thinking (*cinta,mayā paññā*), and the wisdom through mental cultivation (*bhāvanā,mayā paññā*). (D 3:219; Vbh 324) [Comy 1.3].

3.2.2 In fact, we find the same classifying principle being used in **the (Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta** (M 100), where the Buddha speaks of 3 kinds of teachers in his own time, that is,

²² It is true that "[s]ome kept silent and sat down at one side," and such people are even more common today in a Buddhist gathering, even before wise and accomplished teachers. But they are apparently and generally in the negligible minority in the Buddha's case.

²³ See Bodhi 2005:431 ch III n4. These 10 doubtful points are discussed in some detail in Comy Notes below.

²⁴ This category has been discussed at length by Jayatilleke 1963:169-200 (in terms of Western philosophy).

²⁵ This category has been discussed at length by Jayatilleke 1963:205-276 (in terms of Western philosophy).

²⁶ This category has been discussed at length by Jayatilleke 1963:200-204 (in terms of Western philosophy).

- (1) **The traditionalists** (*anussavikā*), who, on the basis of aural tradition, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The traditionalists derive their knowledge and claims wholly from “divine revelation,” scriptural tradition and interpretations based on it. Prominent amongst the traditionalists are the brahmins who uphold the authority of the Vedas.

Their knowledge or wisdom is based almost exclusively on hearing (*suta, mayā paññā*). Under this category would be included 6 of the 10 doubtful points (nos 1-4, 9-10), that is, respectively, “by way of tradition” and “by way of authority” as listed in Table 3.2. The traditionalists lack acceptance of facts or truths “by way of reasoning” (nos 5-8).

- (2) **The rationalists and speculators [metaphysicians]** (*takkī vīmaṃsī*): the former are those who try to “reason” things out; the latter tend to work entirely on the basis of mere faith. Using mere reasoning or speculation to reinforce their beliefs, they proclaim their dogmas and faith. The rationalists derive their knowledge and claims through reasoning and speculations without any claim to extrasensory perception. The speculators of the early Upaniṣads, the skeptics, the materialists and most of the Ājīvakas fall into this category.

Their knowledge is mostly that of the wisdom through thinking and reasoning (*cinta, mayā paññā*). Under this category would be included all the 4 doubtful points “by way of reasoning” (nos 5-8), as listed in Table 3.2.

- (3) **The experientialists**, who, in things unheard before, having directly known the Dharma for themselves (*sāmaṃ yeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya*),²⁷ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have attained direct knowledge here and now. The experientialists depend on direct personal knowledge and experience, including extrasensory perception on the basis of which their theories are founded. Many of the thinkers of the middle and late Upaniṣads, some of the Ājīvakas and Jains can be put in this class. The materialists, as empiricists (those who advocate reality as known only through personal experience, that is, the senses), may also be classed here, “if not for the fact that they denied the validity of claims to extrasensory perception.”²⁸ The Buddha declares himself to be a teacher in this category. Their knowledge or wisdom is based on mental cultivation (*bhāvanā, mayā paññā*).

(M 100,7/2:211), SD 10.9²⁹

3.3 AVOIDING THE POWER MODE

3.3.1 Firstly, the Buddha basically advises the Kālāmas not to blindly accept any teaching on account of tradition or of authority, that is, not to fall into the “power mode.” The term *tradition*, according to **Bodhi**,³⁰ refers to the first 4 criteria. They include the following:

- (1) “Aural/oral tradition” (*anussava*) refers to the Vedic lineages, which according to the brahmins, originated with the primal being and came down through successive generations of direct “secret” transmissions

²⁷ This phrase, notes Bodhi, “emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life.” (M:NB 1304 920).

²⁸ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:170.

²⁹ See Intro (2).

³⁰ **Bodhi** gives a threefold classification of the doubtful points [1]: “reverence for tradition,” comprising points (1-4); “four types of reasoning,” comprising (5-6); and “two types of personal authority,” comprising (7-10). (2005:431 ch III n4). His main points have been incorporated here. For further discussion, see under Commentary in this chapter. These 10 points are also given a detailed philosophical analysis in **Jayatilleke** 1963:175-205, 271-75.

from guru to chela. This is found in sectarian Buddhism where the sect (such as a triumphalist Abhidhamma group) promotes or gives priority to the teachings of their own gurus rather prioritizing the Buddha Dharma.

- (2) “Lineage” (*paramparā*) refers to an unbroken succession of teachings or teachers. An example of legitimation through lineage is that of the Tibetan sects, and the Chan and Zen traditions.
- (3) “Hearsay” (*iti,kirā*) refers to popular opinion or general consensus. This is common in Buddhist circles, where students attribute various virtues and powers to their teachers.
- (4) “Scriptural authority” (*piṭaka,sampadā*) regarding religious texts as being infallible. This is common amongst modern Mahāyāna teachers who promote late or parochial sutras or texts as the “king of sutras,” and so on. These may be great religious literature, but they are not authentic sources of true liberating knowledge.

3.3.2 A teaching should not be regarded as being true or beneficial simply on the **authority** of *revelations, testimonies, or received traditions or wisdom, of hereditary lineages or successive traditions (religious and otherwise), of hearsay (including the media and gossip), scripture, expertise (including academic qualification and charisma), or respectability (including status and title)*. To rely on authority in intellectual and spiritual matters (especially the latter) is to surrender our mind to an external agency. Spiritual liberation, on the other hand, can only be obtained through a direct knowledge of reality, even if the means to do so is found externally (say, through another’s “voice” or admonition) [Intro 5.4].

3.3.3 The power mode is based on unequal relationships, or more technically, a relationship based on *conceit*, that those perceived as lower should look up to those higher. The locus of control is externalized: there is a dependence on an external authority that controls our thoughts and behaviour. On the contrary, a spiritual relationship entails no measuring or status, like the waters of the rivers merging into the great ocean, individuals become freely linked in a spiritual community. This aspect of the Buddha’s admonition becomes especially significant in connection with his instructions on the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) [§15].

3.4 THE PRIMACY OF FEELING

3.4.1 Secondly, we should not accept any teaching on the basis of reasoning alone, that is, in terms of “head aspect.” A teaching should not be regarded as being true or beneficial simply on the basis of **reasoning**, that is, through *pure logic, inference, reasoned thought (such as theories), or bias (philosophical or otherwise)*. [4]

3.4.2 Reasoning only works (if they do) in a controlled situation of conventional premises. Most of living experiences are motivated by and result from *feelings*. That the teaching on the divine abodes should follow here is very significant, as it points to the supremacy of a right understanding of feelings as the basis for spiritual life that ripens in awakening.

3.4.3 The Brahma, jāla Sutta (D 1) is very clear on this point, declaring that all the 62 grounds for wrong view are based on feeling:

Therein, bhikshus, what those recluses and brahmins who are speculators about the past, who are speculators about the future, who are speculators about both the past and future, who hold various dogmatic views about both the past and future, assert on sixty-two grounds their dogmatic notions—that is only the feeling of those who know not, who see not, merely the agitation and vacillation of those overcome by craving.

(D 1,117/1:14), SD 25.2

Then the Brahma,jāla Sutta adds that for those who assert their dogmatic notions on the 62 grounds for wrong view, “it is impossible that they would experience anything other than *contact* (that is, sense-experience).”³¹ That is to say, all our experiences are sense-based, and have to be understood so.

3.5 MORAL VIRTUE AND MENTAL CULTIVATION

3.5.1 Having said that by way of clearing away the Kālāmas’ initial doubts and unease, the Buddha then turns to more important teachings: those of moral virtue and mental cultivation. By way of a sustained question-and-answer sequence, the Buddha makes sure that his audience is following the trend of his teaching on **moral virtue** (*sīla*). The Kālāmas agree that actions motivated by the 3 unwholesome roots—greed, hate and delusion—lead one to break the basic moral precepts and to make others to do so. As such, these actions are *blamable (personally unbeneficial), censured by the wise (socially unbeneficial), and bring about bad karmic fruits* [§§3b-8]. All the 10 doubtful points are then repeated to emphasize their connection with the misperception and misinterpretation of contact (sense-experiences) and feeling [§9a].

3.5.2 On the other hand, actions motivated by the 3 wholesome roots—non-greed (charity), non-hate (lovingkindness and compassion), and non-delusion (wisdom)—do not entail the breaking of the basic moral precepts nor making others to do so. As such, these actions are *not blamable (personally beneficial), praised by the wise (socially beneficial), and bring about good karmic fruits* [§§10-14]. This is no mean teaching, as the destruction of the 3 unwholesome roots leads one to the highest goal, nirvana.

3.5.3 The Kālāmas, having understood and accepted these basic principles of moral virtue, are now ready for mental cultivation, which understandably consists in **the 4 divine abodes** (*brahma, vihāra*), those conducive to beneficent leadership and community life; that is to say, lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. These practices lead to the “breaking of barriers” between self and other, and so greatly helps in the forging of spiritual friendship and a wholesome community.

3.5.4 Finally, the Buddha gives a remarkable teaching, that of **the 4 self-assurances** [§16]. For those who are not concerned beyond the present life, or who are not prepared for any conviction regarding karma and rebirth, such a way of life ensures at least their present welfare, if not their future lives. The 4 self-assurances seem to forestall Pascal’s Wager [7], which pales against their compass and compassion. The 4 self-assurances, in fact, form the theme of **the Apanṇaka Sutta** (M 60).³²

3.5.5 The Sutta happily concludes with the Kālāmas taking refuge in the 3 jewels “for life.” It is highly likely that this stock passage (which often concludes successful transmission of the Dharma) refers to at least the attaining of streamwinning of the refuge-takers. For, it is unlikely that one would go to the 3 jewels “for life” merely by way of lip-service, that is, only as a ritual. Moreover, faith—evident from the tone of the passage—is a hallmark of the streamwinner.

4 Beyond belief and reason

4.1 HOW WE KNOW THINGS

4.1.1 A very significant characteristic of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta often overlooked by many, especially the proponents of vague Buddhism, is that the 10 doubtful points [1] are closely related to **Buddhist episte-**

³¹ D 1,143/1:43 (SD 25.2).

³² M 60/1:400-413 (SD 35.5).

mology [1.2], that is, how we know things. Let us, for a moment, ask ourselves what do we really know for ourselves? We can begin by disregarding all those things we know from books, the mass media (newspapers, radio, TV, phone, etc), from the Internet, and also from what people tell us—then, very little remains that we can truly call *our personal knowledge*.

4.1.2 Indeed, we would discover that our direct first-hand knowledge of things is really very little compared to second- and third-hand information. And our minds are filled with mostly unverified information, very often half-truths and hearsay. *Our lives are run on rumours*. No wonder, we often find ourselves lost and unhappy, or suspect that something, or much, is missing from our lives. However, thinking, when wisely done, helps us to see through such delusions; otherwise, such delusions only worsen our situation.

4.1.3 Understandably, the Buddha rejects popular opinion as a measure of spiritual truth, as it tends to be arbitrary and false, and as such is not helpful in the spiritual task. *The crowd never thinks*; the majority is not always right. Thus, as recorded in **the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta** (M 35), when Saccaka, debating with the Buddha, invokes popular opinion (*mahatī janatā*)—asserting that *the majority must be right*—to support his notion, the Buddha rebukes him, declaring that popular opinion has nothing to do with the truth of the point in question: “What, Aggivessana, has popular opinion to do with you? Come now, extricate just your own assertion!”³³

4.1.4 The Buddha and the early Buddhists are not interested in philosophical speculation, that is, in discussing what knowledge is or how we know things, although we do find some interesting and helpful passages in this connection (as evident from the Kesaputtiya Sutta and related discourses). Knowledge is taken merely as a tool for spiritual liberation. The same tools—language and thinking—are also the tools of philosophy. However, while philosophy (“the love for thinking”) takes thinking as a goal in itself, Buddhism takes it only as a step towards spiritual understanding, that is, the love for liberation. Only through the direct experience of mental cultivation can we gain the knowledge leading to spiritual awakening.

4.2 WHAT WE CAN REALLY KNOW

4.2.1 The Saṃyutta Nikāya contains two interesting suttas dealing with the issue of *how we know things* and direct knowledge. They are **the (Musīla Narada) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68) and **the Atthi Nu Kho Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.153). Both Suttas speak of the 5 questionable sources of knowledge—namely, faith, personal preference, repeated hearing, specious reasoning, and acceptance of (or being convinced of) a view after pondering on it³⁴—and of true personal knowledge (*paccattam eva ñāṇa*). In **the (Musīla) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68), the monk Saviṭṭha asks the arhat Musīla whether he (Musīla) directly knows dependent arising, beginning with this question:

Avuso Musīla,
apart from faith,
apart from preference,
apart from received tradition [what is repeatedly heard],
apart from specious reasoning [reasoned thought],
apart from acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it,

³³ Or, “Confine yourself to just your own point” (*kiṃ hi te Aggivessana mahatī janatā karissati, iṅgha tvaṃ sakam yeva vādam nibbeṭhehi*) (M 35.11/1:230).

³⁴ These five are discussed in detail in Jayatilleke 1963:812-188, 274-276.

does the venerable Musīla have personal knowledge thus: “With birth as condition, there is death-and decay”?³⁵ (S 12.68/2:115), SD 70.11

As an arhat, Musīla, of course, answers in the affirmative. Although he does not wish to declare his arhat-hood, it is clear from his answer that he has direct knowledge of awakening.

4.2.2 A similar question is asked by the Buddha in **the Atthi Nu Kho Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.153), whether apart from the five positions—of faith, preference, or repeated hearing [oral tradition], by specious reasoning or reasoned thought, or by acceptance of (or being convinced of) a view after pondering on it—one could declare final knowledge (*aññā*), that is, one’s arhat-hood. The Buddha then goes on to explain how this can be done, thus:

“Here, bhikshus, a monk, having seen a form with the eye, knows when greed, hate and delusion are within, thus: ‘Greed, hate, and delusion are in me.’ He knows when there are no greed, hate and delusion within, thus: ‘Greed, hate and delusion are not in me.’

Since this is so, bhikshus, have these things been understood through faith, through preference, through repeated hearing, through reasoned reflection [by specious reasoning], or through acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it?”

“No, bhante.” ...

“This, bhikshus, is the method of exposition by means of which—apart from faith, from preference, from repeated hearing, from specious reasoning, or from acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it—a monk can declare final knowledge, thus:

‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.’” (S 35.153,7/4:139), SD 85.9

4.2.3 The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that one person accepts something through faith (*saddhā*) by placing faith in another and accepting what he says as being true. Another accepts something through personal preference (*ruci*) when he approves of some idea or thesis by reflecting on it, and then takes it to be true. Another accepts through tradition (*anussava*) when he thinks, “This has come down from ancient times by received [aural] tradition; so it must be true.” For another, as he thinks, a certain thesis appears valid, and he concludes, “So it is,” and accepts it by reasoned reflection (*ākāra, parivitakka*).³⁶ In the fifth case, as he reflects, a view arises by pondering over some hypothesis: this is acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it (*diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti*). (SA 2:403) [Intro 5.1]

4.3 PERSONAL VERIFICATION

4.3.1 The Buddha’s teaching is personally verifiable in this life itself (*sacchikato sayam*, Tha 331; *diṭṭhe dhamme veditvā*, Sn 1053). Book religions, such as Brahmanism or Vedism and the modern God-religions, are said to be based on hearsay (*iti, kira*) or tradition (*iti, hīti, ha*). “The Blessed One teaches a holy life that is not based on hearsay or tradition” (A 2:26).³⁷ Indeed, the Buddha tells Mettagū,

I will expound a teaching that is not based on hearsay or tradition, knowing which, living mindfully, one would here and now transcend the attachment in world. (Sn 1053)³⁸

³⁵ *Aññatr’eva āvuso Musīla saddhāya aññatra ruciyaññātra anussavā ākāra, parivitakkā aññatra diṭṭhi, nijjhāna, -khantiyā atth’āyasmato Musīlassa paccattam eva ñāṇaṃ jāti, paccayā jarā, maraṇaṃ ti.*

³⁶ Jayatilleke discusses *ākāra* as meaning “reason.” (1963:274).

³⁷ *Brahma, cariyam anītiham... adesayi so bhagavā* (A 2:26).

³⁸ *Kittayissāmi te dhammam (Mettagū ti bhagavā) | diṭṭhe dhamme anītiham | yam veditvā sato caram tare loka visattikam.* (Sn 1053)

4.3.2 The Thera,gāthā records an elder as having realized “the Dharma that is not based on hearsay or tradition (*dhmmo anītiho*)” (Tha 331). The term ***anīti,ha*** is commonly found in **the Culla Niddesa** (that is, the second part of the Niddesa), an ancient commentary on the Pārāyana Vagga of the Sutta Nipāta (Sn 976-1149). The term is found in three of the dialogues (called “questions,” *pañha*) and one in the conclusion (Anugīti Gāthā),³⁹ and the Culla Niddesa explains *anītiha* as follows:

<u>not by tradition</u>	<i>na iti,hītihaṃ,</i>
not by hearsay	<i>na iti kirāya,</i>
not by lineage	<i>na paramparāya,</i>
not by scriptural authority	<i>na piṭaka,sampadāya,</i>
not by pure reason (and deduction)	<i>na takka,hetu,</i>
not by inference [by invoking causality]	<i>na naya,hetu,</i>
not by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning]	<i>na ākāra,parivitakkena,</i>
not by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it	<i>na diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā:</i>
the Dharma is realized by oneself for oneself,	<i>sāmaṃ sayam abhiññātāṃ</i>
directly verified by oneself	<i>atta,paccakkham dhammaṃ. (Nc 49)⁴⁰</i>

Omitted are positions (1) “Do not go by tradition [aural tradition] (*mā anussavena*),” (9) “Do not go by another’s seeming ability (*mā bhavya,rūpatāya*),” and (10) “Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse is our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’] (*mā samaṇo no garū ti*),” all found in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta.

4.3.3 The Culla Niddesa gloss given above contains only 7 positions (2-8) of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta—from *iti,kirā to diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*⁴¹—which seems to imply that they together comprise *iti,hīti,ha*. Positions (1), (9) and (10) of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta are not found in the Culla Niddesa definition. Is *iti,kirā* synonymous with ***iti,hīti,ha*** (no 1 of the Culla Niddesa list here)? This is difficult to know from lack of internal evidence [but see Comy 3a(4) below].

4.3.4 Apparently, the list of 10 doubtful points (as listed in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta, for example) are not exhaustive. However, they are representative of the various unsatisfactory sources of knowledge. Furthermore, the 10 positions are not always mutually exclusive. There is some overlapping or connection of positions. For example, the terms *iti,ha* (traditional instruction, aural tradition) and *anīti,ha* (that which is neither traditional instruction nor aural tradition) are explained in terms of seven of the 10 doubtful points, all of which appear to be included under *anussava* (oral tradition) or its antonym.

4.3.5 The bottom line is that early Buddhism (as preserved in the Pali Canon) rejects any kind of knowledge based on authority as an effective means of spiritual liberation. The only true source of knowledge is our own **experiences**, that is, how things appear to us through the 5 senses and the mind, especially the mind. They are called wisdom when they are properly understood and used.

4.3.6 Philosophy sometimes defines experience differently, for example, as “[t]he guiding or misguiding idea is that for each of us certainty is possible only with regard to our own experience, in this cribbed and ‘private’ interpretation, and that any claims to experience in the everyday or ‘public’ sense must be incorrigibly

³⁹ As *anītihaṃ*, Dhoṭaka Pañha (Sn 1066; Nc:CSCD 88) = Mettagū Pañha (Sn 1053; Nc:CSCD 62, 67); as *itihītihaṃ*, Hemaka (Sn 1084; Nc:CSCD 112) = Anugīti Gāthā (conclusion) (Sn 1135; Nc:CSCD 191).

⁴⁰ In its positive form, *iti,kirāya,paramparāya ... na atta,paccakkham dhammaṃ* (Nc 108). See Jayatilleke 1963:198 f, 202.

⁴¹ The first two positions are reversed in the two sets.

reckless” (Flew 1979:116 f). However, for Buddhists, this need not be the case, as an external truth (such as another person’s spiritual state) can be known simply through “right inference” (*naya*) [Comy 3a(6)1], or better, through “inferential knowledge” (*anvaye ñāṇa*) [Comy 3.1(6)2].

Inferential knowledge, however, only works *after* we have attained some level of spiritual liberation, that is, when the mind has attained some level of calm and clarity. The bottom line is that the answer is not out there: it is found only within oneself.

5 Religions, true and false

5.1 THE TRUTH AND USEFULNESS OF A RELIGION

5.1.1 Another interesting and important feature to be noted in the list of 10 doubtful points or theses as given in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta is that the Buddha does not declare that they are false. They are to be examined, firstly, for their *truth value* (whether they are true and useful), and, secondly, whether they have *moral worth*.

5.1.2 The first case—regarding the truth and usefulness of a view or teaching—is explained in **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95).⁴² As in **the (Musīla) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68)⁴³ and **the Atthi Nu Kho Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.153)⁴⁴ [4], the Caṅkī Sutta, too, state that a view or teaching *may arise* in any of these 5 ways:⁴⁵

(1) through faith	<i>saddhā,</i>
(2) through personal preference	<i>ruci,</i>
(3) through repeated hearing	<i>anussava,</i>
(4) through specious reasoning [reasoned thought]	<i>ākāra, parivitakka, and</i>
(5) through being convinced [through acceptance of] a view after pondering on it	<i>diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti.</i>

Even the profoundest teaching based on any of these five positions may turn out “in either of two different ways here and now”: it may be fully accepted through faith, etc, “yet it may be hollow, empty, false (*rittaṃ tucchaṃ musā*),” but something else may *not* be fully accepted through faith, etc, “yet it may be true, real, unmistaken (*bhūtaṃ tacchaṃ anaññathā*).”⁴⁶

5.1.3 In other words, **the truth or goodness of a teaching or religion** is not that we have faith in it, nor that we prefer it to others (we like it, etc), nor that we are used to listening to it (such as childhood conditioning), nor that we have reasons or use reasoning, no matter to show how good it is, nor that we have accepted it through having long thought about it. The truth and usefulness of a teaching or religion lies in *its ability to provide a sustainable moral life as a basis for mental calm and clarity, so that we can realize inner liberation for ourselves*.

⁴² M 95/2:164-177 (SD 21.15). Briefly mentioned in **Deva, dāha S** (M 101,11/2:218), SD 18.4.

⁴³ S 12.68/2:115-118.

⁴⁴ S 35.153/4:138-140.

⁴⁵ These five are discussed in detail in Jayatilleke 1963:812-188, 274-276.

⁴⁶ M 95,14/2:170 f (SD 21.15).

5.2 THE MORAL WORTH OF A RELIGION

5.2.1 The second point to note is that if a view or teaching lacks moral worth, it is to be rejected. These views and teachings that are condemned as false in the sense that they do not conduce to the moral life (*abrahma,-cariya,vāsa*), as pointed in **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76)⁴⁷ and **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2),⁴⁸ are as follows:

(1) **Nihilism (or materialism)** (M 76,7-9), that is, the notion that this is our only life, there is no after-life, there is no such thing as charity, no karma, no parents, and “there are no recluses and brahmins who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.”⁴⁹ **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2,22) ascribes this view to Ajita Kesa,kambala, who was also an annihilationist.⁵⁰

(2) **Amoralism** or non-action (*akiriya,vāda*) (M 76,10-12), which denies moral virtue (that is, there is neither good nor bad), that is, there is no bad when one breaks the precepts or cause others to do so. Even if one were to commit mass murder or commit violent acts, such as torture, there is no bad. “In generosity, self-taming, self-restraint, and truthful speech, there is no merit, no source of merit.”⁵¹ **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2,22) ascribes this view to Puraṇa Kassapa.⁵²

We find further 3 important examples of amoralism mentioned in **the Tittth’āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61), which opens with the Buddha pointing out these three common wrong views in his days as being examples of doctrines of non-action:

Monks, there are three sectarian doctrines⁵³ which when fully examined, investigated, discussed by the wise, even if taken in any other way,⁵⁴ will remain **a doctrine of non-action** (*akiriya,vāda*).⁵⁵ What are the three?

- (a) DETERMINISM. There are, monks, some recluses and brahmins who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences, whether pleasurable, painful or neutral, all that is caused by past action [done in past lives] (*pubbe kata,hetu*).”⁵⁶
- (b) THEISM. There are, monks, others who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences ... all that is caused by God’s creation (*issara,nimmāna,hetu*).”⁵⁷

⁴⁷ M 76,7-19/1:514-521 (SD 35.7). See Jayatilleke 1963:140-143.

⁴⁸ On the 6 sectarian teachers, see D 2,16-33/1:52-59 (SD 8.10).

⁴⁹ Also at **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,10/1:287), SD 5.7 & **Sandaka S** (M 76,7/1:515), SD 35.7. See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,5-12/-1:401-404), SD 35.5 where this wrong view is answered.

⁵⁰ D 2,21-23/1:55 (SD 8.10).

⁵¹ See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,13-20/1:404-407) where this view is answered.

⁵² D 2,16-17/1:52 f (SD 8.10).

⁵³ “Sectarian doctrines,” *tittth’āyatanāni*. M 1:483,21,23; A 1:173, 175; Nc 154; Vbh 145, 367; AA 2:272; DhA 2:63.

⁵⁴ “Even if taken in any other way,” *param pi gantvā*. I have taken the Pali as it is *pace* Comy which glosses it as *yaṇ kiñci paramparaṇ gantvā pi*, “even if adopted because of tradition” (A:ÑB 61).

⁵⁵ **Sāmañña,phala S** ascribes the doctrine of non-action to Puraṇa Kassapa (D 2,17/1:52 f). “Although on first encounter the view seems to rest on materialistic premises..., there is canonical evidence that Puraṇa Kassapa subscribed to a fatalistic doctrine. Thus his moral antinomianism probably follows from the view that all action is predestined in ways that abrogate the ascription of moral responsibility to its agent.” (M:ÑB 1264 n629). See A L Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ajivikas*, 1951:84.

⁵⁶ This determinist view is ascribed by the Buddhists to the Jains; but cf **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,28-30/1:57 & nn), where Nigaṇṭha Naṭaputta is ascribed a different set of teachings. For rebuttal, see **Devadaha S** (M 101).

⁵⁷ This theist view is common among the brahmins.

- (c) FATALISM. There are, monks, others who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences ... all that is uncaused and unconditioned (*ahetu appaccaya*).”⁵⁸
(A 3.61,1/1:173), SD 6.9

The first view, **determinism**—that everything that one feels now is due to what one did in the past—is discussed in detail in **the Devadaha Sutta** (M 101), where it is said to be a Jain view.⁵⁹ They held that all suffering one experiences in this life is due to bad karma from a previous life. The Devadaha Sutta shows that this as a wrong view.⁶⁰

The God-idea (**theism**) becomes especially problematic, even destructive, when it attributes all things (“creation”) to God, thus leaving humans with practically no sense of personal responsibility, or worse, to ascribe all their actions as being willed by God. Such a system effectively lacks personal moral responsibility, or at least would not value human life, since its creator would come first.

Of these 3 deterministic notions, the most harmful is, of course, the third, that of **fatalism**, which is also a characteristic of the “non-conditionality doctrine” (see following).

- (3) **Non-conditionality** is, firstly, common with **fatalism or determinism** (*ahetuka, vāda*) (M 76,13-15), which denies moral responsibility, that is, there is no cause (*hetu*)⁶¹ for moral degeneration, moral growth, or spiritual liberation. There is neither cause nor condition for the purification of beings. There is nothing self-caused, nothing other-caused, nothing human-caused; nor effort of any kind.⁶²

We are powerless, victims of fickle fate, circumstances and nature. We feel joy and pain being reborn in the 6 social classes.⁶³ There are a fixed number of origins, karma, beings, and time, and “having transmigrated⁶⁴ and wandered on through these, the wise and the foolish alike will put an end to pain.” There is neither karma nor moral life. Pleasure and pain, like everything else, are fixed.

“Just as a ball of string, when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding, in the same way, having transmigrated and wandered on, the wise and the foolish alike will put an end to pain.”

The Sāmañña,phala Sutta (D 2,19) ascribes this view to Makkhali Gosāla.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ This fatalist view (that denies causality) was taught by Makkhali Gosāla, a contemporary of the Buddha who held that all things are fated (D 2,20/1:53, M 30,2/1:198, 36,5/1:238, 36,48/1:250, 60,21/1:407, 76,53/1:524, 77,6/ 2:2 ff). This doctrine, together with the doctrine of non-action (or inaction) belongs to the “wrong views with a fixed destiny” (*niyata micchā, diṭṭhi*), ie a wrong view leading to a bad rebirth (Tkp 168).

⁵⁹ M 101/2:101-228 (SD 18.4).

⁶⁰ For further discussion, see SD 17.3(6.4): “Not everything is due to past karma.”

⁶¹ *Ahetu, appaccayā*: “condition” *hetu* means “root” (eg greed, hatred, delusion); *paccaya* means “condition.”

⁶² These ideas are presented by a certain brahmin to the Buddha who refutes them in **Atta, kāri S** (A 6.38/3:337 f), SD 7.6.

⁶³ See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,21-28) where this wrong view is answered. On these 6 classes (*abhijāti*), see **Cha-ḷ-abhijāti S** (A 6.57/3:383), where according to the antinomian **Pūraṇa Kassapa**, they are (1) the black class (*kaṇhābhijāti*), ie the bloody trade (butchers, fishermen, robbers, etc); (2) the blue class (*nīlābhijāti*), ie monks who subscribe to karma; (3) the red class (*lohitābhijāti*), ie the loin-clad Jains; (4) the yellow class (*haliddābhijāti*), ie the white-clad disciples of naked ascetics; (5) the white class (*sukkābhijāti*), ie the male and female Ājīvikas; (6) the purest white class (*parama, sukkhābhijāti*), ie Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Saṅkicca and Makkhali Gosāla. The Buddha however rejects this arbitrary gesture, and teaches that it is **karma** that makes us, not class (A 6.57/3:383-387; also DA 1:182; MA 3:131; AA 2:342 f; SA 2:342 f).

⁶⁴ *Sandhāvitvā*, “having transmigrated” (from *sandhāvati*). This term which connotes a permanent soul is not used in Buddhism.

⁶⁵ D 2,18-20/1:53-55 (SD 8.10).

(4) **Atomism** or physicalism (M 76,16-18), which holds that only matter exists by way of seven substances or “bodies” (*kāya*)—the earth-substance, the liquid-substance, the fire-substance, the wind-substance, happiness, pain, and the soul—“uncreated, irreducible, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar, that do not obstruct with one another, are incapable of causing one another happiness, pain or both happiness and pain And among them there is no killer nor one who causes killing, no hearer nor one who causes hearing, no knower nor one who causes knowing. When one cuts off a (person’s) head, there is no one taking anyone’s life. The sword simply passes through the seven substances.” **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2,25) ascribes this view to Pakudha Kaccāyana.⁶⁶

The other two views mentioned in the Sāmañña,phala Sutta are the ascetic practice (that is, the fourfold restraint)⁶⁷ of Nigaṇṭha Naṭa,putta⁶⁸ and the agnosticism of Saṅghaya Belaṭṭha,putta.⁶⁹

5.2.2 The 4 views stated above are rejected outright by the Buddha because they do not conduce to the holy life (*abrahma,carīya,vāsa*), that is, they are false religions. In fact, they are generally very self-centred views, and as such are also anti-social. The 10 doubtful points listed in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta do not fall into the category of *abrahma,carīya,vāsa*, in that they are really modes of inquiry or possible sources of knowledge. However, not all knowledge is useful in terms of personal development or spiritual growth: the value of knowledge lies most importantly in its moral worthiness: *it does not harm us, others or the environment, and conduces to our moral life, mental development and spiritual liberation.*

5.2.3 Understandably, the Buddha advised the Kālāmas that they should examine the moral worthiness of a view or teaching, and accepting it only if it conduces to one’s moral virtue. A view based on any of the 10 doubtful points are to be rejected for this reason:

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,
“These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.”
 —Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.’ [§§3.2, 8]

⁶⁶ D 2,24-26/1:56 f (SD 8.10). Here **Sandaka S** (M 76,16-18/1:517 f), conflates the ideas of Pakudha Kaccāyana (D 2,26-1:56) and of Makkhali Gosāla (D 2,18-20/1:53-55). See M:NB 1281 n752. The Dīgha tradition appears to be the correct one: see Bodhi (tr), *The Discourse on the Fruits of Recluseship*, 1989:72-77.

⁶⁷ “The Nigaṇṭha is obstructed by all the waters, conjoined with all the waters, cleansed by all the waters, suffused with all the waters [ie the avoidance of all bad]” (*sabba,vāri,vārito, sabba,vāri,yuto, sabba,vāri,dhuto, sabba,vāri,phuṭṭo* (with some vll), which do not represent the genuine Jain teaching, but seem to parody it in puns. The Jains do have a rule of restraint in regard to water, and *vāri* can mean “water,” “restraint,” or possibly “sin,” and some of the verbal forms are equally dubious. The reference to one “free from bonds” and yet bound by these restraints (whatever they are) is a deliberate paradox. (KR Norman in M Walshe (tr), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 1996:545 n115)

⁶⁸ D 2,27-29/1:57 f (SD 8.10). (Skt) Nirgrantha Jñāti,putra. The name given in the suttas to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (ca 540-568 BCE?), the leader of the Jains. He is unfavourably described in the Canon, eg **Upāli S** (M 56). *Nigaṇṭha* means “free from bonds.” On Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, see Jayatilleke 1963:140 f (see index) & Jaini (1970) 2001: 57-61.

⁶⁹ D 2,31-32/1:58 f (SD 8.10). (Skt) Saṃjayin Vairatṭi,putra, also called (P) Belaṭṭhi,putta. Although he is put in unfavourable light in the Pali texts, there appears to be a serious note to his philosophy. It is likely that his standpoint is not made out of ignorance but based on the notion that knowledge was not necessary, even dangerous for salvation. In other words, when one really knows nothing, one then realizes everything. **Shosun Miyamoto**, in his article, “The logic of relativity as the common ground for the development of the middle way” (in Yamaguchi (ed) *Buddhism and Culture*, 1960: 67-88) asserts that Saṅghaya’s “system is quite near to the Buddhist standpoint of [the] indescribable or inexpressible [*avyākata*]” and that “Saṅghaya’s thought is not far removed from the logic of *Śūnya* of the Mādhyamika.” For a study of Saṅghaya as a skeptic, see Jayatilleke 1963:130-135, 336-339 (see index) & Jaini (1970) 2001:57-61.

Or, they should be accepted if,

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,
“These things are wholesome. These things are not blamable. These things are praised by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring about good and happiness.”
 —Then Kālāmas, you should live cultivating them.’ [§§9.2, 14]

“So I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken” (*iti yaṃ taṃ vuttaṃ idam etaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ*), the Buddha then declares each time, and the passage on the 10 doubtful points immediately follow [8, 9a, 14]. In short, all reports or religions may contain some truth, but although they are not false, they are unsatisfactory (*anassāsikāṃ*), that is, they provide no guarantee for spiritual liberation. [§7]

5.3 CONDITIONS LEADING TO SPIRITUAL LIBERATION.

(1) TWO CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

The **Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43) mentions two conditions for the arising of right view, namely, “the voice of another” (*parato,ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso,manasikāra*) (M 1:294; A 1:87)⁷⁰ [5.4]. The Sutta Commentary explains that wise attention is the personal skillful means of minding (*attano upāya,manasikāra*), and that the voice of another is “the listening to conducive Dharma” (*sappāya,dhamma-s,savana*) (MA 2:346).⁷¹

5.3.1 Attention (*manasikāra*) is a Buddhist psychological term belonging to the definition of “name” (*nāma*) of name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*), as found in **the Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta** (M 9):

Feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention⁷²—these are called name.
 (*Vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro idaṃ vuccati nāmaṃ*). (M 9,54/1:53), SD 11.14

In the Abhidhamma, *manasikāra* belongs to the formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) and is one of the 7 mental factors (*cetasika*),⁷³ inseparably associated with all states of consciousness. In other words, they refer to a morally significant process. When this is motivated by greed, hate or delusion, seen with “unwise attention” (*ayoniso,manasikāra*) it is regarded as unwholesome; when it is free from greed, hate or delusion, seen with “wise attention” (*yoniso,manasikāra*), it is said to be wholesome.

5.3.2 Manasikāra is the very first stage of the mind’s encounter with an object,⁷⁴ and it holds the associated mental factors to the object. As such, it is the prominent factor in two specific classes of consciousness, that is, advertence (*āvajjana*) at the five-sense doors and at the mind-door. These two states of consciousness,

⁷⁰ **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,13/1:294), SD 35.1 & **Āsā Vg** (A 2.11.9/1:87).

⁷¹ MA says that these 2 conditions—“the voice of another” and “wise attention”—are necessary for the disciple desiring to arrive at the right view of insight and the right view of the supramundane path. But the individual buddhas (*pacceka,buddha*) and the omniscient buddhas (*sabbāññū,buddha*) arrive at their awakening solely in dependence on wise attention without “the voice of another.” (MA 2:346)

⁷² On “name-and-form,” see SD 17.1a(4). On “name,” see Analayo, *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (draft), 2005:23 n121 (at M 1:53).

⁷³ The 7 are sense-impression (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), concentration (*samādhi*), vitality (*jīvita*), and attention (*manasikāra*). See Abhs:BRS 2.2(7) (Guide).

⁷⁴ “*Manasikāra* should be distinguished from *vitakka*: while the former turns its concomitants towards the object, the latter applies them onto the object. *Manasikāra* is an indispensable cognitive factor present in all states of consciousness; *vitakka* is a specialized factor which is not indispensable to cognition.” (Abhs:BRS 2.2(7) (Guide).

breaking through into the life continuum (*bhavaṅga*), form the first stage of the perceptual process (*citta,-vīthi*).⁷⁵

The term *manasikāra* often occurs in the suttas as the phrase, “wise attention” (*yoniso,manasikāra*). It is found throughout **the Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2), and is, in fact, its key action word, and where it is said to counter the mental influxes.⁷⁶ **The Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43) says that wise attention is a condition for the arising of right view (M 43),⁷⁷ of streamwinning,⁷⁸ and of the awakening-factors.⁷⁹

The term *yoniso* (in *yoniso manasikāra*) comes from *yonī*, meaning “the womb, origin (place of birth).” As such, *yoniso* means “down to its origin or foundation” (PED), and *yoniso manasikāra* means “directing the attention to the roots of things,” that is, observing phenomena as they truly are, as being characterized by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self.

(2) THE PERCEPTION OF IMPERMANENCE. The opposite of wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is “unwise attention” (*ayoniso manasikāra*), which basically involves seeking or seeing permanence in the impermanent, pleasure in the painful, and a personal entity in what is not self. It leads to the arising of the mental influxes (M 2),⁸⁰ and of the mental hindrances.⁸¹ Mental cultivation is simply impossible under such circumstances.

5.3.3 In spiritual practice, we only need to begin and focus on the perception of impermanence (*anicca,-saññā*) in our being and experiences (for example, reflecting on how we are nothing more than the 5 aggregates)⁸² and in all phenomena (that is, noting the rising and falling of things).⁸³ **The Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), for example, explains how a “good worldling” (one amenable to the spiritual life, whether lay or monastic) keeps to “the supreme cultivation of the faculties in the noble one’s discipline (*ariyassa vinaye anuttarā indriya,bhāvanā*), that is, by regarding all sense-experiences and mentation as “conditioned, gross and dependently arisen,” or in simple terms, by noting their momentariness or impermanence. (M 152,4-9)⁸⁴

⁷⁵ See Vism 14.152/466 & **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b(5).

⁷⁶ M 2/1:6-12 (SD 30.3). “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “influxes”) comes from *ā-savati*, meaning “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously tr as “cankers, taints (‘deadly taints,’ RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, bad (influence),” or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 kinds of *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*ditth’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is prob older and is found more frequently in the suttas (D 33.1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these influxes is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁷⁷ M 43,13/1:294 (SD 35.1).

⁷⁸ It is one of the limbs of streamwinning (*sotāpatti-y-aṅgāni*): (1) association with true persons (ie true practitioners, esp saints); (2) hearing the true teaching; (3) wise attention; (4) practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma (D 33,1.11(13)/3:227; Pm 2:189 f). These are preliminary practices that lead to attainment of streamwinning. In **Paññā,vuḍḍhi S** (A 5.246) these same 4 qualities are called *vuḍḍhi,dhamma*, “states conducive to growth” (A 5.246/2:245); cf the 5 factors of noble growth (*ariya,vuḍḍhi*): (**Tadah’**) **Uposatha S** (A 3.70,8.2/1:210), SD 4.18; **Sambadh’okāsa S** (A 6.26,8/-3:316), SD 15.7a; **Pañca Vuḍḍhi S 1** (A 5.63/3:80); **Pañca Vuḍḍhi S 2** (A 5.64/3:80). See S:B 762 n120. Cf (2) *sotāpannassa aṅgāni*, **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70), SD 3.3(4.2).

⁷⁹ See SD 10.1(8); **Kāya S** (S 46.2/5:64-67); (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Sīla S** (S 46.3/5:67-70), SD 10.15; (**Ajjhatta**) **Aṅga S** (S 46.49-/5:101), (**Bahiddhā**) **Aṅga S** (S 46.50/5:102), **Āhāra S** (S 46.51/5:102-107), SD 7.15.

⁸⁰ M 2/1:6-12 @ SD 30.3.

⁸¹ The mental hindrances are: (1) sense-desire (*kāma-c,chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*), (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca,kukkucca*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): S 46.2, 51.

⁸² On a detailed study of the 5 aggregates, see SD 17.

⁸³ **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,15/4:285), SD 5.10. See below (5.5).

⁸⁴ M 152,4-9/3:299 f (SD 17.13).

5.3.4 The perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) is in fact the key practice for a lay Buddhist, as clearly exhorted in the ten discourses (by way of perceptions of impermanence) of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta**. One who accepts the truth of impermanence after pondering over them with some wisdom⁸⁵ (by way of attention) is called **a truth-follower**, and one who accepts the truth of impermanence *through wise faith* (either by another's voice [5.4] or by wise attention) is called **a faith-follower**. The ten suttas declare regarding either of them:

He has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without attaining the fruit of stream-winning. (S 25.1-10/3:225 ff): see SD 16.7

5.4 ANOTHER'S VOICE

5.4.1 "The voice of another" (*parato,ghosa*) is a key concept of early Buddhism that apparently has not received any scholarly attention, except perhaps from **Peter Masefield**.⁸⁶ In the second paragraph of his section on "*Parato ghosa*," Masefield claims that "the Nikāyas appeared to be almost totally silent upon the question of how right view was to be attained ... [except] for one cryptic message, found on only two occasions" (1986:50): he is, of course, referring to the "two conditions that give rise to right view,"⁸⁷ that is, another's voice (*parato ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).⁸⁸ We have discussed the latter, wise attention [5.3], so we will focus our discussion here on the former, another's voice.

5.4.2 The Aṅguttara Commentary explains *parato ghosa* in terms of how wrong view arises through "hearing the false Dharma before [in the presence of] another" (*parassa santikā asaddhamma,savanaṃ*), and how right view through "hearing the true Dharma" (*saddhamma,savanaṃ*) (AA 2:157).

5.4.3 The Majjhima Commentary is more informative. It glosses another's voice as "the listening to conducive Dharma" (*sappāya,dhamma-s,savana*), and adds that wise attention is the method of the Pratyeka Buddhas and the All-knowing Buddhas, since there is no *parato ghosa* for them. *Parato ghosa* is the means of the listeners or disciples (*sāvaka*) (MA 2:346). This interpretation is supported by **the Sutta Nipāta Commentary** which says that the "noble listener [disciple]" (*ariya,sāvaka*) is one who is characterized by "hearing (the Dharma) before the aryas" (*ariyānaṃ santike sutattā*) (SnA 166).

5.4.4 The Nālaka Sutta (Sn 3.11) records how Asita's prophecies to his nephew Nālaka regarding the Buddha's awakening, and how the latter then renounces and follows to the Buddha himself:

*Buddho ti ghosaṃ yada parato suṇāsi
sambodhi,patto vicarati dhammam aggaṃ
gantvāna tattha samayaṃ paripucchiyāno
carassu tasmim bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ*

When you hear the sound, "Buddha," from others, he, attained to self-awakening, moves in the foremost Dharma, going there, asking about the doctrine (*samaya*), live the holy life under that Blessed One. (Sn 696)

*Sutvāna ghosaṃ jina,vara,cakka,vattane
gantvāna disvā isi,nisabhaṃ pasanno*

Hearing the voice of the noble conqueror's wheel-turning, going, seeing the lordly bull of seers, he becomes faithful.

⁸⁵ Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti.

⁸⁶ 1986: ch 2 esp 50-54.

⁸⁷ Dve'me ... paccayā sammā,diṭṭhiyā uppādāya.

⁸⁸ **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 49,13/1:294; A 2.11.9/1:87).

moneyya, seṭṭhaṃ muni, pavaraṃ apucchi
samāgate asita, vhayassa sāsane ti

He asked the noble sage about supreme sagehood;
 when the one called Asita's message had come to pass.

(Sn 698)

5.4.5 The Majjhima Commentary cites the well known case of Sāriputta's conversion. Although he has fulfilled a hundred thousand aeons [world-cycles] (*kappa*) and one uncountable aeon (*asaṅkheyya kappa*)⁸⁹ and, he is still unable to destroy even an iota (*aṇumatta*) of defilement, and yet upon hearing a single stanza from the newly awakened elder Assaji (MA 2:346), he is able to realize the Dharma eye (V 1:40), which the Dhammapada Commentary confirms as the attainment of streamwinning (DhA 1:92 f).

It is said that during their first meeting, Sāriputta earnestly requests for a teaching from Assaji, who then recites:

Of all things that arise from a cause,
 Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

Ye dhammā hetu-p, pabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha

As soon as Sāriputta hears these first two lines, he is established in the fruit of streamwinning. Then Assaji completes the stanza:

And also how these cease to be—
 This too the great sage has told.

tesaṃ ca yo nirodho
evaṃ vādī mahā, samaṇo

Sāriputta then relays the stanza to his best friend, Moggallāna, who similarly gains the fruit of streamwinning on hearing the first two lines. Both of them then become the Buddha's disciples.⁹⁰

5.4.6 It is possible to interpret *parato ghosa* in a figurative sense as “the voice from THE beyond,” as suggested by Masefield, thus:

Moreover, whilst *para-* is used to denote other people, it can also refer to the beyond, the further side and so on, as in, for instance, such terms as *paraloka* and the distinct possibility exists that the phrase *parato ghoso* may have originally meant “the sound from the Beyond” in the sense of the sound of the supermundane Dhamma; though it would at the same time also be true to say that it is “the voice of another” in the sense that it requires another person—usually the Buddha but on occasion, as in the case of Sāriputta, some other ariyan—to mediate it.

(1986:52)

The “voice from the beyond” should clearly be taken in its *figurative* sense as referring to the truth regarding the afterlife, and also liberation from suffering (that is, *samsara*) itself. This interpretation helps to explain the numerous occasions when many of the early disciples who attain various stages of sainthood merely by listening to the Buddha or one of the awakened disciples teaching.

⁸⁹ An uncountable aeon is one of the 4 “uncountable aeons” of the full world-cycle (*kappa*), and here prob refers to the stable state of the 4 cycles: the other three are the collapsing (or devolving) universe, the collapsed (or devolved) universe, the evolving universe, and the evolved or stable universe. See **Aggañña S** (D 27,10-13/3:84-86), SD 2.10 & Appendix.

⁹⁰ V 1:40 f; J 1:85. After the Buddha's passing, esp during the late Gupta until the end of the Pāla period (c 600-1200 CE), this verse attained cult status as inscriptions often interred in stupas. See Daniel Boucher, “The *Pratītyasamutpāda-gāthā* and its role in the medieval cult of the relics,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14,1 1991: 1-27.

5.4.7 The awakening of the two foremost disciples are classic examples of *liberation through hearing* “the voice from the beyond.” **The Dīgha,nakha Sutta** (M 74) records how Sāriputta, two weeks after his joining the order, while standing behind the Buddha fanning him and listening to the Buddha discoursing on feeling to his nephew, Dīgha,nakha, gains arhathood:

Now at that time, the venerable Sāriputta⁹¹ was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him.⁹² Then he thought:

“The Blessed One, indeed, speaks to us of the abandoning of these things through direct knowledge.⁹³ The Sugata [the well-farer], indeed, speaks to us of the relinquishing of these things through direct knowledge.”

As the venerable Sāriputta reflected thus, through not clinging, his mind was freed from the mental influxes.⁹⁴ (M 74,14/1:500 f), SD 16.1

5.4.8 Similarly, **the Pacalā Sutta** (A 7.58) records how the Buddha admonishes the newly ordained Moggallāna as he struggles with drowsiness while meditating. The Buddha teaches him eight ways of dealing with drowsiness and the conditions conducive to mental concentration. At the end of the teaching, Moggallāna becomes an arhat.⁹⁵

5.5 SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

5.5.1 The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) goes on to say that **right view** (pertaining to the path of arhathood) is assisted by 5 factors when it has the liberation of mind (from lust) and liberation by wisdom (from ignorance) as the goal (both referring to the fruit of arhathood). These 5 factors are: moral conduct, learning, discussion, calmness and insight. (M 43)⁹⁶

These teachings are also found in **the Saṃyutta Nikāya** and **the Iti,vuttaka** where it is said that spiritual friendship is the chief *external support* for spiritual development and skillful means its chief *internal support*.⁹⁷ Here, moral conduct, learning and discussion would fall under the category of **spiritual friendship**,⁹⁸ while calmness and insight (that is, cultivation or meditation) come under **wise attention**. As wise attention has already been discussed [5.3], we will only look at spiritual friendship here.

5.5.2 For the lay follower, the Buddha gives this instruction of spiritual friendship, found in **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54), under “worldly welfare”:

Here, Vyagghapajja, in whatever village or market town the son of family dwells, he associates, converses, discusses with householders or householders’ sons, young men mature in virtue, or old men mature in virtue, endowed with faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom.⁹⁹ He

⁹¹ Comy says that this is two weeks (*aḍḍha,māsa,pabbajitena*) after Sāriputta’s going forth (MA 3:203).

⁹² On monks fanning the Buddha, see Intro (4) above.

⁹³ “Direct knowledge,” *abhiññā*, also “superknowledge.” Comy says that the Buddha talks of the ridding of the notions regarding the eternal, regarding the partially eternal, and regarding form, through the direct knowledge of these things. (MA 3:208)

⁹⁴ “Mental influxes,” *āsava*. See Intro (5.3(1)) n.

⁹⁵ A 7.58/4:85-91 (SD 4.11)

⁹⁶ M 43/1:294 (SD 35.1).

⁹⁷ **Kālyāṇa,mitta S** (S 45.49/5:5:29), **Sīla,sampadā S** (S 45.55/5:30 f); It 16, 17

⁹⁸ See **Spiritual friendship**, SD 8.1.

⁹⁹ These 4 are the conditions for spiritual welfare: see SD 5.10 §11.

emulates the faith¹⁰⁰ of the faithful, the virtue of the virtuous, the charity of charitable, and the wisdom of the wise.
(A 8.54,6/4:282), SD 5.10

5.5.3 The 4 spiritual qualities are defined in the Sutta's section on spiritual welfare as follows:

12 (1) What is the accomplishment of faith?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family has (wise) faith. He has faith in the Buddha's awakening thus:

'So too, is he the Blessed One:¹⁰¹ for, he is arhat, the fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tamable persons, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.'

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of faith.

(2) What is the accomplishment of moral virtue?

13 Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family abstains from harming life, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of moral virtue.

(3) What is the accomplishment of charity?

14 Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family dwells in at home with a heart free from the stain of miserliness, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, devoted to alms-giving, delighting to have a share in giving.¹⁰²

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of charity.

(4) What is the accomplishment of wisdom? [285]

15 Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family is wise, possesses wisdom directed to [noting] the rising and falling away [of phenomena] that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

These are the 4 things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a son of family in the world to come.
(A 8.54,12-15/4:284 f), SD 5.10

5.5.4 In the Meghiya Sutta (A 9.3 = U 4.1), the following 5 factors—very similar to the 4 given in the Dīgha, jānu Sutta—are given by the Buddha to the monk Meghiya for his training:

¹⁰⁰ "Faith," *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) "rootless faith" (*amūlaka, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith (M 95,14/2:170); (2) "faith with a good cause" (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 47,15/-1:320,8); also called *avecca-p, pasāda* (S 12.41,11/2:69). "Wise faith" is syn with (2). *Amūlaka* = "not seen, not heard, not suspected" (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). Gethin speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): "Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith, in its affective dimension, is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence to wards something or somebody ... the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary." (Gethin 2001:207; my emphases).

¹⁰¹ Alt tr: "For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord]..." On the meaning of *iti pi so*, see *Buddhānussati*, SD 15.7 (2.2) & n.

¹⁰² This passage is stock, found in eg *Dhana S* (A 7.6/4:6), *Nakula, māta S* (A 8.48/4:268 f); cf *Vata, pada S* (S 11.11/-1:228). Commented upon at Vism 7.101-106: see *Cāgānussati*, SD 15.12.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Spiritual friendship. | wise faith (<i>saddhā</i>) ¹⁰³ |
| 2. Moral conduct in keeping with the code of discipline, seeing danger in the slightest moral breach. | |
| 3. Talk on contentment, aloofness and the spiritual life. | study and discussion |
| 4. Energy in abandoning unwholesome states and promoting wholesome states. | calmness |
| 5. The wisdom that sees the rise and fall of phenomena that leads to the complete destruction of suffering. | insight |
- (A 9.3/4:357 = U 4.136 f; UA 221), SD 34.2

5.5.5 From the above discussion, it is obvious that spiritual friendship is crucial in personal development, and this is in fact attested by the Buddha in a dialogue with Ānanda, as recorded in **the Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2), thus:

“Bhante, spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is half of the holy life.”

“Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is **the whole of the holy life**. When a monk has a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he will develop the noble eightfold path.

And how, Ānanda, does a monk who has a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, cultivate the noble eightfold path, develop the noble eightfold path?

Here, Ānanda, a monk cultivates right view, ... right intention, ... right speech, ... right action, ... right livelihood, ... right effort, ... right mindfulness, ... right concentration, *based on seclusion, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release*.

It is in this way, Ānanda, that a monk who has a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, cultivates the noble eightfold path, develops the noble eightfold path.

In this way, too, Ānanda, it should be known, in a manner of speaking, how the whole of the holy life is spiritual friendship ... :

By relying upon me as a spiritual friend, Ānanda,

beings subject to birth are freed from birth,

beings subject to decay are freed from decay,

beings subject to death are freed from death,

beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental pain, and despair are freed from them.

In this way, Ānanda, it should be known, in a manner of speaking, how spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship is the whole of the holy life.

(S 45.2/5:2 f @ SD 34.9; also at S 3.18/1:87 f; cf Sāriputta’s remark, S 5:4)

6 Testing the teacher

6.1 As mentioned above [1], Śāntarakṣita makes this famous statement in his **Tattva,saṅgraha**:

O bhikṣhus [said the self-awakened one], my words should be accepted by the wise only after investigation, not out of respect (for me)—just as gold (is accepted) only after heating, cutting and rubbing. (Ttts ch 26/3588) [6]

¹⁰³ Cf UA 221.

Śāntarakṣita is not saying here you should simply pick and choose what you like about Buddhism. In a sense, you need not have to do so, as you would likely be drawn to what you can understand and find inspiring, and would probably skim over other teachings you find unintelligible. Śāntarakṣita's words have 3 main points:

- (1) you should use your wisdom when searching the scriptures,
- (2) you should not accept a teaching or instruction from a teacher simply out of respect for him, and
- (3) check out the teaching to ensure that it is wholesome, and if so, make sure you practise it.

6.2 The Vīmaṃsaka Sutta (M 47) is a complete discourse on testing the teacher before accepting him as your own. The Buddha actually invites his disciples (or anyone else) to test him to discover whether he is awakened or not, thus:

Bhikṣhus, an inquiring monk, not knowing another's mind, should investigate the Tathagata in order to find out whether or not he is fully self-awakened. M 47,2/1:317), SD 35.6¹⁰⁴

The discourse goes on to instruct how this investigation is to be done, that is, he should observe through his own eyes and ears:

- (1) whether the Buddha's bodily conduct or his speech is defiled (*saṅkiliṭṭha*);¹⁰⁵
- (2) whether the Buddha's action or speech is morally "mixed" (*vītimissa*) (that is, not fully wholesome);
- (3) whether purified (*vodāta*) mental states are found in the Buddha;
- (4) whether the Buddha has attained his wholesome state (*kusala dhamma*) for a long time or just recently;
- (5) whether the Buddha has reached such a height of fame that he is negatively affected by it;
- (6) whether the Buddha fearlessly restrains himself from lust (*abhayūparata*), or he does so out of fear; or whether he avoids sensual lust through having destroyed it.

Then, he should go on to question the Buddha on these points so that they can be confirmed to be wholesomely so. He carefully listens to the Buddha's teaching. And if others were to question him on such matters, he would be able to confidently declare through his direct knowledge, thus¹⁰⁶

"The Blessed One is fully self-awakened. The Blessed One's Dharma is well taught. The Sangha is well-practised."

Bhikṣhus, when one's faith has been planted, rooted and established in the Tathagata for these reasons, by these words, by these phrases, this faith is said to be supported by reasons, rooted in vision, firm: it is unshaken by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or by anyone in the world.¹⁰⁷ (M 47,4-16/318-320, summarized), SD 35.6¹⁰⁸

6.3 Here we have seen how spiritual investigation and wisdom lead to reasoned faith (*ākāra, vatī saddhā*) or wise faith (*avecca-p, pasāda*). The wise layman **Citta**, in a witty encounter with the Jains, when they speak of

¹⁰⁴ *Vīmaṃsakena bhikkhave bhikkhunā parassa ceto, pariyāyaṃ ajānantena tathāgatena samānnesanā kātabbā, - sammā, sambuddho vā no vā iti viññāṇāyā ti* (M 47/1:317). Foll Be, Ce:BJT & Se: see M:NB 1244 n482.

¹⁰⁵ ... *dvīsu dhammesu tathāgato sammanesitabbo, cakkhu, sota, viññeyyesu dhammesu: ye saṅkiliṭṭha cakkhu, sota, - viññeyyā dhammā samvījanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā ti* (M 47,4/1:317)

¹⁰⁶ *Sammā sambuddho bhagavā, svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, supaṭipanno saṅgho'ti. Yassa kassa ci bhikkhave imehi ākārehi imehi padehi imehi byañjanehi tathāgate saddhā niviṭṭhā hoti mūla, jātā patitṭhitā, ayaṃ vuccatī bhikkhave ākāra, vatī saddhā dassana, mūlikā dalhā, asaṃhāriyā samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmim.*

¹⁰⁷ This in fact refers to the streamwinner's faith.

¹⁰⁸ See below Comy 3a(10). See also Jayatilleke 1963:392-394.

the stopping of thinking and pondering¹⁰⁹ in the second dhyana, declares that he “does not go by faith in the Blessed One.”

The Jain leader, Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta, however, mistakes this, literally, thinking that Citta has *no* faith in the Buddha, and even goes on to state that “knowledge, householder, is indeed superior to faith!” (*saddhā-ya kho gahapati ñāṇaṃ yeva paṇītataraṃ*).¹¹⁰ Citta then explains that what he really means is that having understood it for himself he has *no* need of faith (that is, blind faith) in the Buddha!¹¹¹ [4]

7 Kesaputtiya Sutta and Pascal’s Wager

7.1 PASCAL’S WAGER

7.1.1 In the **Apaṇṇaka Sutta** (M 60), as here in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta, the Buddha wagers, as it were, that it is better to eschew the three notorious false views of nihilism, amorism and determinism, and two views denying the formless states and cessation.¹¹² While in the Apaṇṇaka Sutta, it might be said that the Buddha gives *philosophical and ethical* arguments for rejecting these five false views, here in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta, he gives *meditative and spiritual* arguments for living a morally virtuous life.

7.1.2 The “**Buddha’s wager**” is that of a proposal of a single positive choice in the face of four uncertain situations. The Buddha argues that regardless of whether the teachings of karma and rebirth are valid, even taking it as if they were, brings one positive rewards here and now. The relieved and jubilant Kālāmas (or a significant number of them) go for refuge in the 3 jewels [§18 & Table 7.2].

7.1.3 This penultimate section of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta has often led some of the philosophically inclined to compare it to **Pascal’s wager**,¹¹³ as if presaging it. Both the four self-assurances [§18] and Pascal’s wager are classic instances of a decision theory¹¹⁴ application of a choice under uncertainty. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) gives this wager:

... you *must* wager. It is not optional... Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.

(Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* 1670:3.233, Infini-Rien. Tr W F Trotter, 1910)

7.1.4 Pascal’s wager tries to justify belief in God not from proof of his existence but rather with an appeal to self-interest. It is in our interests to believe in the Christian God, the wager suggests, and it is therefore rational for us to do so. The wager can be simply explained in this way:

¹⁰⁹ That is, initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*).

¹¹⁰ Apparently, PD Premasiri (2006:128 f) misinterprets this sentence, taking it literally (as Nigaṇṭha does!), out of context.

¹¹¹ **Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta S** (S 41.8/298 f). A similar pun is used by Sāriputta in **Pubba,koṭṭhaka S** (S 48.44/5:220-222), SD 10.7. For a summary of Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta S, see SD 10.7(5).

¹¹² M 60/1:400-413 @ SD 35.5.

¹¹³ See Kaufman 1958:170-172, 203; and esp <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal-wager/> for an authoritative write-up and refs, or for other refs, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal%27s_Wager; Theodore M Drange, “Pascal’s Wager Refuted” (2000): http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/theodore_drange/wager.html. See also **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60), SD 35.5.

¹¹⁴ **Decision theory** is an interdisciplinary concern regarding how real or ideal decision-makers make or should make decisions, and how optimal decisions are to be made. The central idea in decision theory is “choice under uncertainty,” which characterizes Pascal’s wager. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decision_theory.

- You believe in God:
If God exists, you go to heaven: your gain is infinite.
If God does not exist, your loss (because of mistaken belief) is finite.
- You do not believe in God:
If God does not exist, your gain is finite and therefore negligible.
If God does exist, your loss is infinite: your gain is zero, and you may be punished.

7.1.5 Pascal's argument can be graphically represented in the following decision matrix, listing all the 4 possibilities:¹¹⁵

	<i>God exists</i>	<i>God does not exist</i>
<i>Wager: God exists</i>	Happiness	We lose nothing
<i>Wager: God does not exist</i>	Suffering	We win nothing

Table 7.1.5: How Pascal's wager fails

In simple terms, Pascal's wager is simply ludicrous for the following reasons:

- We assume that there is only *one* God: most religions and cultures believe there are many Gods.
- In that case, why must it be *your* God? Why not some *other* God?
- Even then, if God is really *all-loving*, wouldn't He tolerate both belief and unbelief?
- What gives you the right to speak *for* God? For you to resort to such a *gamble*, only shows that you lack faith in your own God.

7.1.6 The main criticisms (logical fallacies)¹¹⁶ of Pascal's wager, in some detail, are as follows:

- (1) It assumes that there is a *need* for belief.** The main problem is that a decision-theoretic analysis would show that this argument regards belief in these concepts to be rational for or applicable to all non-zero levels of belief. One could, for example, simply declare that one does not believe in any of the premises!
- (2) It assumes that God rewards belief.** It is illogical to assume that there are only these two possibilities: that (a) the Christian God exists and punishes or rewards, and (b) that God does not exist. The wager does not account for the possibility that there may be many gods. Such a God or gods, rather than behaving as Pascal or Christians would have it, *could instead reward skepticism and punish blind faith, or reward honest reasoning and punish false faith*.
- (3) It does not constitute a true belief.** Another logical fallacy of the wager is that if a person is uncertain whether a particular religion is true and the god of that religion is real, but that person still believes in it because of the expectation of a reward and the fear of punishment, then that belief is *not a true valid belief or a true faith* in that religion and its god.

¹¹⁵ See Walter A Kaufman 1958:170 & Edward McClennen 1994:115-137.

¹¹⁶ For an easy to read "List of Common Fallacies" (Jim Walker): <http://www.nobeliefs.com/fallacies.htm>. This is also found in **Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), SD 9 (Appendix 2).

William James (1842-1910),¹¹⁷ in *The Will to Believe*, summarizes this argument thus:

Surely Pascal's own personal belief in masses and holy water had far other springs; and this celebrated page of his is but an argument for others, a last desperate snatch at a weapon against the hardness of the unbelieving heart. We feel that a faith in masses and holy water adopted willfully after such a mechanical calculation would lack the inner soul of faith's reality; and if we were ourselves in the place of the Deity, we should probably take particular pleasure in cutting off believers of this pattern from their infinite reward.

(*The Will to Believe*, 1897)

In modern times, this criticism is often used against evangelistic Christianity, especially those who try to incite fear such as by claiming that non-believers will go to eternal hell. Such a belief is sometimes called "afterlife insurance," "heaven insurance," or "hell avoidance insurance."

(4) It assumes that one can choose what one believes. This fallacy is similar to the previous one. The wager says that if one is uncertain about Christianity, one should still believe in it, just in case it is true after all. But, to believe that something is true may not be based on fact or certainty. Therefore, the wager could be interpreted to mean that if we are uncertain that it is true then *we should decide or pretend to be certain that it is*.

(5) It assumes that Christianity is the only religion that makes such a claim. Pascal's wager assumes that Christianity is the *only* religion which claims that a person will be judged and punished by God for not believing in him (that is, not believing in that religion). In reality, Christianity is *not* the only religion which claims that God will judge and punish nonbelievers. Many other religions—such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Daoism and many indigenous religions—also claim that God (or some deity) will judge and punish unbelievers.

So, if you claim that we should believe in Christianity (or in any other religion), just because of the possibility of being punished for not believing in it, then what are we going to say about other religions that make the same claim? And as a believer of a religion which makes such a claim, what do you think about their similar claims anyway?

For example, in the "Homer the Heretic"¹¹⁸ episode of the Simpsons, Homer stops going to church and decides to follow God in his own way: by watching TV, slobbering about and dancing in his underpants. Throughout the episode he justifies himself in a number of ways, such as:

- "What's the big deal about going to some building every Sunday, I mean, isn't God everywhere?"
- "Don't you think the almighty has better things to worry about than where one little guy spends one measly hour of his week?"
- "And what if we've picked the wrong religion? Every week we're just making God madder and madder?"

We do not need subtle philosophical arguments to understand the import of such claims. These are very simple facts of life, and as such they can be simply stated by even Homer Simpson!

¹¹⁷ James was a pioneering American psychologist, philosopher, and leader of the philosophical movement of Pragmatism, who wrote influential books on the young science of psychology, educational psychology, the psychology of religious experience, and the philosophy of pragmatism. On James' role in Buddhist psychology, see **Consciousness and meditation**, SD 17.8c(2).

¹¹⁸ Epi 62, Prod code 9F01, orig airdate 8 Oct 1992, written by George Meyer & directed by Jim Reardon. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homer_the_Heretic.

(6) There are opportunity costs. Pascal's wager fails to mention any cost (disadvantages) relating to belief. Philosophers have proposed that there may be both direct costs (time, health, wealth) and opportunity costs.¹¹⁹ Most modern religions require their followers to spend time attending religious services at houses of worship and to donate money for the maintenance of such places and/or to the needy, when possible. As a result, *if a person believes in a God that does not exist*, then that person has lost time, money and chance that could have been used for some other purpose.

There may be opportunity costs for those who choose to believe in a religion. For example, scientific understanding, such as the theory of evolution, that seems to some to contradict scripture, could enable a non-believer to discover or accomplish things a creationist could not. It is also argued that belief incurs a cost by not allowing the believer to participate in and enjoy actions forbidden by religious rules and dogmas. Many religious followers make significant (but not necessarily wise) sacrifices for their beliefs. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses reject blood transfusions, even if it may cost their lives or those of their loved ones.

(7) Measure theory. Pascal's wager assumes that God is possible, and hence there is a non-zero probability of him existing. But this does not work all the time. It is not clear what is meant when "probability" or "chance" is said in the context of something possibly existing, but probability cannot be used as defined in mathematics to justify the wager as it is, since God being possible does not mean that God's existence has positive probability.¹²⁰

7.1.7 The most important fallacy or weakness to note in Pascal's wager is that it takes a very speculative ("as if") approach to the God-idea. The Buddha, in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta, however, does not in any way advocate a speculative notion of karma and rebirth. It is obvious that Pascal's wager is based on a "power mode," in fact, a threat with a clear agenda: believe in God, or God will punish you. The mature and clear logic of the 4 self-assurances reflects the "love mode" of a thinker's faith. Otherwise, any comparison between the two is at best academic and speculative. Furthermore, one might assert that if Buddhism were false, it is of no consequence, but if Buddhism is true, the implication is universal.¹²¹

7.2 THE 4 SELF-ASSURANCES

7.2.1 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta closes with a guarantee that whether we believe in rebirth and karma or not, as long as our "mind is without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus," we would enjoy **4 self-assurances** or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*) [§17], as follows:

¹¹⁹ In economics, **opportunity cost** or **economic cost**, is *the cost of something in terms of an opportunity forgone* (and the benefits that could be derived from that opportunity), or *the most valuable forgone alternative*, ie the second best alternative. For example, if the local town council decides to build a shopping mall on a piece of vacant land that it owns, the opportunity cost is *some other thing* that could have been done with that land and the construction funds. In building the mall, the town council has forgone the opportunity to build, say, a parking lot on that land, or a recreation centre, or to sell the land to reduce the council's debt, and so on. Opportunity cost need not be assessed in monetary terms, but in terms of *anything* that is of value to the person or persons doing the assessing. For example, a person who chooses to meditate would not be able to use that time watching TV. In any case, if he chooses to watch a TV show, he would only be able to watch one show at a time, and (even if he is recording another show) he can only watch either one at a time, foregoing the other one. Whichever one he chooses entails a lost opportunity to experience the other.

¹²⁰ This is a summary of a technical argument. I am not very familiar with measure theory, for which see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal's_Wager#Measure_theory, and other refs there.

¹²¹ On how to fully benefit from the 4 self-assurances, see Comy 15b-16.

(1) if karma and rebirth are true	we will have a good rebirth;
(2) if karma and rebirth are false	we will still be happy right here;
(3) if good and bad exist	we face no bad karmic result;
(4) if there is neither good nor bad	we remain pure and unaffected anyway.

Table 7.2 The 4 self-assurances [§18]

If all this sounds somewhat abstract, perhaps, this thoughtful little prose poem by **Annie Dillard** (b 1945), US Pulitzer Prize writer, best known for her narrative non-fiction, makes very good sense:

Somewhere, and I can't find where,
 I read about an Eskimo hunter who asked the local missionary priest,
 "If I didn't know about God and sin, would I go to hell?"
 "No," said the priest, "not if you did not know."
 "Then why," asked the Eskimo earnestly, "did you tell me?"

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974)

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2. Sutta and commentary

[Note prefixes: “§” before a number refers to passages in the Sutta itself. “Intro” refers to an Introduction section.” “Comy” here usually refers to the Commentarial Notes at the end of this chapter. A parenthesized cross-reference without a prefix, eg [8], refers to the section in the same chapter.

Sutta Synopsis	
§§1-2	1 The Kālāmas approach the Buddha.
§§3-14	2 The moral worth of statements.
§§15a	3 The 4 divine abodes.
§§15b-16	4 The 4 self-assurances.
§17	5 The Kālāmas’ exultation.
§18	6 The Kālāmas go for refuge.

Kesa,puttiya Sutta

The Discourse to the Kesa,puttiyas

A 3.65

[An asterisk (*) following a word or phrase refers to **the commentary** (Part 3).]

Translated with notes by Piya Tan, ©2002,2021

[188] Thus have I heard.

The Kālāmas approach the Buddha

1 At one time, the Blessed One was wandering in Kosala with a large community of monks and they arrived at a market town of the Kālāmas* named Kesa,putta.*

1.2 Now the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta heard (this):

“It is said, sirs, that the recluse Gotama,* a Sakya son, who went forth from the Sakyan clan, has arrived in Kesa,putta.”

1.3 Now a good report about that Master Gotama has been going around thus:*

“So too, is he the Blessed One:¹ for, he is arhat, fully self-awakened, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tameable persons, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.

1.4 Having realized by his own direct knowledge this world with its gods, its maras and its brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people, he makes it known to others.

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

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

1.5 It is good to see such arhats.”*

¹ Alt tr: “For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord]...” On the meaning of *iti pi so* verse, see *Buddhānussati*, SD 15.7 (2.2) & n.

1.6 Then, the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta approached the Blessed One.

Having approached, some saluted the Blessed One, and sat down at one side.

Some, exchanged greetings with him, and when they have concluded their greetings and cordial talk, sat down at one side.

Some saluted the Blessed One with lotus-palms, and then sat down at one side.

Some announced their name and clan before the Blessed One, and then sat down at one side.

Some kept silent and sat down at one side.²

1.7 When the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta were all seated, they spoke thus to the Blessed One:

2 * “Bhante, there are some recluses and brahmins who come to Kesa,putta. They expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

2.2 And then some other recluses and brahmins come to Kesa,putta [189] and they, too, expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

2.3 **Bhante, we are uncertain and in doubt: Which of these good recluses and brahmins speak truth and which speak falsehood?”**³

The 10 doubtful points:⁴ (1) standards for religious truth

3 “It is fitting that you are uncertain, that you doubt,⁵ Kālāmas. Doubt has arisen in you over what is doubtful.⁶

THE 10 DOUBTFUL POINTS: * (1) STANDARDS FOR RELIGIOUS TRUTH⁷

Come, Kālāmas:⁸

4 PROPOSITIONS BASED ON TRADITION:

(1) Do not go⁹ by tradition [aural revelation].^{10*}

mā anussavena

(2) Do not go by lineage [received wisdom].*

mā paramparāya

(3) Do not go by hearsay.*

mā iti, kirāya

(4) Do not go by scriptural authority.*

mā piṭaka, sampadānena

² This is likely to be a case of social or emotional distance: see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (2.2). See also **Love**, SD 38.4 (5.3.1.1).

³ From here on, MĀ 18 reads: “Gotama, having heard this, we are uncertain, in doubt, ‘Of these recluses and brahmins, who is truthful, who is false?’ The World Honoured One said, “Kālāmas, have neither uncertainty nor doubt. Why is that? Because when there is uncertainty and doubt, there will be perplexity. You lack pure wisdom with which to know whether there is an afterlife or not. You lack pure wisdom about which deeds are unwholesome, which deeds are not.” Clearly the tone of the Chin version is very different from the Pali. See Part 2, Intro nn (1.1.4.4).

⁴ *Kaṅkhāniya-ṭṭhāna*. This phrase comes from 3, It is interesting that this key section on the 10 doubtful points is completely absent from the Chinese version: see SD 35.4b. On the significance of the 10 points, see also (**Licchavi**) **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193) @ SD 45.8 (1.3).

⁵ On doubt (*vicikicchā*), see **Vicikicchā**, SD 32.8

⁶ *Alaṇ hi vo, kālāmā, kaṅkhituṃ alaṃ vicikicchituṃ. Kaṅkhanīy’eva pana vo ṭhāne vicikicchā uppannā*. However, in MĀ 16, the Chin tr depicts the Buddha as telling them *not* to have doubts (T1.26.438c12). We see a similar difference between the Pali and the Chin tr in **Pāṭaliya S** (S 42.13/4:350,15), SD 65.1, and **MĀ 20** (T1.26.447a22). See Part 3 (1.2).

⁷ This is the 1st of 4 “uses” of these 10 points, as envisioned by the Buddha [§§8, 9, 14].

⁸ Philosophically, these 10 doubtful points can be grouped into 3 classes: I. 4 traditional propositions: (1-4), II. 4 types of reasoning (5-8); III. 2 types of personal authority (9-10) [1.1.4]. For a threefold categorization: (3.2).

* Passages with a suffixed asterisk (*) have Commentarial Notes (see below).

⁹ Comy interprets as *mā gaṇhiṭṭha*, “Do not take hold of (a notion)” throughout (AA 2:305).

¹⁰ Here, “tradition” includes revelations, prophecies and so on,

4 TYPES OF REASONING:

- (5) Do not go by pure reason [by logic].*
 (6) Do not go by inference (and deduction).*
 (7) Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].*
 (8) Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view
 after pondering on it.*

*mā takka,hetu[,gāhena]**mā naya,hetu[,gāhena]**mā ākāra,parivitakkena**mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā*

2 TYPES OF PERSONAL AUTHORITY:

- (9) Do not go by (another's) seeming ability.*
 (10) Do not go by the thought, 'This recluse [holy man] is
 our teacher.' ['This recluse is respected by us.']*

*mā bhavya,rūpatāya**mā samaṇo no garūti*

3.2 When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,*

'These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise.

These things, fully undertaken,¹¹ bring about harm and suffering.*—Then, Kālāmas, you should abandon them.¹²The 3 unwholesome roots (1) [§10]4 GREED. *What do you think, Kālāmas, when greed arises in a person, is it for his good or for his harm?""For his harm, bhante."¹³

"This person, Kālāmas, who is **greedy**, overcome by greed, his mind controlled by greed,
*destroys life, takes the not-given, violates the women of others,*¹⁴ *tells lies,*

and *he will also make others do likewise—*

which bring him harm and suffering for a long time."

"Yes, bhante."

5 HATE. "What do you think, Kālāmas, when hatred arises in a person, is it for his good or for his harm?"

"For his harm, bhante."

"This person, Kālāmas, who is **hateful**, overcome by hatred, his mind controlled by hatred,
destroys life, takes the not-given, violates the women of others, tells lies,

and *he will also make others do likewise—*

which will bring him harm and suffering for a long time."

"Yes, bhante."

¹¹ "Fully undertaken," *samattā samādinna*. **Samadinnā** here is past part of *samādiyati*, "he undertakes" (cf *samādi-yāmi*, "I undertake" the training-rules). **Samattā** has these senses: (1) (cf Skt *samasta*, Jtkm 31.90) (A 2:193, ie, here; Sn 781 = *paripuṇṇa*, Nm 65); (2) (cf Skt *samāpta*) complete, entire, perfect (Sn 402, 881, 1000; Nm 289, 298; SnA 778; Miln 349); (3) adv, *samattam*, "completely" (S 5:175), "accomplished, in full" (Sn 889). The meaning here is that if any of the 10 doubtful points were accepted or practised "in full," it would not be beneficial, even be detrimental, to one. See Sn:N 344 n402.

¹² This whole section on the 10 doubtful points is completely absent from the Chinese version: see SD 35.4b.

¹³ See **Mūla S** (A 3.69): Greed, hate, delusion are the 3 unwholesome roots of all immoral conduct and all impure mental states (SD 18.2). The Buddha gently and clearly shows the Kālāmas, unlike those religionists, the simple logic or natural goodness of moral virtue, the very basis of his own Dharma training.

¹⁴ *Para,dāram pi gacchati*, lit "go to the women of others, too." It is likely that all those who have gone to see the Buddha at Kesa,putta are men, since elsewhere and more commonly, the third precept reads *kāmesu micchācārā*, "misconduct through sense-pleasures" (eg M 1:312), esp in the 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*, D 1:146), which applies to all, regardless of gender.

6 DELUSION. “What do you think, Kālāmas, when delusion arises in a person, is it for his good or for his harm?”

“For his harm, bhante.” [190]

“This person, Kālāmas, who is **deluded**, overcome by delusion, his mind controlled by delusion, *destroys life, takes the not-given, violates the women of others, tells lies, and he will also make others do likewise—*

which will bring him harm and suffering for a long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

Moral refrain 1: Emphatic rejection*

7 “What do you think, Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?” “Unwholesome, bhante.”

“Blamable or not blamable?”

“Blamable, bhante.”

“Censured or praised by the wise?”

“Censured by the wise, bhante.”

“These things, fully undertaken, do they bring about harm and suffering?

What do you think of this?”

“These things, bhante, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.

So indeed it is to us in this matter.”

10 doubtful points: (2) standards for moral ethics¹⁵

8 * “Thus I have spoken, Kālāmas; it is for this reason that I have spoken thus:*

‘Come, Kālāmas:

Do not go by tradition [aural tradition]. Do not go by lineage [received wisdom].

Do not go by hearsay.

Do not go by scriptural authority.

Do not go by pure reason [by logic].

Do not go by inference (and deduction).

Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].

Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it.

Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability.

Do not go by the thought, “This recluse is our teacher.” [“This recluse is respected by us.”]

8.2 When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

“These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.”

—Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.’

Thus I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken thus.

¹⁵ Morality is not a code of rules or routine of rituals and vows serving as “tenets of confession,” or for crowd-control, but allows individuals the latitude for wholesome faith and personal practice in keeping with the common good [§14].

10 doubtful points: (3) standard for self-realization¹⁶**9** Come Kālāmas:¹⁷

Do not go by aural tradition [received wisdom].

Do not go by lineage [received wisdom].

Do not go by hearsay.

Do not go by scriptural authority.

Do not go by pure reason.

Do not go by inference (and deduction).

Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].

Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it.

Do not go by (another's) seeming ability.

Do not go by the thought, 'This recluse [holy man] is our teacher.' ['This recluse is respected by us.']

Right view as virtuous action¹⁸

9.2 When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

'These things are wholesome.

These things are not blamable.

These things are praised by the wise.

These things, fully undertaken, bring good and happiness.'*

—Then, Kālāmas, you should live cultivating them.

The 3 wholesome roots (2) [§3.2]

10 NON-GREED. What do you think, Kālāmas, this person, in whom non-greed [charity] arises, does it arise for his good or for his harm?"

"For his good, bhante."

"This person, Kālāmas, who is **not greedy**, not overcome by greed, his thoughts not controlled by it, *does not destroy life, does not take the not-given, does not violate the women of others, does not tell lies*, and he will also not make others do likewise, [191]

which will bring good and happiness for the long time."

"Yes, bhante."

11 NON-HATRED. "What do you think, Kālāmas, this person, in whom non-hatred [lovingkindness] arises, does it arise for his good or for his harm?"

"For his good, bhante."

"What do you think, Kālāmas, this person, who is **not hateful**, not overcome by hatred, his thoughts not controlled by it,

¹⁶ Fully: Self-reliance and self-realization through wholesome moral conduct. Full and true moral virtue cannot be rightly dictated by any religion, group or person, but must be properly understood and freely practised by each individual for the common good. [§14]

¹⁷ Note that the "doubtful points" passage is repeated only here (for the unwholesome roots), but not after the statement of the wholesome roots [§14], where it is merely stated once. This clearly shows these doubtful points are related to the unwholesome roots and as such should be rejected.

¹⁸ See (Licchavī) Bhaddiya S (A 4.193) @ SD 45.8 (1.4).

does not destroy life, does not take the not-given, does not violate the women of others, does not tell lies,
 and he will also not make others do likewise,
 which will bring good and happiness for the long time.”
 “Yes, bhante.”

12 NON-DELUSION. “What do you think, Kālāmas, this person in whom non-delusion [wisdom] arises, does it arise for his good or for his harm?”

“For his good, bhante.”

“This person, Kālāmas, who is **not deluded**, not overcome by delusion, his mind not controlled by it, *does not destroy life, does not take the not-given, does not violate the women of others, does not tell lies,* and he will also not make others do likewise,

which will bring good and happiness for the long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

Moral refrain 2: Emphatic affirmation¹⁹

13 * “What do you think, Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Blamable or not blamable?”

“Censured or praised by the wise?”

“These things, fully undertaken, do they bring good and happiness?”

“Wholesome, bhante.”

“Not blamable, bhante.”

“Praised by the wise, bhante.”

“These things, bhante, fully undertaken, bring good and happiness.”

So indeed it is to us in this matter.”

10 doubtworthy points: (4) the common good²⁰

14 “Thus I have spoken, Kālāmas; it is for this reason that I have spoken thus:*

‘Come, Kālāmas:

Do not go by aural tradition [received wisdom].

Do not go by lineage [received wisdom].

Do not go by hearsay.

Do not go by scriptural authority.

Do not go by pure reason [by logic].

Do not go by inference (and deduction).

Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].

Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it.

Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability.

Do not go by the thought, “This recluse [holy man] is our teacher.” [“This recluse is respected by us.”]’

¹⁹ For Moral Refrain 1, see §7 & n.

²⁰ The 10 undoubtworthy points serve as the criteria for the universal or common good, both religious and secular, as “the universal moral precepts.”

Right view as virtuous action²¹

14.2 When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,
'These things are wholesome. These things are not blamable. These things are praised by the wise. These things, fully undertaken, bring good and happiness.'
 —Then Kālāmas, you should live [192] cultivating them.
 Thus I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken thus.

The divine abodes*

15 Now, Kālāmas, that noble disciple—thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, clearly comprehending, ever mindful*²²—

- (1) [LOVINGKINDNESS] dwells pervading with a heart of **lovingkindness**, dwells suffusing one quarter; so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
 thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,²³
 he dwells suffusing all the world with lovingkindness
 that is vast, grown great [exalted],²⁴ immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.²⁵
- (2) [COMPASSION] He dwells with a heart of **compassion**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
 thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,
 he dwells suffusing all the world with compassion
 that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.
- (3) [GLADNESS] He dwells with a heart of **gladness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
 thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,
 he dwells suffusing all the world with gladness
 that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.
- (4) [EQUANIMITY] He dwells with a heart of **equanimity**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;
 thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,
 he dwells suffusing all the world with equanimity
 that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.²⁶

²¹ See (Licchavī) Bhaddiya S (A 4.193) @ SD 45.8 (1.4).

²² *Evam vigatābhijjho vigatāvyāpādo asammūlho sampajāno paṭissato*. This describes the saint's mind; cf description of the ordinary mind at §15.2 etc.

²³ *Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb'attatāya*. This underscored word is a better reading than *sabbatthatāya* (PED "on the whole") since *sabbadhi* ("everywhere") precedes it. It is resolved as *sabba* + *atta* + the suffix *-tā* (making it an abstract noun), giving the sense of "all-and-self-ness." The word *sabbattatāya* is dative, giving the sense, "to all-and-selfness," or as Bodhi translates it: "to all as to himself" (2005:90).

²⁴ The mind "grown great" (*maha-g, gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

²⁵ The recurrence of these last 2 phrases—"without hate, without ill will"—attests to the fact that lovingkindness is the basis for all the other 3 abodes, ie, they are actually a refinement of lovingkindness applied on deeper and broader levels.

²⁶ On how this practice leads to spiritual liberation, see Kara.ja,kāya Brahma,vihāra S (A 10.208/5:299), SD 2.10.

The 4 self-assurances (*assāsa*)

15.2 Kālāmas, this noble disciple—
 his mind without enmity thus,
 his mind without ill will thus,
 his mind uncorrupted thus,
 his mind purified thus²⁷—wins **these 4 self-assurances** right here in this life:*

16 DEFINITION OF THE 4 SELF-ASSURANCES*

(1) The 1st self-assurance [The 1st self-assurance he has won is this:]
 ‘If there *is* an afterlife [another world], and if good and bad karmic deeds bear fruit and result,
 it is possible then that when the body breaks up, after death,
 I shall re-appear in a state of joy, a happy destination, in heaven.’²⁸
 This is the 1st self-assurance he has won.²⁹

(2) The 2nd self-assurance [The 2nd self-assurance he has won is this:]
 ‘If there is *no* afterlife, and if good and bad karmic deeds do not bear fruit and results,
 then, still right here, in this life, free from enmity, from ill will, I live happily.’³⁰
 This is the 2nd self-assurance he has won.³¹

(3) The 3rd self-assurance [The 3rd self-assurance he has won is this:]
 ‘Suppose bad *does* come to the bad-doer:
 but how can I—who intends no bad towards anyone, who has done no bad—be touched by suffering?’³²
 This is the 3rd self-assurance he has won.³³

²⁷ *Evam avera, citto evam avyāpajjha, citto evam asaṅkhiliṭṭha, citto evam visuddha, citto*. This describes the ordinary mind; cf description of the saint’s mind at §15a.

²⁸ *Sace kho pana atthu para, loko atthi sukaṭa, dukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko ṭhānaṃ ahaṃ kāyassa bhedaṃ param maraṇā sugatīṃ saggaṃ lokāṃ uppajjissāmiti*. In such a scenario, we naturally arise in a heavenly state on account of our own good actions and mind without any need of outside agency.

²⁹ The Chin version, **MĀ 16**, reads thus: (1) “If there is this world and other worlds, if there is fruition of good and bad deeds, I gain the right view in connection with karma; I fully uphold it. With the breaking up of the body, after death, I will surely go to a good state, even be reborn in a heaven. The noble disciple who has heard much, has a mind free from fetters, from enmity, from ill will, from strife.” (T1.26.439b10-13): SD 35.4b.

³⁰ Whether or not there is heaven, hell, etc, what matters is that we have lived well with our present happiness.

³¹ **MĀ 16** reads thus: (2) “If there is neither this nor other worlds, and no results of good and bad deeds, I will, in this teaching, still not be faulted by others (for my deeds), but will be praised by those with right wisdom. Also, those progressing (on the path), those with right view, say that this is so (this and other world; karma and its fruition). The noble disciple who has heard much, has a mind free from fetters, from enmity, from ill will, from strife.” (T1.26.439b14-17): SD 35.4b.

³² *Sace kho pana karoto karīyati pāpaṃ na kho paṇāhaṃ kassaci pāpaṃ cetemi akarontaṃ kho panamaṃ pāpaṃ kammaṃ kuto dukkhaṃ phusissatīti*. Even when bad things do happen to good people (as commonly seen in life), the good will not suffer any unwholesome karma as for those who commit those bad deeds upon them. The bad-doers here are already unhappy and unwise in some way to be compelled to act so negatively, and will further face future negative karmic fruits.

³³ **MĀ 16** reads thus: (3) “If karma exists, I’ve surely done no evil; I think no evil. Since I’ve done no evil, how can suffering come to me? The noble disciple who has heard much, has a mind free from fetters, from enmity, from ill will, from strife.” (T1.26.439b18-21): SD 35.4b.

(4) The 4th self-assurance [The 4th self-assurance he has won is this:]

‘Suppose bad does *not* come to the bad-doer:

then, right here in this life, I see myself purified both ways.’³⁴

This is the 4th self-assurance he has won.³⁵

Kālāmas, this noble disciple—

his mind without enmity thus,

his mind without ill will thus,

his mind uncorrupted thus,

his mind purified thus—wins **these 4 self-assurances** right here in this life.”

The Kālāmas’ exultation*

17 “So it is, Blessed One! So it is, well-farer!

Indeed, bhante, this noble disciple—

his mind without enmity thus,

his mind without ill will thus,

his mind uncorrupted thus,

his mind purified thus—wins **[193] these 4 self-assurances** right here in this life:

(1) The 1st self-assurance he has won is this:

‘If there *is* an afterlife [another world], and if good and bad karmic deeds bear fruit and result,

it is possible then that when the body breaks up, after death,

I shall re-appear in a state of joy, a happy destination, in heaven.’

This is the 1st self-assurance he has won.

(2) The 2nd self-assurance he has won is this:

‘If there is no afterlife, and if good and bad deeds do not bear fruit and results, still right here in this life, *free from enmity, from ill will*, I live happily.’

This is the 2nd self-assurance he has won.

(3) The 3rd self-assurance he has won is this:

‘Suppose bad does come to the bad-doer: but how can I—*who intends no bad towards anyone, who has done no bad*—be touched by suffering?’

This is the 3rd self-assurance he has won.

(4) The 4th self-assurance he has won is this:

‘Suppose bad does not come to the bad-doer: then, right here in this life, I see myself *purified both ways*.’

This is the 4th self-assurance he has won.

17.2 ndeed, bhante, this noble disciple—

his mind without enmity thus,

his mind without ill will thus,

³⁴ Because he does no bad, no bad will come to him (Comy). Whether karma and rebirth are true or not, whether we believe in them or not, living free from greed, hate and delusion brings us a life of true humanity and happiness.

³⁵ **MĀ 16** reads thus: (4) “If karma exists, I’ve surely done no evil. I’ve done no wrong in the world; hence, there is no question of fear or no fear. I always have love and compassion for all the world. My mind quarrels not with sentient beings. It is not clouded, but joyful. The noble disciple who has heard much, has a mind free from fetters, from enmity, from ill will, from strife.” (T1.26.439b22-26): SD 35.4b.

his mind uncorrupted thus,
 his mind purified thus—wins **these 4 self-assurances** right here in this life.

The Kālāmas go for refuge*

18 Excellent, bhante³⁶ Gotama! Excellent, bhante!
 Just as if, bhante, one were to place upright what had been overturned,
 or, were to reveal what was hidden,
 or, were to show the way to one who was lost,
 or, were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes can see forms,
 in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by master Gotama.
 We, bhante, go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.
 May master Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone to him for refuge from this day forth
 for life.”

— *pañcamam* —

³⁶ In this refuge-going passage, the Kālāmas address the Buddha both as *bhante* and as *bho*. The latter is a common vocative used amongst brahmins. Throughout the rest of the discourse, they address the Buddha as *bhante*. Three explanations are possible: (1) Originally, *bhante* and *bho* are synonymous. (2) The reciters who composed this Sutta use the standard Buddhist vocation in its main body, but left the refuge-going passage with its own brahminical vocative. (3) The refuge as a formula or ritual for brahmins would, as a rule, use *bho* as the vocative.

Part 3

Sutta Commentary

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§1.1 The Kālāmas of Kesaputta

1 The Kesa,puttiyas were the people of Kesaputta (or Kesa,mutti): they were better known as Kālāma (A 1:188). It has been suggested that they may be identical with the Kesins of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas.¹ **Kālāma** is probably the name of a clan (*gotta*; Skt *gotra*). **Kesa,putta**² is a market town (*nigama*) in Kosala belonging to the Kālāmas, who were kshatriyas (AA 2:304). Among the well known members of this clan are the ascetic Bharaṇḍu Kālāma (A 3.124),³ and the Ālāra Kālāma, the teacher of Gotama before his awakening. Both Bharaṇḍu and the recluse Gotama have lived together as pupils of Ālāra.⁴

2 The Bharaṇḍu Sutta (A 3.124) records the Buddha as instructing Mahānāma on 3 kinds of teachers: the first teaches the full comprehension of sense-desires, but neither of sense-objects nor feelings; the second teaches the full comprehension of both sense-desires and sense-objects, but not of feelings; but the third teaches the full comprehension of all three. The Buddha asks Mahānāma whether their accomplishment (*niṭṭha*) is one and the same (*eka*) or different (*puṭhu*).⁵ Bharaṇḍu tells Mahānāma to answer that they are one and the same: thrice he does this, and thrice the Buddha answers that they are all different. Taking this as a snub by the Buddha, Bharaṇḍu leaves, not to return any more.⁶

3 Although neither the Sutta nor the Commentary mentions where exactly the Buddha and the monks stays during this sojourn in Kesaputta country, the Chinese version states that it is **the siṃsapa grove** 尸攝想 *shī shè hé* (onomatopoeic).⁷ Often such information, not corroborated in the Pali version, would be found in the Commentaries.⁸ However, here the Commentary and Subcommentary are silent.

§1.2 “It is said, sirs, that the recluse Gotama ... ”

This is a stock passage to show that the Kālāmas are well acquainted with the Buddha’s background. This paragraph denotes the Buddha’s social status (in the minds of the Kālāmas and the world), which adds a significant sense of charisma to his personality.

¹ B C Law, *Geography of Early Buddhism*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Repr Delhi: Oriental Books, 1979. 1932:30 n; Chaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, 2nd ed Calcutta, 1950:118.

² Be has *Kesa,mutta* throughout: see Be:VRI 1:216-222.

³ A 3.124/1:276-278.

⁴ **Bharaṇḍu S** (A 3.124,2/1:277; AA 2:375).

⁵ A 3.124/1:276-278; AA 2:374 f.

⁶ A 3.124/1:2376-278.

⁷ *Siṃsapa* (Dalbergia sissoo), sesam, Indian rosewood: SD 21.7 (1.4). The Chinese translation is confirmed by: <https://mbingenheimer.net/t26/mainGlossary.html>

⁸ See eg Analayo, “The influences of Commentarial exegesis on the transmission of Āgama literature,” 2010:1-20.

§1.3 Now a good report about that Master Gotama ...

1 This section declares the presence of the 3 jewels in the world.

Paragraph 1, beginning “**The Blessed One is an arhat ...**,” is the traditional verse for the recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*) in his nine virtues,⁹ and reflects his spiritual status to the world.

2 Paragraph 2, beginning “**Having realized by his own direct knowledge ...**,” is a statement of the Buddha’s self-awakening and that he is a world-teacher, capable of liberating all beings throughout earth and heaven.

3 Paragraph 3, beginning “**He teaches the Dharma ...**,” is a brief description of the Dharma. The full verse on the recollection of the Dharma, on its 6 virtues, runs thus:¹⁰

- (1) Well taught (*svākkhāto*) is the Dharma;
- (2) it is visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), sometimes rendered as “to be seen for oneself”;
- (3) it has an immediate effect (*akālika*);
- (4) it invites and entails personal verification (*ehi,passika*);
- (5) it is accessible (*opanayika*); alternately, it “brings on progress”;
- (6) it is to be personally realized by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*).

4 The phrase, “**good in the beginning**,” refers to the moral virtue (*sīla-k,khandha*) training of the teaching, and is essentially stated as in the first virtue, “well taught.”

5 The phrase, “**good in the middle**,” refers to the mental cultivation (*samādhi-k,khandha*) training of the teaching, which is represented by virtues 2-3 [3]:

- (2) mental cultivation and mindfulness make one see the Dharma in this life itself;
- (3) the benefits of mental training are immediate, and also allows one to have an experience of the timelessness of reality;

6 The phrase, “**good in the end**,” refers to the wisdom (*pañña-k,khandha*) training of the teaching, which is represented by virtues 4-6 [3]:

- (4) the Dharma is meant to be tried and tested, like food for the hungry or medicine for the ill, which represents the first stage of Buddhist training or discipleship: this is the level of the “good worldling”;
- (5) the Dharma immediately becomes “accessible,” that is, one begins to understand it, so that it “brings on progress” on the spiritual path: in this life itself, one will attain at least streamwinning, if not arhathood; and
- (6) the Dharma can fully awaken one so that one reaches the highest spiritual state, that of the arhats, the truly wise ones.

Hence, the phrase, “**good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end**” refers to the 3 trainings (*ti,sikkhā*), that is, the training in moral virtue, in mental concentration, and in wisdom.¹¹

7 The phrase, “**both in the spirit and in the letter**” refers to the two aspects of the teachings as idea and as form. Traditionally, this is explained as follows in **the Visuddhi,magga**:

⁹ See *Buddhānussati*, SD 15.7.

¹⁰ D 2:92 (Vism 216); M 27,11/1:179 = 38,31/1:267; A 1:156 (see AA), 227 (AA); Sn 567 (SnA) = M 92 (MA), Sn 1137 (Nc, NcA, SnA); S 2:58 = 4:328. For a traditional comy, see Vism 7.69-75/213-215. See *Dhammānussati*, SD 15.9.

¹¹ See *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

It is (well-taught) “in the spirit” (*sāttham*) because it is perfect (*sampatti*) in meaning, and it is (well-taught) “in the letter” (*savyañjanam*) because it is perfect in the details.

It is (well-taught) “in the spirit” because it conforms to the words declaring its meaning by way of explanation, proclamation, revelation, analysis and clarification. It is (well-taught) “in the letter” because it is perfect by way of syllable, word, the letter, style, language and exposition.

(Vism 7.72/214)

8 The spirit (*attha*) of the teaching is preserved through personal practice, especially through proper instructions from accomplished teachers and from personal realization. The word or letter (*pada*) of the teaching refers to the aural [by ear] or oral [by mouth] tradition, that is, the phrasing (*vyañjana*) and sound (*ghosa*) of the teaching, and to the written texts properly recorded, preserved and transmitted.

Those who are quick in understanding and realizing the true teaching are able to grasp its spirit, that is, its meaning directly. Those who begin their spiritual training with the letter of the Teaching take a more gradual path, through 3 stages:

- (1) hearing the Teaching on the word level (*suta, mayā paññā*),
- (2) reflecting over the Teaching (*cinta, mayā paññā*), and
- (3) cultivating a direct experience of reality (*bhāvanā, mayā paññā*). (D 3:219; Vbh 324) [3.2]

§1.4 “It is good to see arhats such as these”

1 THE BENEFIT OF SEEING RECLUSES

1.1 Since the only means of Dharma transmission in the Buddha’s time is that of the aural tradition, one has to be in the presence (*santike*) of the Teacher and within sight (*dassana*) of him, in order to benefit from the Teaching. However, even when the listener is still unable to immediately understand the teacher’s word, the frequent, patient and responsive way of listening would in due course bring liberating wisdom upon one. This is clearly stated in the ninth stanza of **the Maṅgala Sutta** (Kh 5.9 = Sn 266):

<i>khantī ca sovacassatā</i>	Patience, being tractable [being responsive to instruction],
<i>samaṇānañ ca dassanam</i>	Seeing the recluses [especially left-home practitioners],
<i>kālena dhamma, sākaṁchā</i>	And timely Dharma discussions—
<i>etam maṅgalam uttamam</i>	This is the highest blessing.

I have translated the abstract noun *dassana*¹² (Skt *darśana*), “seeing, sight, vision” as “**darshan**,”¹³ a loan word from modern Hindi. This shows the importance and popularity of the practice of viewing holy persons such as the Buddha. I have used the modern Indian word “darshan” to reflect the original cultural and religious background that applies here. The ancient Indians who came to “see” the Buddha, did just that: they regarded

¹² It comes from the verb *dassati* = *dakkhati*, *dakkhiti*, “he sees.” The word *dassana* appears a total of at least 12 times in **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16), all in ch 5 (§§5.7 (x2), 5.15 (x5), 5.19, 5.20, 5.24, 5.24, 5.25), the Kusinārā Chapter: see SD 9 (7.5(i)).

¹³ Webster’s 3rd International Dictionary on ²**darshan**: “a blessing held by various Hindus to consist in the viewing of an eminent person (as a religious leader).” See Trainor 1997:177 f & McMahan 1998:10 (digital).

this mere gazing on a holy person to bring upon them great blessing, and also to be in the sight of a holy person was just as blessed. This, in fact, is often the case for the modern traditional Indians, too.¹⁴

1.2 The Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta contains two important passages relating to *dassana* as “seeing” a holy person, and where we can tease out a good understanding of the Buddha’s teaching regarding it. The first passage is **the Upavāṇa episode** (D 16.5.4 f) where the Buddha abruptly instructs Upavāṇa, who is fanning him, to step aside. When asked by Ānanda, the Buddha replies that numerous devatas (heavenly beings) have assembled “for the sight of the Tathāgata” (D 16.5.5). The more worldly devatas lament: “Too soon will the Eye in the world disappear!” The second passage concerns the 4 holy places, of which the Buddha declares: “Ānanda, there are these four places that should be seen by the faithful son of family so as to rouse samvega [a sense of urgency].” (D 16,5.8.1)¹⁵

2 THE BENEFITS OF FAITH

2.1 The statement, “It is good to see such arhats” (*sādhū kho pana tathā,rūpānaṃ arahataṃ dassanaṃ hotī ti*), clearly attests to the faith (*saddhā*) of those (or most of those) who have approached the Buddha. **Faith** is an effective beginning of the spiritual path. The Kālāmas have, in fact, been *suffering* from doubt and confusion on account of the claims and counter-claims of the various religious teachers and speakers who visit them. This suffering leads them to see the Buddha, in whose teaching their *faith* arises. **The Upanisā Sutta** (S 12.23) actually declares that suffering leads to faith and on to *arhathood* in this manner:¹⁶

Ignorance ↔ **Suffering** → faith → gladness → zest → tranquillity → happiness → concentration → knowledge and vision → revulsion → dispassion → freedom → the destruction of mental influxes (arhathood).¹⁷

2.2 In the case of the Kālāmas, they or a significant number of them apparently accept the Buddha’s teachings after pondering on them (*dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti*) and as a result become streamwinners, as suggested by their going for refuge at the end of the discourse (as in the case of Bhaddiya in a similar discourse).¹⁸ Their process of spiritual awakening forms a part of “the gradual training” (*anupubba,sikkhā*) of **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), that is, up to stage (8), thus:¹⁹

- (1) Faith (*saddhā*) conduces one to visit (that is, to see) a teacher.
- (2) Visiting (*upasaṅkamana*) the teacher conduces one to respectfully attending to the teacher.
- (3) Respectfully attending (*payirūpāsana*) to the teacher conduces to giving ear.
- (4) Giving ear (*sota,vadhāna*) conduces to hearing the Dharma.

¹⁴ See *Pratyupanna-Buddha-Saṃmukha,vasthita-samādhī Sūtra* (tr Harrison, 1990) §14H. Lawrence Babb, “Glancing: Visual interaction in Hinduism,” 1981:396 f, has shown that Hindus not only wish to see their deities, but also wish to be seen by them.

¹⁵ For a useful discussion, see Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, 1997:174-176.

¹⁶ S 12.23/2:29-32 @ SD 6.12 & **Dependent Arising**, SD 5.16 (18C).

¹⁷ On mental influxes (*āśava*), see Intro 5.3(1).

¹⁸ **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193/2:190-194), SD 35.10 contains the same 10 doubtful points & the section on the roots (§§3b-15a). Comy says that at the end of the discourse, Bhaddiya becomes a streamwinner. (AA 3:173)

¹⁹ This sequence is from **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70), but the terms are from **Caṅkī S** (M 95). See foll n.

- (5) Hearing the Dharma (*dhamma,savana*) conduces to remembering the Dharma.
- (6) Remembering the Dharma (*dhamma,dhāraṇā*) conduces to the examination of its meaning.
- (7) The examination of the meaning (*atth'upaparikkhā*) of the teachings helps one to accept it after pondering on it.
- (8) Being convinced of the teachings after pondering on them (*dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti*)²⁰ conduces to will-power [wholesome desire].
- (9) Will-power (*chanda*) conduces to effort.
- (10) Effort (*ussāha*) conduces to scrutiny.
- (11) Scrutiny [deliberating] (*tulanā*) conduces to striving.
- (12) With a resolute mind (*pahit'atta*), he realizes through his own body the supreme truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom [arhathood].²¹

(M 70,23-24/1:480), SD 11.1 = (M 95,20/2:173), SD 21.15

2.3 The Caṅkī Sutta (D 95), too, mentions these 12-stage gradual progress—but in reverse—and which it says leads to “the final attainment of truth” (*saccānupatti*), that is, arhathood.²²

This exhortation is effectively a “psychology of learning” in a few lines. The learning process is not just a matter of rote or book-learning, but of spiritual friendship with the teacher (1-4), which in turn is a fertile ground for learning (5-8), which leads to efforts in spiritual change (9-12) and realization. We also see here a more elaborate exposition of **the Maṅgala Sutta** quatrain on the four qualities beginning with patience (Kh 5.9 = Sn 266) mentioned above [1.4(1)].

2.4 It is interesting to see how “being convinced of the teachings after pondering on them” (*dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti*) gives the positive counterpart of the doubtful point known as *diṭṭhi,nijjhāna,khanti* [Comy 3a(8)]. Here we see the proper context of pondering (through wise attention) on a teaching as a spiritual exercise, and as not a cursory or biased acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after some thought [Intro 5.3].

§2 “Bhante, there are some recluses and brahmins ... we are uncertain and in doubt: Which of these good recluses speak truth and which speak falsehood?”

According to the Aṅguttara Commentary, the town of Kesa,putta is located at the edge of a forest. Various groups of wanderers would stop there to spend the night before crossing the forest (or on emerging from the forest). During their stay, they would give talks to the Kālāmas, so that they are exposed to a wide range of religious and philosophical ideas (AA 2:305). Understandably, such a bewildering range of views causes doubt and perplexity in the minds of the Kālāmas.²³

§3.0 The 10 doubtful points and related suttas

1 THE 10 DOUBTFUL POINTS AND RELATED TEACHINGS

²⁰ The phrasing here shows or suggests how *dhamma,nijjhāna,khanti* should be resolved, ie with *dhammā* as pl.

²¹ Be Ee: *Pahit'atto samāno kāyena c'eva paramaṃ saccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca naṃ aṭṭhijjha passati*. Here, **Caṅkī S** (M 95) has: “Striving (*padhāna*) conduces to the attaining of truth (*saccānupatti*).” M 95,21/2:173 f (SD 21.15). Both passages mean the same thing. Comy on Caṅkī S says that *saccānubodha* means “awakening to the path” (*maggānubodha*), and *saccānupatti* means “realization of the fruit” (*phala,sacchikiriya*) (MA 3:427).

²² M 95,21-33/2:174-176 (SD 21.15).

²³ A very similar commentarial remark (MA 3:115 f) is given in connection with **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,4/1:401), SD 35.5.

1.1 The passage on the 10 doubtful points (**kaṅkhāniya-ṭṭhāna*) does not have any verb at all, but which is supplied by the Sutta Commentary as *mā gaṇhiṭṭha*, “do not take hold of (a notion)” (AA 2:305). A number of translators have rendered this idiomatically as “do not go by ...” rather than being literal, technical or prolix, with such renditions as “Do not accept anything through ...” or “Do not hold on to a notion on account ...,” although these may serve as explanations or amplified translations.

1.2 It is curious that this key section on **the 10 doubtful points** is completely absent from the Chinese version, **MĀ 16**²⁴ [SD 35.4b]. It depicts the Buddha as not asking the Kālāmas to judge for themselves and resolve their doubts. Then, he advises them not to give rise to doubt and perplexity, telling them outright: “**You yourselves do not have the pure wisdom with which to know whether there is an afterlife or not, Kālāmas. You yourselves do not have the pure wisdom to know which deeds are unwholesome and which are not unwholesome, Kālāmas.**”²⁵

Then, he categorically tells them what he himself has known these by direct experience. He explains to the Kālāmas the 3 unwholesome courses of action and how they are breached; and then he explains the 10 wholesome courses of action, in a similar way as those found, for example, in **the (Dasaka) Cunda Sutta** (A 10.176),²⁶ SD 59.10, on the threefold purity, and **the Niraya,sagga Sutta 1** (A 10:200),²⁷ on rebirth in a heaven.

2 RELATED SUTTAS

The 10 doubtful points are not an isolated teaching, but found elsewhere in the Pali canon. We see them in at least 2 other important discourses, both found in the Aṅguttara, as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 2.1 | Saḷha Sutta | A 3.66/1:193-197 | SD 43.6 |
| 2.2 | (Licchavī) Bhaddiya Sutta | A 4.193/2:190-194 | SD 45.8 (1.3). |

2.1 The Saḷha Sutta (A 3.66), basically, presents the same teaching given by the Buddha in **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.67): the 10 doubtful points, the 3 unwholesome roots, the 3 wholesome roots, and the 4 divine abodes. In A 3.66, they are given by the the arhat Nandaka to 2 young laymen, Saḷha and Rohana.

2.2 The (Licchavī) Bhaddiya Sutta (A 4.193) shows the Buddha teaching the Licchavī layman, Bhaddiya, the same 10 doubtful points, along with “the 4 social biases”—how people tend to behave socially—that is, the qualities of greed, hate, delusion and impetuosity. Bhaddiya goes for refuge and then becomes a streamwinner.

§3.1 (1) “Do not go by tradition [aural tradition]” (*mā anussavena*)

1 In the Buddha’s time, there were two predominant systems of religious thinking: the established Vedic system of the brahmins (*brāhmaṇa*) and the reform movement. **The traditional brahmins** claimed that their religion originated from the primal being (*puruṣa*) and was handed down aurally [by ear] and exclusively through successive generations of brahmins. Their system was, in reality, mostly text-centred and ritual-based, like most other major religions. It also claimed that its was preserved by a lineage based on secret knowledge shared only amongst initiates. If so, then, no one would know whether it was based on truth or falsehood.

²⁴ MĀ 16 (T1.26.438b14-438c21), SD 35.4b. On the Madhyama Āgama, see SD 58.1 (5.4.5.4 (2)).

²⁵ MĀ 16: 汝等 [c14] 自無淨智。為有後世。為無後世。伽藍。汝 [c15] 等亦無淨智。所作有罪。所作無罪。伽藍。(T1.26.438c14-15).

²⁶ A 10.176/5:263-268 (SD 59.10).

²⁷ A 10.200/5:283-285 = A:Be 10:211 (SD 57.29).

2 The reform movement, on the other hand, consisted mainly of recluses (Skt *śramaṇa*; P *samaṇa*) who, like the Buddha, based their teachings on personal realization through mental cultivation and reinterpreted religiosity as an inner experience, attainable through personal effort, that is, without the mediation of priest or brahmin. A good case in point is that of *karma*, which, according to the brahmins, meant rituals and sacraments, of which only the brahmins had the power and privilege to perform, while the Buddhists and Jains regarded it as *volitional action* for which one was morally accountable.²⁸ The reform movement, however, also included non-religious groups such as the materialists (ancestors of the Cārvāka).

3 Modern scholars, such as Jayatilleke,²⁹ generally agree that *anussava* here probably refers to the “sacred Vedic tradition,” that is, the brahminical aural tradition. In rejecting *anussava* as a valid source of knowledge, the Buddha directly challenges the religious authority of the brahmins. Of course, this doubtful point of *anussava* does not only apply to the brahminical tradition, but also to all forms of traditional authority, including Buddhist sectarianism.

4 The Sandaka Sutta (M 76) throws more light on why *anussava* is not a satisfactory means of knowledge. In the Sutta, Ānanda explains that a teacher who is a traditionalist (*anussavika*) may uphold a teaching that is “traditionally handed down” (*itiha, itiha, paramparā*), taking it to be “scriptural authority” (*piṭaka, sampadā*). However traditional or “authoritative” a traditionalist teaching may be, one that is based on *anussava* must have the following possibilities:

it might be well-remembered;	<i>sussatam pi hoti</i>
it might be ill-remembered;	<i>dussatam pi hoti</i>
it might be true; or	<i>tathā pi hoti</i>
it might be false.	<i>aññathā pi hoti</i>

Seeing that such a traditional or dogmatic religion based on *anussava* is unsatisfactory (*anassāsika*), an intelligent person, becoming disillusioned with it, would leave.³⁰

5 In a broad religious sense, *anussava*, “what is repeatedly heard,” refers to religious tenets and teachings that have been handed down, that are to be accepted without question, especially those that cannot be personally verified. This would include religious prophecies, revelations, miracles (including reports of miracles) and “official” religious doctrines.

6 In our own times, this first doubtful point applies to our traditional religions and customs. Many of the traditions, customs and practices we see during the rites of passages—especially those of birth, marriage and death—have been handed down from our collective past. Some of these practices, such as new year home-gatherings and communal fellowship, have a healthy socializing value. Practices that are superstitious, alienating, wasteful or exploitative should be rejected or modified into something relevant to our personal and social development.

²⁸ It should be noted here that the Buddha does not import wholesale the notions of karma and rebirth from pre-Buddhist systems. For one, they are still not fully developed systems during his time, and, they are bound by the conventions and terms of the day. Clearly, then, when the Buddha adopts such terms he also adapts them, giving them new meanings and uses. This is called “**natural adaptation**”: SD 1.8 (1.5+1.6); SD 39.3 (3.3.4). See also Jayatilleke 1963:369-376.

²⁹ Jayatilleke 1963:171-178.

³⁰ *So anassāsikaṃ idaṃ brahma, cariyā ti iti viditvā tasmā brahma, cariyā nibbija pakkamati* (M 76, 28/1:520), SD 35.7. See also Jayatilleke 1963:185-187.

§3.2 (2) “Do not go by lineage [received wisdom]” (*mā paramparāya*)

The Pali word *paramparā* simply means a “series or succession” (PED) and can refer to either teachers, or to teachings, or both. In the former case, *paramparā of teachers*, we have the Buddha comparing the lineage of Vedic teachers to “a close line of blind men, clinging together, of whom the front end sees not, the middle section sees not, and the tail end sees not, too” (*andha,veṇi,paramparaṃ saṃsattā purimo’pi na passati majjhimo ’pi na passati pacchimo ’pi na passati*, D 1:239; M 2:170).³¹

Paramparā can also refer to an “unbroken line of the teaching,” as in the phrase, *itiha,itiha,paramparā* (Skt *aitihya,pāramparya*),³² “a teaching successively handed down,” that is, a lineage or pedigree. In either case, the continuity of teacher or teachings, or of both—as in the case of the Chan and Zen traditions—are regarded as the authenticity and authoritativeness.³³ Here, the authority is less in truth, but more in tradition.

However, as Jayatilleke notes:

Today, it may appear strange as to why anyone should accept an assertion merely because it is in a tradition. But in the context of Ancient India, we must not forget that the antiquity of a continuous tradition was itself a criterion in favour of its acceptance. This was probably the reason why the Jains and later even the Buddhists vied with each other in claiming the antiquity of their respective traditions over all others.
(Jayatilleke 1963:195 §296)

§3.1 (3) “Do not go by hearsay” (*mā iti,kirāya*)

1 *Iti,kirā* (f)³⁴ is a common expression simply meaning “hearsay” (PED). There is variant reading, *iti,kiriyāya*, which is sometimes preferred by the editors (eg Poussin and Thomas) to *iti,kirāya* (Nm 400, ed Poussin & Thomas).³⁵ However, as Jayatilleke has pointed out:

The Niddesa represents a later stratum within the Canon itself, as it is a commentary on two sections of the Suttanipāta and the form *itikiriyāya* is either due to an attempt to “correct” *itikirāya* on the misunderstanding that the nominal base is *itikiriyā-* or is the result of an attempt to form an abstract noun, viz **itikirya- > itikiriya-* which by contamination with *kiriyā* gives *itikiriyāya* for the instrumental case. The earlier form *itikirāya* is certainly to be preferred as the more authentic reading.
(Jayatilleke 1963:195 §297)

2 While the Kesa,puttiya Sutta has the reading *mā iti,kirāya mā piṭaka,sampadena* [§3a], we find *itihītiha* (vi *itih’itiha*) in the **Sandaka Sutta** (M 76.24-26) and the **Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95.12 f): *itihītiha paramparāya piṭaka,sampadāya*.³⁶ Both *iti,kira* and *itihītiha* (and its variants) have essentially the same sense of “hearsay.” *Itihītiha* is formed from the base, the particle *iti*, and the particles *-ha* and *-kira*, both of which are used in introducing reports or anecdotal material. *Itiha* often occurs as a conjunction translated as “in this way” or “thinking or considering thus,” as in the **Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26.19).³⁷ Sometimes it is found in the suttas as introducing traditional history (D 1:1; M 1:151), or introducing a legendary account (M 1:311).

³¹ **Tevijja S** (D 13,15/1:239 f), SD 1.8; **Caṅkī S** (M 95,13/2:170), SD 21.15.

³² See *aitihya,pāramparayā*, *Vṛtti* on Pāṇini 5.4.23; *upadeśa,pāramparye aitihiyam*, Böhtlingk, *Pāṇini’s acht Bücher Grammaticher Regeln*, Band I, 1839:342.

³³ See **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.5.

³⁴ Nm 360, 400, 482; Nc 108.

³⁵ Cf Nc 108, ed Stede.

³⁶ M 76,24-26/1:520 @ SD 35.7; M 95,12-13/2:169 @ SD 21.15. See Jayatilleke 1963:193-199.

³⁷ M 26,19/1:168 @ SD 1.11.

There is the negative form **anītiha** or *anitiha*, meaning “not based on hearsay or tradition,” which is really the negative form not of *itiha* but of *itihītiha*. In the **Brahma, cariya Sutta** (A 4.25), it is said that “the Blessed One has taught a holy life not based on hearsay or tradition” (*brahma, cariyam anītiham ... adesayi so bhagavā*).³⁸ The elder **Girimānanda** is said to have realized for himself “the Dharma that is *anītiha*” (*dharmo anītiho*, Tha 331). The **Mettagū Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.5) records this statement:

(Mettagū, said the Blessed One,) I will proclaim a teaching
For the here and how, not based on hearsay or tradition,
Having known which, living mindfully, one would cross over attachment in the world.

*Kittayissāmi te dhammam (Mettagū ti bhagavā)
diṭṭhe dhamme anītiham
yam veditvā sato caram tare loka visattikam.*

(Sn 1053)

3 It is possible (albeit without internal evidence) that *iti, kira* (at least in the Buddha’s time) has the same meaning as *itiha* [Intro 4.3]. Its Sanskrit form **aitihya** probably refers to “all the Vedic branches of study from *itihāsa* onwards” (Jayatilleke 1963:197). The suttas, for example, always speak of “*itihāsa* as the fifth (item of Vedic studies)” (*itihāsa, pañcamam*).³⁹ As such, we may surmise that this doubtful point—that of *iti, kira*—is:

directed at the validity of the legendary and historical material as well as the speculative theories of the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and possibly the Early Upaniṣads, all of which were probably classified under *aitihya* in the Brāhmaṇical tradition at this time.” (Jayatilleke 1963:198)

4 In our own times, we can take **iti, kira** to refer to popular opinion or general consensus. Now that we have some idea of the ancient context and modern application of this doubtful point, we can “recontextualize” it by applying it to indigenous and modern legends, histories, and traditions, as well as various speculative notions (religious and otherwise). This means that we should not blindly believe the mass media, the Internet, advertisements, sales talk, evangelism, and gossips—but to take them with a grain of salt, and if possible to personally find out for oneself what the real truth is. Waking life is a series of narratives, most of which seem to have lives of their own and are not really what they appear to be. Liberation lies in the ability to see through these narratives for what they really are.

5 The argument from “**hearsay**” may occur like this: famous actor X appears in an advertisement as declaring that he uses product Y, or someone telling a moving story that he has found the one and only true religion Z. Hence, the subtext or hidden message (in the advertisement), or even an open declaration (by the “witness”), is that Y should be purchased or that we, too, should embrace Z. At best, we can say that X has his personal preference, or simply that he is deluded. We might as well get a famous person who says, “Eat more salt and only salt; I do and it is good for me!” Should we follow such a foolish advice?

6 Or, someone might claim that a certain view or practice must be good, right or true because it is popular or widespread (taught by the famous teacher). For example, a young Buddhist might be told by his parents to at least earn 2 academic degrees, because it is a “competitive” society, or that “everyone” is studying for double degrees. Or with 2 degrees, we could get “better” jobs, or the jobs that we want. We could then make more money, gain respect, and so on.

³⁸ A 4.25/2:26.

³⁹ **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1.3/1:88; **Tikaṇṇa S** (A 3.58/1:163), **Doṇa S** (A 5.192/3:223).

But do we always get the job we want, or even get a good job at all. Even if we do, after a while, we might change our minds, and look for another job. Furthermore, are people who have all the money they think they want, really happy? If they were really happy, why do they keep on wanting more? The usually way out is simply to get into denials of such considerations. On the other hand, when we are happy with what we want in life and happily go about doing it, we know just what to do, happily.

7 Such talks or arguments are valid if they are simply based on “common consensus.” There are a number of reasons that a lot of people use or buy such a soap (it is cheap, on promotion, the soap is most widely distributed, etc), or follow such a religion (people are born into it, or through social or cultural dominance, or there are palpable economic or political advantages, etc). To say that something is good, true or right because “most or many people” are using it or are “it,” is a kind of argumentation con called “consensus gentium” (common consensus).

8 A related argument con here is that of “appeal to authority” (argumentum ad verecundiam). [§3.1 (4) & comy].

§3.1 (4) “Do not go by scriptural authority” (*mā piṭaka,sampadānena*)

1 MEANING OF PIṬAKA

1.1 The word *piṭaka* literally means “basket,” and figuratively refers to the three main collections of the Pali Canon. However, this latter sense is not found in the Canon itself, but became current only around the Indian emperor Asoka’s time (that is, around two centuries after the Buddha). As used in the early suttas, the word *piṭaka* simply means “scripture or canon.” In other words, *piṭaka* is never used in the Pali Canon to refer to the Buddha’s Teaching or to itself.

1.2 The phrase *piṭaka,sampadā* is fully translated as “the scriptural authority,” or more simply as “scripture.” While *sampadā* usually means “accomplishment, proficiency” (as in *sīla,sampada*, *paññā,sampadā*), Jayatilleke notes that

the word may perhaps denote a characteristic of *piṭaka* (*piṭakassa sampadā*) and mean lit[erally] “the worth of the *piṭaka*” and therefore “the authority of the *piṭaka*.” (Jayatilleke 1963:200 §305)

We know from such discourses as **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76,24-26) and **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95,12 f) that *piṭaka,sampadā* refers to the Vedic tradition.⁴⁰ The suttas occasionally refer to the Vedic mantras or hymns having been “put together” (*samihita* = *saṃhita*),⁴¹ and **the Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 3.6) refers to “the Vedas of the recluses”:

vedāni viceyya kevalāni (Sabhiyā ti bhagavā)

*samaṇānaṃ yāni p’atthi brāhmaṇānaṃ
sabba,vedanāsu vīta,rāgo
sabbaṃ vedan̄ aticca vedagu so.*

Having fully examined every branch of knowledge,
(O Sabhiya, said the Blessed One:)

whatever there are of the recluses or the brahmins,
with lust removed from all feelings,
he is accomplished in all knowledge, a knowledge
master. (Sn 529)

⁴⁰ M 76,24-26/1:520 @ SD 35.7; M 95,12-13/2:169 @ SD 21.15. See Jayatilleke 1963:193-199.

⁴¹ **Tevijja S** (D 13,13/1:238), SD 1.8; cf Skt *saṃhita*, “collection.”

2 “APPEAL TO AUTHORITY”

2.1 We know that none of the sacred texts (of any religious group) were ever written down in the Buddha’s time and all teachings were orally and aurally transmitted. From such passages (Sn 529), it is also clear that the word *veda* (which simply means “sacred knowledge”) does not necessarily refer only to the brahminical texts, but to any religious teacher’s or group’s aural (“heard”) collection of gnostic teachings. As such, we can conclude that *piṭaka as a doubtful source of knowledge* refers to the scripture and teachings of either Vedic or non-Vedic teachers or systems, or to *any* religious scripture of the time, including that of Buddhism.

2.2 In our own times, we can, for example, argue that Buddhism (or any religion) is good, right or true (we are often not certain which!) because a popular movie actor or a famous scientist is “Buddhist” (of course, what kind of Buddhist is another matter). This argumentation con is common in politics, too. Politicians often try to get the endorsement of certain large or influential religious groups, so that (amongst other things), this would make more people think that those endorsed make better or the best candidates.

2.3 On a simpler level, such an argument may go this way: first, someone is praised, then that person is cited as an authority in a field unrelated to the area in which the person has been praised. It’s like saying:

A is popular in the movies (or is a famous scientist).

A is a Buddhist (or a follower of any religion).

Therefore, Buddhism (or the religion mentioned) must be true, good, or right. x

2.4 In logical terms, this basis for doubt—like the 9th and the 10th bases for doubt [§3.1]—are all examples of an “appeal to authority” (*ad verecundiam*, “out of deference”).⁴² Here, the argumentation con is that since the words of holy scriptures say such and such position must be true. We need to carefully examine the context of the scriptural references, and the various meanings and connotations of such readings.

2.5 A related argumentation con is when we declare or assume that soap A is widely used (or religion A is widely accepted); therefore, it must be good, true or right. This is not a valid argument because there are a number of reasons that people buy such a soap (it is cheap, on promotion, the soap is most widely distributed, etc), or follow such a religion (people are born into it, or through social or cultural dominance, or they get palpable economic or political advantages, etc). This kind of argumentation is called “consensus gentium” (common consensus). [§3.1 (3) & comy]

3 PURPOSE OF THE DHARMA

3.1 In Buddhism, the Dharma is often referred to as a “path” (*magga*), which means that one has to walk on it towards a destination. In other words, the Dharma is a means of personal development and liberation. The **Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22) is an important discourse on the true purpose of religion: that the Dharma is to be properly used and not to be taken as good in itself. The Sutta contains 2 famous parables in this connection: the parables of the water-snake and of the raft.

3.2 In the **parable of the water-snake**, the Buddha warns against the misuse and abuse of the Dharma. “Without wisely examining the (true) purpose [or meaning] of those teachings with wisdom, they are not

⁴² See Shapiro 2011:80.

convinced of it [they fail to see its wisdom]” [Comy 3a(8)],⁴³ that is, they see the teachings through blind faith, or merely as an intellectual exercise, or for debating with others, or simply for showing off.

3.3 The parable of the raft points to the true nature of the Dharma as teaching. We make and use a raft simply to cross dangerous waters, and once we are safely on the other side, we have no more need for it. We are then reminded “to abandon even the Dharma, how much more that which is not Dharma!”⁴⁴ Even the Dharma has only *instrumental value*: its purpose is for bringing one to nirvana, which is of *intrinsic value* (good in itself).⁴⁵

Just as a careless water-snake catcher, wrongly grasping it by its coils or its tail instead of its head, is killed or greatly pained by being bitten by a water-snake, even so, those who “learn the Dharma only for the sake of criticizing others and for winning debates, do not enjoy the benefits for the sake of which one learns the Dharma. Those teachings, wrongly grasped by them, bring them harm and suffering for a long time to come.”⁴⁶

4 RELIGION IN OUR TIME

4.1 In our own time, there are two major categories of world religions and influential religious systems, namely, the book religions and the non-book religions, or more specifically, the word-based systems⁴⁷ and the *truth*-based systems. Buddhism is an example of a non-book truth-based system.⁴⁸ The main book religions are the Abrahamic systems: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in their various sects and denominations, and also the Indian religions, such as Jainism, the various Hindu denominations, and Sikhism. Of the Chinese religions, Confucianism is an example of a book-centred system, although it is more of a socio-ethical philosophy.

This categorization however is not so clear cut. In the Abrahamic system, for example, we have numerous groups that, although having high regard for their traditional scripture (the Torah, the Bible or the Koran), often look up to their own religious leaders, mostly charismatic personalities, for *religious interpretation and injunctions*, and it is these leaders who actually rule their lives. Such groups are effectively cults insofar as their members centre their lives around a living authority figure and often regard other systems and society at large or certain groups in an antagonistic manner.

4.2 In any case, whether the authority is based on a holy book (scripture) or on the leader’s word, the same doubtful point of “scriptural authority” applies. This is especially the case where the followers are not allowed to question such an authority, or can do so only in a limited or superficial way. Scriptures, after all, are man-made texts—edited, revised or authorized—of what is perceived or accepted as religious experience. Any

⁴³ D 22,10/1:133 @ SD 3.13.

⁴⁴ *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag’eva adhammā*. Comy takes *dhammā* here to mean “good states,” ie calm and insight (*samatha, vipassanā*), citing **Laṭutikôpama S** (M 66,26-33/1:455) as teaching the abandonment of attachment to calm, and **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38,14/1:260 f @ SD 7.10) as one of the abandonment of attachment to insight. Bodhi, however, is of the view that “*dhammā* here signifies not good states themselves, but the teachings, the correct attitude to which was delineated just above in the simile of the snake.” (M:ÑB 1209 n255). See Intro.

⁴⁵ **Ratha,vinīta S** (M 24) is a dialogue between Puṇṇa Mantāṇi,putta and Sāriputta on the true purpose of the Dharma in the spirit of the raft parable and discussing it in greater detail.

⁴⁶ D 22,10/1:133 f @ SD 3.13. Comy explains that this passage aims at showing the fault in merely gaining intellectual knowledge of the Dharma (as in Ariṭṭha’s case). The “good for sake of which one learns the Dharma” is the paths and fruits. (MA 2:106)

⁴⁷ Just as the Vedic brahmins believe that *śabda* (the revealed word) is preserved in the Vedas, Christians often believe that *logos* (God as word) is preserved literally in the Bible. Both *śabda* (a post-Buddhist Mimāṃsā Skt term) and *logos* (Gk) tr as “word.” Buddhism, on the other hand, seeks direct experience of truth (*sacca*, related to the word “such”) and reality (*tathā*, related to the word “that”): informed Buddhist practitioners are thus concerned with “suchness” and “thatness,” or more simply, with the “truly real” (*yathā,bhūta*) or true reality (not virtual reality).

⁴⁸ See SD 17.6(2.1).

scripture, aural or scribal, spoken or written, that is to be understood has to be interpreted and reinterpreted, and often enough, parts of it would be ignored, misunderstood or even forgotten. Charismatic religious figures are often those who selectively quote or spin their scripture for personal ends. We therefore need to go beyond the wood of *the letter* to see the tree of *the spirit*. This only comes from a direct experience of reality: if we are hungry, we need to take the meal ourselves.

§3.1 (5) “Do not go by pure reason” (*mā takka,hetu[,qāhena]*)

1 *Takka* is sometimes translated as “logic,”⁴⁹ but I think it is more closely related to *naya* (the following doubtful point, that of “inference”). The Buddha’s admonition *mā takka,hetu*, means that pure reason should not be taken to be fully reliable as a source of knowledge. Pure reason is theoretical or discursive speculation (such as, using logic alone or invoking causality), as opposed to practical reason (understanding the nature of conditionality),⁵⁰ that is, careful thinking for the sake of happiness here and hereafter, and as a means to spiritual liberation.

2 In the **Sandaka Sutta** (M 76), Ānanda speaks of 4 types of religions that are not necessarily false but are unsatisfactory (*anassāsika*). Such a teaching has 4 possibilities:

well reasoned,	true	(<i>sutakkitaṃ tathā</i>)
well reasoned,	false	(<i>sutakkitaṃ aññathā</i>)
ill reasoned,	true	(<i>dutakkitaṃ tathā</i>)
ill reasoned,	false	(<i>dutakkitaṃ aññathā</i>)

This means that the truth or falsity of an idea or teaching cannot be judged by the consistency of its reasoning alone. For, even a well reasoned idea may be false in the light of related facts, and an ill reasoned idea may be true from personal experience. Just as an idea accepted on the best authority may well be false [Comy 3a(1)], the soundness of reasoning is no guarantee of truth.⁵¹ Further investigation and direct knowledge are needed.⁵²

3 In the suttas, *takka* has two senses, which according to **Jayatilke** are as follows:

- (1) the kind of reasoning with which the theories, which were debated at this time, were defended or criticized, even if they may not have been in origin products of reasoning at all, or
- (2) the kind of reasoning with which the speculative, rational metaphysical theories were constructed and which the commentator has called “pure reasoning.” (1963:271 f)

In simple terms, we can call the first “critical reasoning” or “practical reasoning,” and the second “speculative reasoning” or “pure reasoning.” Both may have a rational basis, but while the former is *practical*, the latter tends to be *speculative*. The Buddha often applies the former, but clearly rejects the latter.

⁴⁹ As Bodhi does (2005:89).

⁵⁰ By “causality” here is the notion of attributing events to a single cause, even a first cause, and confounding causality and correlation, eg if I were to say that there is “something” (eg this world), therefore someone (God) must have created, I have confused a correlation (which I have projected) with causation [SD 35.1 (3.6)]. By “conditionality,” is meant that no event has a single cause or effect: reality works with numerous causes and effects, although we can, by way of expedience, examine a single link between a cause and an effect, as in dependent arising: see **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16. See also Reflection “Causes and conditions,” R305, Singapore, 2013.

⁵¹ See **Sandaka S** (M 76), SD 35.7 (3.1.3); also Jayatilke 1963:271 f.

⁵² For detailed discussion, see Jayatilke 1963:205 f, 271-276.

4 Pure reason (or “pure reasoning,” according to Jayatilleke), being theoretical, discursive and speculative, has, as a rule, no interest in or actually rejects spiritual inquiry, either because their proponents lack the tools for introspection or they simply have more mundane motives. Where pure reason is common (such as in scientific, economic or political thinking), the purpose is usually to work out some sort of universal system, to find some sort of global principle governing the universe, society or the country. As such, pure reason usually involves the “power mode” [Intro 3.3].

5 On a psychological level, “pure reason(ing)” is simply another term for mental proliferation (*papañca*), the latent tendency or habitual impulse, as a result of lust, ill will, and ignorance, to conceptualize and speculate about one’s sense-experiences.⁵³ As a modern western Buddhist puts it: “If humanity is suffering then pure reason is a symptom of this suffering not the means to its alleviation.” (Nagapriya, nd: 7). Buddhism, however, is not against reasoning in its critical form: in fact, it can be helpful in discerning good and bad, and choosing good and avoiding bad.

The point here is that the spiritually inclined mind might spontaneously be able to see the true nature of reality that lies beyond the realm of thought [reasoning] (*atakkāvacara*).⁵⁴ Throughout **the Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1) we find this stock passage at the start of the Sutta and in the 13 refrains following each of the 8 main standpoints (or sets) of 62 grounds for wrong views:

There are, bhikshus, other dharma, deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful and sublime, beyond the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be known by the wise, that the Tathagata, having realized for himself with direct knowledge, expounds to others—those who, rightly praising the Tathagata according to reality, would speak regarding these. (D 1,28)⁵⁵

It is because the Buddha’s wisdom is direct, total, and profound, going “beyond the sphere of reasoning,” that he is able to discern and explain all the 62 grounds for wrong views, the roots of human speculation.

Practical reason, on the other hand, aims at spiritual inquiry and is a more personal effort at self-understanding, even self-liberation. The practical reasoner, certainly in the Buddhist context, seeks to work out mental and social environments that conduce to personal development and the general good. Such an endeavour can of course serve one in the quest for self-awakening.

6 Points (5) and (6) seem to overlap. Possibly, (5) refers to a theoretical use of logic, a kind of personal reasoning without any real experience; whereas (6) refers to actually dealing with conditions and situations, and reasoning them out, we come to a logical conclusion. This possibility should be kept in mind as we go through the discussions on point (6), which follows.

§3.1 (6) “Do not go by inference (and deduction)” (*mā naya, hetu[, gāhena]*)

1 INFERENCE AS NAYA

1.1 In non-Buddhist systems, such as *Trairāśika* Ājīvikas and the Jains, the term *naya*, in the technical sense of “standpoint,” is a usage not found in the Pali Canon (Jayatilleke 1963: 273). Jayatilleke distinguishes between

⁵³ As a modern Buddhist puts it: “If humanity is suffering then pure reason is a symptom of this suffering not the means to its alleviation.” (Nagapriya, nd: 7)

⁵⁴ See **Mahā’padāna S** (D 14,3.1.2), SD 49.8.

⁵⁵ D 1,28/1:12, 1,52/1:22, 1,60/1:24, 1,66/1:28, 1,70.1:29, 1,73/1:30 (summary), 1,77.3/1:31, 1,80.3/1:32, 1,83.3/1:31, 1,92.2/1:36, 1,99.3/1:38, 1,100.3/1:39, 1,104/1:39 @ SD 25.2.

two kinds of inference: the inference without causation and the inference with causation.⁵⁶ The former kind of inference (without causation) is that of the non-Buddhist teachers and traditions. The Vedic conception of order in the universe, for example, was not a causal one, but based on primitive animistic beliefs.⁵⁷ The universe was ruled by *ṛta*, the course of things ruled by the god Varuṇa.⁵⁸

1.2 In the Buddhist context, *naya*, or more fully *naya,hetu*, has to do with proper logical reasoning by way of cause and effect. In **the Darī, mukha Jātaka** (J 378), for example, *naya* is used for “right inference”: “the wise one makes a right inference” (*nayaṃ nayati medhavi*, J 4:241) as opposed to *anaya*, “wrong inference”: “the foolish makes a wrong inference” (*anayaṃ nayati dummedho*).⁵⁹

2 INFERENCE AS ANVAYA

2.1 The *Critical Pāli Dictionary* (CPD) gives these meanings of **anvaya**: (1) series, lineage, succession; (2) successor, next, following; (3) ifc: following, descended from, dependent on; (4) (logical) connection, reasoning, inference, conclusion, consequence; (5) “positive concomitance.” This word is famously found in the term *dharm’anvaya*, by which Sāriputta, in **the Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28),⁶⁰ makes his lion-roar that the Buddha is “the best Buddha.” I have rendered it as “the drift of the Dharma,”⁶¹ or alternately, “by means of the Dharma,” that is, by inference through the Dharma.

Elsewhere, *dharm’anvaya* is found in **the Nāṇa Vatthu Sutta 1** (S 12.33)⁶² as “inferential knowledge” (*anvaye ñāṇa*),⁶³ which by way of retrospection (recollection of past lives) enables him to deduce the qualities of past Buddhas and infer the qualities of future Buddhas. Sāriputta means that his lion-roar is based on right inference (*anvaya*) through his understanding and realization of the Dharma as an arhat.

2.2 The Buddhist notion of inference (termed **anvaya**) is closely related to dependent arising. Inference can, in fact, be used in a positive way to enter the path of sainthood, that is, by way of “the knowledge of phenomena” (**dharme ñāṇa**) and “inferential knowledge” (*anvaye ñāṇa*). Both these terms are found in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33),⁶⁴ **the Nāṇa Vatthu Sutta 1** (S 12.33)⁶⁵ and **the Vibhaṅga** (Vbh §796/329). **The Nāṇa Vatthu Sutta 1** illustrates how inference (*naya*) is done so as to bring *spiritual growth* and *realization*, thus:

Bhikshus, when a noble disciple	
thus understands	<u>decay-and-death</u> (<i>jarā, maraṇa</i>),
thus understands	the arising of decay-and-death;
thus understands	the ending of decay-and-death;
thus understands	the way to the ending of decay-and-death.
—This is “ the knowledge of phenomena ” (<i>dharme ñāṇa</i>). ⁶⁶	

⁵⁶ See Jayatilleke 1963:443-464.

⁵⁷ See L S Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic*, London, 1945:293.

⁵⁸ See S Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* vol 1 1941:78 f.

⁵⁹ See Jayatilleke 1963:273 f.

⁶⁰ D 28,21/3:101 @ SD 14.14. Repeats in **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,1.17a/2:83), SD 9.

⁶¹ Here I follow the tr of PED 338b & Walshe, and guided by Comys which gloss *anvaya* as *anumāna* (inference) (DA 3:880, MA 3:352, SA 3:210).

⁶² S 12.33/2:58 @ SD 35.11.

⁶³ Cf SA 2:53 (on **Upanisā S**, S 12.23.4/2:30 @ SD 6.12) we can deduce *dharm’anvaya* to be “review knowledge” (*paccavekkhaṇā ñāṇa*), by which the arhat confirms his awakening.

⁶⁴ D 33,1.11(11)/3:226.

⁶⁵ S 12.33/2:58 @ SD 35.11.

⁶⁶ S:B 571 tr as “the knowledge of the principle.”

By means of this principle (*dhamma*) that is seen, known, immediately won, fathomed, he applies the method to the past and to the future thus:

“Whatever recluses or brahmins in the past

who directly knew	decay-and-death,
who directly know	the arising of decay-and-death,
who directly know	the ending of decay-and-death,
who directly know	the path to the ending of decay-and-death,

knew it in the very same way just as I do now.

Whatever recluses or brahmins in the future

who will directly know	decay-and-death,
who will directly know	the arising of decay-and-death,
who will directly know	the ending of decay-and-death,
who will directly know	the path to the ending of decay-and-death,

will know it in the very same way just as I do now.”

—This is “**the inferential knowledge**” (*anvaye ñāṇa*).⁶⁷ (S 12.33,17-20/2:57 f), SD 35.11

2.3 Bodhi points out⁶⁸ the significance of the key phrase of **the Ñāṇa Vatthu Sutta 1** here, “seen, understood, immediately attained, fathomed” (in connection with “a noble disciple”) [2.2], corresponds almost exactly to the terms used in the stock description of one who has “the Dharma eye” (*dhamma, cakḥhu*): “seen the Dharma, understood the Dharma, fathomed the Dharma,” thus:

“a noble disciple”: *diṭṭhena viditena akālikena pattena pariyogāḷhena*;⁶⁹

“one with Dharma-eye”: *diṭṭha, dhammo patta, dhammo vidita, dhammo pariyogāḷha, dhammo*.⁷⁰

“This implies,” concludes Bodhi, “that the Dhamma which the stream-enterer has seen is dependent origination, an inference additionally confirmed by the closing passage of the present sutta [the Ñāṇa Vatthu Sutta 1].”⁷¹ (S:B 754 n103; emphasis added.)

2.4 It is often misconceived that the direct knowledge of dependent arising is the unique quality of an arhat. However, this direct knowledge is *already* won by the streamwinner, that is, when one attains “penetration into the Dharma” (*dhammābhisamaya*). The arya’s knowledge of dependent arising, as mentioned above, has 2 aspects:⁷²

- (1) knowledge of phenomena (*dhamme ñāṇa*), that is, the direct perception of the relationships of each pair of factors of dependent arising in *the present*; and
- (2) inferential knowledge (*anvaye ñāṇa*) of this fixed order of phenomena that has occurred in *the past* and will occur in *the future*.

2.5 From the 2 discourses, **Ñāṇa Vatthu Suttas 1-2** (S 12.33-34),⁷³ we know that anyone who *comprehends dependent arising*, does so in just the same way as an arya (noble saint) does, albeit only in a theoretical way. However, when one gains this knowledge as a streamwinner, one is totally assured of the final goal: this is also

⁶⁷ Jayatilleke tr it as “inductive knowledge” (1963:443).

⁶⁸ S:B 754 n103.

⁶⁹ S 12.33,18/2:58 @ SD 35.11.

⁷⁰ Eg **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,2.22/1:110,14-15), SD 21.3.

⁷¹ S 12.33.36/2:59.

⁷² See S:B 525.

⁷³ S 12.33-34/2:56-60.

evident from **the Pañca Vera Bhaya Sutta** (S 12.41)⁷⁴ and the closing paragraph of **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.27),⁷⁵ **the Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 12.28),⁷⁶ **the Paṭhama Ariya,sāvaka Sutta** (S 12.49)⁷⁷ and **the Dutiya Ariya,sāvaka Sutta** (S 12.50).⁷⁸

2.6 The closing paragraph of **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.27) runs thus:

Bhikshus, when a noble disciple thus understands the condition (*paccaya*);⁷⁹

thus understands the arising of the condition;

thus understands the ending of the condition;

thus understands the way to the ending of the condition,

he is then called a noble disciple,

accomplished in view,

accomplished in vision,

who has arrived at this Sublime Dharma,

who sees this Sublime Dharma,

who is accomplished in the learner's knowledge,

who is accomplished in the learner's true knowledge,

who has entered the Dharma stream,

a noble one with penetrative wisdom,

who stands right before the door to the Deathless.

diṭṭhi,sampanno

dassana,sampanno

āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ

passati imaṃ addhammaṃ

sekhena ñāṇena amannāgato

sekhāya vijjāya amannāgato

dhamma,sotaṃ samāpanno

ariyo nibbedhika,pañño

amata,dvāram āhacca tiṭṭhati

(S 12.27/2:43. Cf S 12.28/2:45; S 12.49/2:78; S 12.50/2:79)

Now let us come down to earth again to examine the conventional understanding and usage of *naya*, *hetu* or inference, and logical reasoning.

3 DEDUCTION AND INDUCTION

3.1 Terminology

3.1.1 DEDUCTION

In modern philosophy, there are two forms of reasoning: deduction and induction (or, deductive logic or deductive inference, and inductive logic or inductive inference, respectively).

Deduction, in daily application, often refers to observing things which few others observe, and drawing important and surprising conclusions from those observations. This is the kind of “deductive powers” that the fictitious detective Sherlock Holmes often refers to.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ S 12.41/2:68-70 @ SD 3.3(4.2).

⁷⁵ S 12.27/2:43.

⁷⁶ S 12.28/2:45.

⁷⁷ S 12.49/2:78.

⁷⁸ S 12.50/2:79.

⁷⁹ “The condition” (*paccaya*), that is, each pair of links of dependent arising: this is the **Paccaya S** (S 12.27/2:43) theme; the other themes are as follows: **Bhikkhu S** (S 12.28/2:45): dependent arising (fourfold truth template); **Ariya,sāvaka S 1-2** (S 12.49-50/2:78 f): “the world” (*loka*).

⁸⁰ However, most of Holmes’ “deductions” in fact use inductive or abductive reasoning; very few are actually deductive in nature. There is nearly always *some* conceivable, even unlikely, way that his conclusions could have been wrong, a fact often parodied. **Abduction** is a syllogism (set of statements) in which the major premise is evident, but the minor premise, and therefore the conclusion only probable. It is a reasoning process that starts from a set of facts and derives their most likely explanations, which is common in hypothetical work in science and computing (where it is colloquially

In philosophy, deduction is used in a different sense. It is a valid argument in which it is impossible to assert the premises and to deny the conclusion without contradicting oneself. In this kind of reasoning, the **conclusion** is logically necessitated by, or reached from, previously known facts (the premises). If the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.

If a philosopher claims to have deduced conclusion r from premises p and q,
 he is saying that he has *inferred* r from p and q;
 he is claiming that p and q *imply* r (ie, he is claiming that, if someone affirmed both p and q, but denied r, that person would be asserting a self-contradiction).

Valid deduction: (1) All men are mortal. (2) The Buddha is a man. (3) Therefore, the Buddha is mortal.

Deductive reasoning may also be defined as an **inference** in which the conclusion is of no greater generality than the premise, or inference in which the conclusion is just as certain as the es. In simple terms, the conclusion is a specific case, one example of what is stated by the premise. It is important to note, however, that even if the deductive reasoning is logically correct, it may not always factually true, that is, it conflicts with our knowledge of the world or reality, for example:

If it is raining then the ground is dry. ×
 It is raining.
 Therefore the ground is dry.

3.1.2 VALIDITY AND TRUTH

At this point, we need to distinguish *validity* from *truth*. In a valid argument (using deductive reasoning), the need not be true. **Deductive reasoning** only requires that the conclusion follows logically from the premises. If the premises (or propositions) are true, then the conclusion must be true. Take this example (from Hospers 1967: 129)

All cows are green. ×
 I am a cow. ×
 Therefore, I am green. ×

Both the premises here are false, yet the conclusion is *valid*. As such, warns **Hospers**, it is important not to confuse validity with truth. *Propositions* are true or false; *reasoning* or argument is valid or invalid. The propositions in a valid argument may all be false, and the statements in an invalid argument may all be true. Deductive logic is the study of *validity*, not truth.

To know the truth, then, says Hospers, that a conclusion is true,
 (1) we need to know that the premises are true, and
 (2) the argument must be valid, that is, that the conclusion follows logically from the premises.

(1967:129)

referred to as an “inference to the best explanation”). Where an abduction is highly improbable, it is called an *apagoge* (“unaccountable”), sometimes known as *reductio ad absurdum* (Lat, “a reduction to absurdity”): eg, (1) When it rains the ground becomes wet. (Major premise). (2) The ground is wet (minor premise). (3) Therefore, it has rained (a conclusion that is only probable because the river, for example, could have overflowed onto the ground).

3.1.3 INFERENCE IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

3.1.3.1 In Western philosophy, **inference** simply means “the drawing of a conclusion,” whether valid (reasonable) or invalid (unreasonable). For example, Hooke’s law⁸¹ is *the rule that gives the elongation of a beam (an effect) when a force (the cause) is acting on a beam*.

- If the force and Hooke’s law are known, the elongation of the beam can be deducted.
- If the elongation and Hooke’s law are known, the force acting on the beam can be abducted.
- If the elongation and the force are known, Hooke’s law can be inducted.

Simply, inference is the act or process of deriving a conclusion based solely on what one already knows or believes.

There are 3 types of inference, thus:⁸²

- Deductive inference: from the cause and the rule, one finds the effect
- Abductive inference: from the rule and the effect, one finds the cause
- Inductive inference: from the cause and the effect, one finds the rule.

3.1.3.2 Induction or inductive reasoning, as such, is not a clear term, sometimes referring to reasoning other than the deductive, or, otherwise, it is a method of reasoning by which a general law or principle is inferred from observed particular instances.⁸³ In an argument in which the premises are true, then, it is probable that the conclusion will also be true.

The conclusion therefore does not follow with logical necessity from ythje premises, but rather with probability. For example, *every time we measure the speed of light in a vacuum, it is 3×10^5 miles a second. Therefore, the speed of light in a vacuum is a universal constant*. Inductibe reasoning usually proceed from specific instances to the general.⁸⁴

3.1.3.3 In simple terms, induction, as we have seen above, tries, working backwards, to find the rule (a truth) by inferring from the cause and effect.⁸⁵

Induction often entails *belief* in a statement (that it is “true”), so that the conclusion is *valid*. Take this notorious argument as an example:

I believe in God.	
I am saved.	×
Therefore those who believe in God are saved.	×

⁸¹ In physics, Hooke’s law of elasticity states that if a force (F) is applied to an elastic spring or prismatic rod (with length L and cross-section A), its extension is linearly proportional to its tensile stress σ and modulus of elasticity (E). The law assumes perfectly elastic behavior. It is named after the 17th century English physicist Robert Hooke (1635-1703). For a technical explanation, see http://ccrma.stanford.edu/~jos/pasp/Hooke_s_Law.html.

⁸² Simply, the rule is the first premise, the cause is the second premise, and the effect the third premise (conclusion).

⁸³ It is sometimes taught that deductive reasoning proceeds from the general to the particular, while inductive reasoning proceeds from the particular to the general. This is false—at least, this is not the way logicians use these terms. There are deductively valid arguments that proceed from the particular to the general (Raymond is happy, therefore someone is happy) and inductive arguments that proceed from the general to the particular (the natives of India are called Indians, therefore this Indian person is a native of India).

⁸⁴ A Almossawi, *Bad Arguments*, 2013:9.

⁸⁵ On the technical terms (tts) used in this section, see eg AW Sparkes, *Talking Philosophy*, 1991, index.

The first premise is clearly a *belief* and the second premise an *opinion*. The argument is *valid* but the conclusion is false [3.1.2]. Here again, we may relate one idea to another, but one idea need not bring about the other. In other words, **correlation is not causal condition**.

3.1.3.4 In ordinary speech, “infer” often functions as a synonym of “imply,” as in “My holy book says that if you are a nonbeliever, you will not be saved.” Careful philosophical thinking avoids this kind of usage. Implication is a relation between statements, but inference is not. Here again, we see a belief being used as a premise to draw a conclusion, an invalid one.

J S Mill, in his polemical study, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (1865: ch 14),⁸⁶ proposes that reasoning is a source from which we derive new truths. This is a useful proposal so long as we remember that not all reasoning is inference. So long as the reasoning is valid and true, new truths may be derived—and they should also be good and useful.⁸⁷

3.1.4 Wrong ideas about karma

3.1.4.1 The Mahā Kamma,vibhaṅga Sutta (M 136) gives valuable insight into the nature of wrong inference or, more exactly, wrong inductive inference, resulting in wrong views of karma. The Buddha tells Ānanda how someone good in meditation, having attained clairvoyance (“the divine eye”), has the following (mis)perceptions resulting in these improper (generally wrong) views:

In the Sutta itself, there are *2 more identical remarks* for each of these 4 views, that is, in each case the meditator further (a) declares that those who know thus are right, but those who know otherwise are wrong (which the Buddha rejects), and (b) “only this is true, all else is false” (which the Buddha rejects, too). The Buddha goes on to explain why he rejects most of them, approving *only two of them*:

In the case of (1):⁸⁸

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life]
 - (b) or, later on [in this life] he has
 - (c) or, at the time of death he has
- As such, after death, ...

done a bad deed that results in painful feelings;
done a bad deed that results in painful feelings;
undertaken and established a wrong view.⁸⁹
he re-appears in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Mill vehemently opposed the “intuitionist” philosophy of William Whewell and Sir William Hamilton, who held that our understanding was based on intuitively compelling principles rather than on general, causal laws, and that ultimately we need to understand the universe as a divine creation dictated by a rational deity. Mill’s attack on this philosophy reached vengeful height in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy*, which provoked vigorous controversy for some two decades, but is now the least readable of Mill’s works.

⁸⁷ For technical details, see *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (2nd ed) 1995: Inference.

⁸⁸ M 136,17/3:214 @ SD 4.16.

⁸⁹ These are the 3 kinds of karma classified according to time of taking effect. See **(Kamma) Nidāna S** (A 3.33/1:134-136), SD 4.14, on the causes and kinds of karma; cf **Nibbedhika,pariyāya S** (A 6.63.12c), SD 6.11. See also **Visuddhi,magga** where these 3 types of karma are respectively named as *diṭṭha,dhamma vedanīya kamma, upapajja,vedanīya kamma* and *apara,pariyāya vedanīya kamma*—and a 4th, *ahosi kamma*, lapsed or ineffectual karma (Vism 19.14/601); Vism:Ñ 19.14/696 n2. The first 2 kinds of karma may not have results if the conditions needed for their ripening are missing, or because of the presence of a stronger counteractive karma; as such, they are called *ahosi,kamma*: cf **Loṇa,phala S** (A 3.99), SD 3.5. The next birth actually depends on the dying person’s last thought-moment. As such, one’s dying thoughts should be to recollect or reflect on the good deeds one has done: giving, moral virtue, lovingkindness, etc. The **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62 @ SD 3.11) closes with the remark that for one who develops and often cultivates the Breath Meditation, “even the last breath leaves with your knowledge, not without it” (M 62,30/1:426)—that is, one dies mindfully with right view. See Vism 8.24/291 f. On academic attempts to show that orig there are only 2 kinds of karma (present and future), and its rebuttal, see Analayo 2005 at M 3:214. See also prec n.

In the case of (2):⁹¹

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life]
 - (b) or, later on [in this life] he has
 - (c) or, at the time of death he has
- As such, after death, ...

done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
undertaken and established right view.
he re-appears in a happy destination, in heaven.⁹²

In the case of (3):⁹³

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life]
 - (b) or, later on [in this life] he has
 - (c) or, at the time of death he has
- As such, after death, ...

done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
undertaken and established right view.
he re-appears in a happy destination, in heaven.⁹⁴

In the case of (4):⁹⁵

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life]
 - (b) or, later on [in this life] he has
 - (c) or, at the time of death he has
- As such, after death, ...

done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
undertaken and established wrong view.
he re-appears in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a
lower realm, in hell.⁹⁶

(M 136,17-20/3:214 f), SD 4.16

Perception	Conclusions
(1) He “sees” a person, immoral in every way, ⁹⁷ reborn in a suffering state.	(1.1) There is bad karma and its result. ✓ (1.2) All who are immoral go to hell. ×
(2) He “sees” a person, immoral in every way, reborn in a heaven.	(2.1) There is <i>no</i> bad karma. × (2.2) All who are immoral go to heaven. ×

⁹⁰ **Deva,datta**, for example, persuaded prince Ajātasattu to murder his own father, Bimbisāra (a streamwinner) (DA 1:135-137), and thrice attempted to murder the Buddha himself and once succeeded in wounding him, and caused a schism in the order (V 2:191-198)—these last two deeds are certain to lead to rebirth in hell. On Devadatta, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples* lecture 7: “The Buddha’s Bad Karma” (2002) §§5-14.

⁹¹ M 136,18/3:214 @ SD 4.16.

⁹² A good example here is that of the public executioner, **Tamba,dāṭhika Cora,ghātaka** (DhA 8.1), or Coppertoosh, who after a bloody career as a bandit, killed his own comrades and then became executioner of criminals for fifty years. He met the venerable Sāriputta whose teachings uplifted his mind, lightening the burden of his bad karma so that he attained heavenly rebirth (DhA 8.1/2:202 ff).

⁹³ M 136,19/3:214 f (SD 4.16).

⁹⁴ An example here is that of **rajah Pasenadi of Kosala**. The **Anāgata,varṃsa** says that he is a Bodhisattva and will become the 4th future Buddha (JPTS 1886:37). On Pasenadi, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples* lecture 8: “The Thundering Silence” (2002) §19.

⁹⁵ M 136,20/3:215 (SD 4.16).

⁹⁶ An example here is **Mallikā**, queen of king Pasenadi. She lived a virtuous life of giving, keeping the 5 precepts, and the 8 precepts and so on. However, in a moment of indiscretion, she had sexual intercourse with a dog in the bath-house. When the king suspected this, she conjured up an elaborate lie. These acts weighed heavily on her mind to her last moments. As a result she spent seven days in Avīci hell. However, her own habitual goodness then brought her rebirth in Tusita heaven (DhA 9.6/3:119-122).

⁹⁷ “Here, some person harms life, takes the not-given, indulges in sexual misconduct, speaks false words, speaks malicious words, speaks harsh words, speaks frivolous words, is covetous, has a mind of ill will, holds wrong view.” These are the 10 unwholesome course of action (*akusala kamma,patha*) (D 33,3.2(3)/3:269, 290; A 10.176,3-6/5:264-266).

(3) He “sees” a person, moral in every way, ⁹⁸ reborn in a heaven.	(3.1) There is good karma.	✓
	(3.2) All who are moral go to heaven.	×
(4) He “sees” a person, moral in every way, reborn in a suffering state.	(4.1) There is <i>no</i> good karma.	×
	(4.2) All who are moral go to hell.	×

Table 3.1 Possible conclusions regarding karma

(M 136,9-16/3:210-214), SD 4.16

3.1.4.2 From all this, it shows that logic and reasoning, even when based on “evidence” (meaning what are palpable and measurable by way of the physical senses) are not always satisfactory as sources of knowledge, especially “final knowledge” (*aññā*).⁹⁹ In most religious systems, however, there are *more speculation and wishful thinking* than logical reasoning, so that the situation is even more problematic.

3.2 Problems with Creator-God idea.

3.2.1 In the section on eternalism (*sassata, vāda*) of the **Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1,28-34), the Buddha explains —as the first 4 grounds for wrong view—how some accomplished meditators who are eternalists, on 4 grounds, proclaim—through *wrong inductive inference*—the self and the world to be eternal, thus:

- (1) through recollecting up to 100,000 of their past lives;
- (2) through recollecting up to 10 aeons (world-cycles) of their past lives;
- (3) through recollecting up to 40 aeons of their past lives; and
- (4) fabricating it through reasoning, having investigated it through mental inquiry, by way of their own intelligence, that is, the rationalist¹⁰⁰ and the investigator [experimenter].¹⁰¹

(D 1,28-34/1:12-17), SD 25.2

3.2.2 The Brahma, jāla Sutta (D 1), in its section on partial-eternalism (*ekacca, sassata, vāda*), gives another interesting example of *wrong inductive inference* in its explanation of how the Creator-God idea arose (that is, the 5th ground for wrong view). When the universe collapses (or devolves), beings here are mostly born in the Ābhas-sara [streaming-radiance] Brahmā world. When the universe re-evolves, the first being to re-arise (on account of his immense good karma) is Mahā Brahmā. Then, says the Sutta, “as a result of dwelling there all alone for so long, unrest, discontent and agitation arise¹⁰² in him, thus: ‘O that other beings might come here, too!’”¹⁰³

⁹⁸ “Here, some person refrains from harming life, refrains from taking the not-given, refrains from indulging in sexual misconduct, refrains from speaking false words, refrains from speaking malicious words, refrains from speaking harsh words, refrains from speaking frivolous words, is without covetousness, has a mind without ill will, holds right view.” These are the tenfold wholesome course of action (*kusala kamma, patha*) (D 33,3.2(3)/3:269, 34,2.3(5)/3:290; A 10.176,7-10/5:266-268).

⁹⁹ See **Sandaka S** (M 76), SD 35.7(3.1.3).

¹⁰⁰ *Takkī*, ie reasoners and logicians. See foll n.

¹⁰¹ *Vimamsī*, those who examine and investigate. Both the terms “rationalist” and “investigator” clearly refer to the academician, philosopher or scientist of our times. Here *takkī hoti vimamsī* may be taken as either a dvandva (a reasoner and an investigator) or as tatpurusha (a reasoner and investigator, ie one who investigates through reasoning). In fact, *takkī, vimamsī* may be taken as syn with *ākāra, parivittakka* (“rational investigation” or “investigative reasoning”). This is one of the 5 courses of knowledge, viz, faith (*saddhā*), approval (*ruci*), aural/oral tradition (*anussava*), investigative reasoning (*ākāra, parivittakka*), and reflective acceptance of a view (*diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti*) (M 95,14/2:170, 101,11/2:218, 102,15/1:234).

¹⁰² “[U]nrest, discontent, agitation arises,” *nibbusitattā* [Be *nivusitattā*] *anabhirati paritassanā uppajjati*. These 3 abstract nn are taken as a cpd; hence, their common verb is sg.

¹⁰³ This is an agitation arising on account of craving (*taṇhā, tasanā*): see 3.41.

Just then, other beings whose good karma have ripened, are reborn in the same universe, which leads Mahā Brahmā to infer that he has created them, since at his fiat, as it were, they have arisen. And these beings, too, noticing that Mahā Brahmā has arisen before them, surmise that he must have created them, proclaiming, “He must be Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be. By this Lord¹⁰⁴ Brahmā, have we been created.” The Sutta continues:

Now, bhikkhus, there is the case that a certain being, having fallen from that realm, comes here.¹⁰⁵

Having come to this world, he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. When he has gone forth into homelessness, by means of exertion, by means of striving, by means of devotion, by means of diligence, by means of right attention, he touches [attains] mental concentration, such that he recollects that past life, but recollects not what is before that.

He says thus:

‘We are created by Lord Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be.

He is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change: he will remain so just as eternity itself.

But we have been created by that Lord Brahmā and have come here [to this world]. We are impermanent, unstable, short-lived, subject to dying.’ (D 1,18-19/1:18), SD 25.2

3.2.3 The tone of this account is interesting and humorous: it does *not* say that the Creator-God idea is false, but that it is based on false inference. No moral judgement is made on such ideas, except that they are unsatisfactory (*anassāsikam*), that is, they provide no guarantee for spiritual liberation (simply because they are based on a false inference [Intro 5.2]. Understandably, **theology** (the study of God-ideas) and **theodicy** (rationalizing why God and suffering exist) are like attempts to force a square peg into a round hole.

4 FAITH IN BUDDHISM

4.1 Belief and faith

Because of the impossibility of the Creator-God idea, in the sense that there is no satisfactory way of proving that such a being exists, theologians like Anselm of Canterbury (1033/34-1109) understandably wrote: *Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo, quia, nisi credidero, non intelligam*. (“Nor do I seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand. For this too I believe, that unless I first believe, I shall not understand.”)¹⁰⁶ The Buddhist answer is clearly more satisfactory:¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Bhavam*.

¹⁰⁵ *Thānaṃ kho pan’etaṃ, bhikkhave, vijjati yaṃ aññataro satto tamhā kāyā cavitvā itthattaṃ āgacchati*. That is, that Brahmā dies and is reborn on earth.

¹⁰⁶ This was based on a saying of Augustine of Hippo (*crede ut intelligas*, “believe so that you may understand”) to relate faith and reason. It is often accompanied by its corollary, *intellego ut credam* (“I think so that I may believe”), and by Anselm’s other famous phrase *fides quaerens intellectum* (“faith seeking understanding”).

¹⁰⁷ This is one version of a common joke: “Philosophy is like being in a dark room without a candle and looking for a black cat. Metaphysics is like being in a dark room without a candle and looking for a black cat that isn’t there. Theology is like being in a dark room without a candle and looking for a black cat that isn’t there, and shouting ‘I found it!’” (Based on Ellen Rosenbaum)

“Nor do I seek to believe that I may understand, but I understand that I may believe. For this too I understand, that unless I first understand, I shall not *truly* believe.” (Anselm, 11th century)

One of the very serious problems with theology—studies about God and God-related ideas—is that they are rooted in words and imagination. We may cleverly put words together and be deeply convinced by them, but they are merely *words, words, words*, reflecting our own minds and needs, not true reality. Words ultimately do not prove anything, except reflect their user’s or listener’s intentions or delusions.¹⁰⁸

The key problem with such a theological statement, then, is that the *means* seems to justify the end: *believe* that you may understand. The point is whether such believing is worthwhile at all, unless one accepts that believing is good in itself. It is simply unsatisfactory to believe in something for which there is no workable proof whatsoever. As the saying goes, “seeing is believing.”¹⁰⁹

4.2 Wise faith

4.2.1 In the Buddhist case, however, the ten discourses of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (ch 25) admonishes that a disciple could either simply “believe” in—have *faith* in—the fact of impermanence, or he could examine it with wisdom. If this is kept up wisely as one’s spiritual practice, then one is assured of the path to liberation in this life itself, if not surely at this life’s very last moment.¹¹⁰

4.2.2 Here, faith, like every other early Buddhist teaching, especially when conveyed through language, is always *provisional*, as we are reminded, for example, by the parable of the raft [Comy 3a(4)2]. **The Caṅkī Sutta** (D 95), as we have seen [Comy 1.4(2)], presents a twelve-step training for the “final attainment of truth” (*saccānupatti*). The first step here is faith, acting as it were as a springboard to other higher qualities.

But this is not the “believe that I may understand” kind of faith, because it is actually *the result of some prior personal experience* (it is experiential), such as Sāriputta’s first meeting with Assaji, where the former’s faith arises in seeing the latter’s calm demeanour, or in the case of the Kālāmas themselves at the end of this Sutta [§18]. It is with this *wise* faith that the journey to awakening and liberation begins.

4.2.3 The point here is very simple yet universal: it is impossible to deny the *fact* of impermanence. But more important than that, the Buddha has found the way in which this awareness could actually lead to spiritual liberation, that is, either to accept it on faith, that is, *reasoned* or “rooted” faith (since it is an observable fact, rooted in reality), or after careful examination, that is, through wisdom (knowledge, not belief, based on personal experience). In short, it is wise faith, one that is *based on experience that is both valid and true* [3.1.3]. Buddhism is as simple and efficacious as that.¹¹¹

§3.1 (7) “Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning]” (*mā ākāra, parivita-kena*)

1 The word *ākāra* has two meanings: (1) “ways” (D 1:138, 139), and (2) “reason, reasoning” (M 1:320). **The Saṃyutta Commentary** explains ***ākāra, parivitaṅka*** thus: “For another, as he thinks, a certain thesis appears

¹⁰⁸ On the fact that we cannot simply define anything into existence, see SD 1.8 (4.2.2.6).

¹⁰⁹ However, for a philosophical discussion, see eg Daniel C Dennett, “Seeing is believing—or is it?” In K Akins (ed), *Perception*. Vancouver Studies in Cognitive Science 5; Oxford Univ Press, 1996:158-172. Download from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28762376_Seeing_is_Believing-Or_Is_It. See **Unanswered questions**, SD 40a.10 (7.2.2).

¹¹⁰ See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

¹¹¹ On how wisdom leads to wise faith, see Intro 6.

valid, and he concludes, ‘So it is,’ and accepts it by reasoned reflection (*ākāra, parivittakka*).” (SA 2:403).¹¹² This reasoning however is simply the result of habitual tendency, not through any systematic way of thinking (unlike the previous two methods: *takka, hetu* and *naya, hetu*, which are more systematic).

2 The second meaning of *ākāra* is *naya* [1], that is, “reason,” also applies to a statement in **the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta** (M 47), where it is said that if others were to ask a monk for “the reasons (*ākāra*) or grounds (*anvayā*) on which he says that ‘the Blessed One is fully self-awakened ...’,” he should be able to say, “Through direct knowledge in the Dharma in their various aspects, I have here come to the conclusion regarding certain dharmas [phenomena] by way of the Dharma, that I have inspiring faith in the Teacher to be fully self-awakened.”¹¹³

3 Such a belief is said to be “faith based on *reason* and rooted in *vision*” (*ākāra, vati saddhā dassana, mūlikā*) (loc cit), a stock passage referring to the streamwinner’s unshakable faith. This rational faith, which is both valid and true [3.1.3], arises through critical examination (*vīmaṃsā*) and partial verification is markedly different from the “rootless faith” (or blind belief, *amūlikā saddhā*, M 2:70) of the Vedic brahmins and theistic believers, and which does not bear critical examination.¹¹⁴

By itself, such a “reasoned faith” (*ākāra, vati saddhā*) does not amount of liberating knowledge (*aññā* or *ñāṇa*), but with “rooted vision” (*dassana, mūlika*), that is, a significant level of personal experience of reality, one can claim the validity of that knowledge for that level (namely, streamwinning). Again, by itself, reasoned faith cannot be a valid source of knowledge.

4 There is a kind of reasoning or argumentation that seems reasonable, but is actually intended to persuade or mislead us into accepting what is unacceptable, into seeing as possible what is really impossible, into taking what is imaginative or virtual to be real.

Sophistry is argumentation that is specious (plausible but false) or excessively subtle and intended to mislead others. Here’s a clever sophist statement: “The unbelievable is not always the improbable; the inconceivable is not always the impossible.” This may well be true in some ideas that we have been right and good in the first place, but which we have misunderstood, but we must be guarded against freely applying this kind of reasoning to things that are *really* improbably and impossible.

Something similar is called **casuistry**, that is, argumentation that is specious (plausible but false) or excessively subtle and intended to mislead others. It is a clever use of reasoning to trick others, using arguments that sound correct but are actually false. For example, we claim that it is better to kill one big animal than to eat a lot of fish or smaller animals, which is killing more beings; or, that we cannot take our wealth with us, why not send it ahead by donating it to the temple or the monastery.

Sophistry and casuistry often overlap, as they are both dishonest and false argumentation to mislead others, and are very common in religion, which we need to avoid and to guard against. The great French philosopher, Voltaire, ominously warns us: “**Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities.**”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Jayatilleke discusses *ākāra* as meaning “reason.” (1963:274).

¹¹³ *Tathā tathā’haṃ tasmim dhamme abhiññāya idh’ekaccaṃ dhammaṃ dhammesu niṭṭhaṃ agamaṃ satthari pasīdim sammā, sambuddho bhagavā...* (M 47,15-16/1:320), SD 35.6.

¹¹⁴ See Jayatilleke 1963:393.

¹¹⁵ Voltaire, alternative translation of passage from “Questions sur les miracles,” 1765.

§3.1 (8) “Do not go by acceptance of [by being convinced of] a view after pondering on it” (*mā diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khantiyā*)

1 The Aṅguttara Commentary explains this point as “after considering [after reflecting] and after being convinced of it because it agrees with the view that we hold” (*amhākaṃ nijjhāyitvā khamitvā gahita, diṭṭhiyā saddhiṃ sameti*, AA 2:305). In other words, we believe or are convinced of something because it agrees with our preconceived notions or bias. It is as if we like the colour green, and think that whatever is green in colour is true and good. We have a fixed idea, as it were, and we simply look around, accepting only those things that agree with it, not knowing whether any of them is true and valid or not.

2 Here *khamati* has been rendered in strong sense as “being convinced, persuaded, receptive.” Occasionally, when *khamati* occurs with *diṭṭhi*, it is usually translated as “approving of” or “agreeing with” some theory, such as *sabbam me khamati*, “all is agreeable to me” (M 1:497).¹¹⁶ In a word, we can call this our “intellectual receptivity,” in the sense of a bias, liking, or preference.¹¹⁷

3 More broadly, we can include the notion of “political correctness” here. We hold or accept a certain view on account of a favour we have enjoyed or are enjoying, or out of fear of impending loss or pain or punishment. **Political correctness**, here is defined as an attitude or policy of being careful not to offend or upset any person or group in society who are at a disadvantage (such as the “visually handicapped” for the blind), or believed to put us at a disadvantage (readily agreeing to someone of a higher “status,” being a yes-man). Ironically here, we might know that we are in the wrong, but circumstances are such that we are unwilling or unable to tell the truth. However, we should be perceptive enough to notice such a response, and know it for what it really is.

4 However, when *nijjhāna* (Skt *nidhyāna*, “wisdom or understanding”) is used with *khamati*—as in the phrase *nijjhānaṃ khamati*—it is usually translated as “to be convinced of,” or more freely, “fails to see its wisdom.” This passage, for example, appears in **the Alagaddūpama Sutta** (M 22):¹¹⁸

Without wisely examining the (true) purpose [or meaning] of those teachings with wisdom, they are not convinced of it [they fail to see its wisdom].

Tesaṃ te dhammā paññāya atthaṃ anupaparikkhataṃ na nijjhānaṃ khamanti.

(M 22,10/1:133), SD 3.13

5 A positive usage of *nijjhānaṃ khamati* is found in **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), thus:

Having heard the Dharma, he remembers [memorizes] it.¹¹⁹

He examines the meaning of the teachings that he has remembered.

¹¹⁶ See Jayatilleke 1963:215, 275.

¹¹⁷ See Tha:N 267 n1029.

¹¹⁸ Bodhi: “Not examining the meaning of those teachings with wisdom, they do not gain a reflective acceptance of them.” “**They are not convinced of its wisdom,**” *na nijjhānaṃ khamanti*, ie, “they see no wisdom in it.” They are not convinced because of their failure to understand that the purpose of moral conduct is to attain concentration, the purpose of concentration the attaining of insight, etc. (Mṭ qu by Nyanaponika 1974:35 n10). Here *nijjhāna* (Skt *nidhyāna*) means wisdom or understanding. This phrase, preceded by “having wisely examined the purpose [and/or meaning]” appears in **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70,20) and **Caṅkī S** (M 95,27). Cf “One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a Dhamma-follower” (S 25.1 & S:B 1099 n169).

¹¹⁹ This and next line: *Sutvā dhammaṃ dhāreti | dhātānaṃ dhammānaṃ atthaṃ upaparikkhati*: here *dhammaṃ* (sg) in the first line becomes *dhammānaṃ* (pl) in the second line. In the first line, *dhammaṃ* refers to the Teaching as a whole; in the second line, individual aspects or topics are meant.

When he has examined their meaning, he is convinced of the teachings after pondering on it.¹²⁰
Being convinced of the teachings after pondering on it, will-power [initiative] arises in him.

*Sutvā dhammaṃ dhāreti,
 dhatānaṃ dhammānaṃ atthaṃ upaparikkhati,
 atthaṃ upaparikkhato dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti,
 dhamma, nijjhāna, khantiyā sati chando jāyati.*

(M 70,23-24/1:478-480)¹²¹ @ SD 11.1

6 The idiomatic phrase, *dhammā ... khamanti* (*khamanti* in apposition to *dhammā*), literally translated “the teachings are convincing.” In the above context, translating this phrase idiomatically as “he is convinced of” fits it better than “he approves of,” which sounds weaker. Furthermore, this goes well with **the Aṅguttara Commentary** which explains this same line as “after consideration and after being convinced of it because it agrees with the view that we hold” (*amhākaṃ nijjhāyitvā khamitvā gahita, diṭṭhiyā saddhiṃ sameti*, AA 2:305). So here we see that thinking and reflecting are essential aspects of spiritual growth: as such, there is a positive counterpart of this doubtful point, that is, “he is convinced of the Dharma after pondering on it” [1.4(2)].

§3.1 (9) Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability (*mā bhavya, rūpatāya*)

1 The word *bhavya* comes from VBHŪ (to be, become) and *rūpa* means “having the nature of, fitting.” **Jaya-tilleke** explains that literally *mā bhavya, rūpatāya* would read “because of its having the nature of what ought to be,” or more freely, “because of its propriety or fittingness.” He adds:

It would mean the acceptance of a proposition on the grounds of its being specifically *fitting* or appropriate to a context or situation. Ethical theorists have sometimes advocated “fittingness” as a criterion of an action.¹²² According to them, an action would be right if it is the appropriate or proper action in the situation. It is a notion that could be extended to the field of truth. This interpretation of *bhavyarūpatā* though possible is unlikely, for it is too abstract a conception for the sixth century BC and for Indian thought in general, which loves the concrete rather than the abstract.

(Jayatilleke 1963:200f)

2 We do however find a significant number of examples in the Suttas where *bhabba* (an equivalent form of *bhavya*) referring to those “from whom a proposition is accepted rather than to the proposition itself” (loc cit). *Bhabba* (ie *bhavya*), in the sense of “suitable or capable,” qualifies persons in such instances:

<i>bhabbo abhinibbhidāya</i>	capable of piercing through (the egg-shell)	M 1:104=357
<i>bhabbo sambodhāya</i>	capable of self-awakening	M 1:357
<i>bhabbo anuttarassa</i>	capable of attaining the supreme	
<i>yogakkhemassa adhigamāya</i>	security from the yokes (of defilements)	M 1:357
<i>bhabbā te anta, kiriyāya</i>	capable of making an end of it	It 106

¹²⁰ *Nijjhānaṃ khamanti*, lit “insights are endured,” ie “capable of bearing insights”; idiomatic meaning “he is pleased with, approves of, finds pleasure in” (M 1:133 f; 479 f, 2:173, 175; S 3:225, 228, 5:377, 379; Vv 84.17). *Khanti* usu means “patience” but here it means “choice, receptivity, preference, acceptance.” The BHSD defines *kṣānti* as “intellectual receptivity; the being ready in advance to accept knowledge.” *Khanti* is often used in the Canon in this latter sense (see SD 12.13(2a) for refs). The phrase can also be freely rendered as “receptivity in harmony with true reality.” On *khanti* as “mental receptivity,” see **Aniccā S** (A 6.98), SD 12.13(3).

¹²¹ Cf A 4:336, 5:154. See also Jayatilleke 1963:275 f.

¹²² PH Nowell Smith, *Ethics*, Penguin, 1954:120 f, 186 f. [Jayatilleke’s fn]

bhabbo dhammaṃ viññātum
abhabbo katum

capable of knowing the Dharma
unable to do it

U 49¹²³
Sn p41

3 Such usages are also supported by the Commentary, for example, *ayaṃ bhikkhu bhabba,rūpo imassa kathaṃ gahetum yuttam*, “This recluse [monk] is capable: his statement can be accepted” (AA 2:305). As such, the phrase **bhavya,rūpatāya** may be translated as “by another’s seeming ability (or reliability, or competence.” In fact, Jayatilke notes, this would be in effect the same as verbal testimony (*āptopadeśa* or *āptavacana*) as a means of knowledge, as recognized in later Indian philosophical tradition. (loc cit)

4 In our own times, the doubtful point of going by another’s seeming ability would refer to uncritically accepting a view on account of the person’s *expertise* or *charisma*. As far as **expertise** is concerned, even experts do not always agree with one another, and the errors they commit tend to have more widespread and devastating effects than those of a non-expert!

5 Charisma (the attribution of familiar or attractive qualities to another) can influence one in 2 ways: firstly, emotional attachment can arise from familiarity with a person,¹²⁴ and more deleteriously, charisma leads to psychological transference, where one transfers or displaces an emotion or affective attitude from a familiar person (say, one’s father, husband, or partner) onto the teacher or speaker.¹²⁵ In either case, the celebrity worship could make one dysfunctional.¹²⁶ **Lakuṇṭhaka Bhaddiya** (“the dwarf monk”), in his Thera,gāthā, warns against accepting him on charisma, thus:

- 469** Those people who have judged [measured]¹²⁷ me by appearance
and who follow me by voice,¹²⁸
Overcome by desire and passion, they know me not.
- 470** The foolish one, surrounded by mental hindrances, neither knows the inside
Nor sees the outside—he is indeed misled by voice.
- 471** Who knows not the inside, but sees the outside:
Seeing only external fruits, he, too, is misled by voice.
- 472** Who knows the inside, and sees the outside:
Seeing without obstructions, he is not misled by voice. (Tha 469-472 ≠ A 2:71)

6 The Thera,gāthā Commentary explains the phrase “seeing only external fruits” (*bahiddhā,phala,dassavī*) as meaning “grasping only the fruits through grasping by way of inference” (*naya-g,gāhanena phala,mattam gaṇhanto*, ThaA 2:198). Such a person, misled by another’s external or physical qualities wrongly infers that they

¹²³ However, we also have *bhabba,rūpo*, U 79.

¹²⁴ **The Puggala-p,pasāda S** (A 5.250/3:270) warns against the dangers of being devoted to one person because, should the person (a monk) is suspended by the order, or made to sit at the edge of the assembly, or leaves for a distant place, or leaves the order, or dies, one would then not attend to other monks (or teachers), as a result of which one neglects the Dharma, and as a result one’s personal development is negatively affected. [Comy 1.4(2)]

¹²⁵ Such an emotion or affective attitude can also be transferred to a God-figure, which is actually very common in God-centred religions. See Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h.

¹²⁶ See eg “Thin line between celebrity worship and fatal attraction,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 15 Aug 2003: 16 <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/digitised/issue/straitstimes20030815-1>; “Celebrity worship addictive: study,” *The Age* (Australia) 14 Aug 2003..

¹²⁷ “Have judged,” *pāmiṃsu*, lit “(they) measured.”

¹²⁸ “Who follow me by voice,” *ye ca ghosena anvagū*, alt tr “who follow me by my voice.”

entail wholesome inner qualities. Or, worse, one is simply attracted merely to another's external or physical qualities for what they are. In either case, one's mind is clearly dominated by lust and delusion.¹²⁹

7 In logical terms, this—like the next or 10th basis for doubt [§3.1]—is an example of an “appeal to authority” (*ad verecundiam*, “(appeal) to revered authority”).¹³⁰ This is an argumentation that just because someone is learned, well-qualified or charismatic, his opinion on a certain matter must be right, despite everything else. This includes accepting a personal opinion, such as from a famous teacher, as being true without examining and substantiating its veracity.

§3.1 (10) “Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse is our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’]” (*mā samaṇo no garû ti*)

1 The sentence *samaṇo no garu* may be rendered in 3 ways:

- (1) “our (*no*) recluse [holy man] is a respected teacher (*garu*)”;
- (2) “our recluse is respected (*garu*)”; or
- (3) “(this) recluse is respected by us (*no*).”

Sentence (1) reflects partisanship or patronage, that he is *our* recluse, not some other person, that one regards as one's teacher: this could have been spoken by a monk about another. (2) is more general, and refers to any recluse, not necessarily one's teacher, but who is generally well-respected. (3), like (1), shows a certain bias between speaker and recluse. All three interpretations reflect the person's *status*, either due to charisma or as one's teacher. In other words, “recluse” (*samaṇa*) can refer to a monk, a nun, any holy man, or anyone teaching on religion or religion-related matters. All three interpretations point to the logical fallacy of “appeal to authority” (*ad verecundiam*, “(appeal) to revered authority”).¹³¹

2 On the whole, we can surmise that this doubtful point is against the unconditional acceptance of a statement on account of the speaker's prestige or charisma. As such, it is similar to the previous doubtful point, point 9. However, while point 9 (*mā bhavya, rūpatāya*), refers to a person's ability or intrinsic worth, this point (10) (*mā samaṇo no garu*) merely refers to his prestige, a point clearly discerned in the suttas. A teacher or speaker, for example, could be popular and respected but is not Dharma-centred in his teaching; or the audience is incapable of discerning good or bad qualities in him (or her).

3 In the **Dhamma, kathika Sutta** (A 4.139 = Pug 4.7), the Buddha lists 4 types of Dharma speakers:

- (1) one who speaks little but on what is irrelevant (*asahita*) (to the spiritual development), and the audience is unskilled (*akusala*) in discerning it;
- (2) one who speaks little and on what is relevant (*sahita*), and the audience is skilled (*kusala*) in discerning it;
- (3) one who speaks much but on what is irrelevant, and the audience is unskilled in discerning it;
- (4) one who speaks much and on what is relevant, and the audience is skilled in discerning it.

(A 4.139/2:138; Pug 4.7/42), SD 46.10

¹²⁹ See **The teacher or the teaching?** SD 3.14(6).

¹³⁰ See Shapiro 2011:80.

¹³¹ See Shapiro 2011:80.

4 A classic application of this doubtful point is found in the **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38), where it is said, “our teacher is respected; we speak out of respect for our teacher” (*satthā no garu, satthu,gāravena ca mayam vādema*).¹³² As this is directly related to this point, let us look at the whole passage in context. The Buddha is admonishing the monks against Ariṭṭha’s wrong view that sexual pleasure is not against the Teaching. The Buddha explains the nature of consciousness, of the body, of food (how the body and mind are sustained), dependent arising, and not speculating about oneself. Finally, he goes on to explain the true measure of wisdom:

4 “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you speak thus:

‘The teacher [Gotama] is respected by us.’¹³³ ‘We speak as we do out of respect for the teacher?’”¹³⁴

“No, bhante.”

24.2 “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you speak thus:

‘The recluse [Gotama] says thus, and we speak thus following the word of the recluse?’”¹³⁵

“No, bhante.”

24.3 “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you turn to another teacher?”

“No, bhante.”

24.4 “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you resort to¹³⁶ the observances [rules], strange arguments, and auspicious and portentous rites and practices¹³⁷ of common [worldly] recluses and brahmins, taking them as the essence [the heart of the holy life]?”

“No, bhante.”

24.5 “Do you speak only of what you have known, seen¹³⁸ and understood for yourselves?”

“Yes, bhante.”

25 “Good, monks! So have you been guided by me with this Dharma, seen here and now [to be realized in this life], timeless, for one to come and see, accessible [leading onward], to be personally known by the wise.

For it is in reference to this that it has been said:

‘Monks, this Dharma is seen here and now, timeless, for one to come and see, accessible, to be personally known by the wise.’” (M 38,24-25/1:265), SD 7.10

5 In the suttas, the word **samaṇa** (“recluse,” sometimes translated as “monk”) generally refers to those following the religious life who are now of the Vedic tradition, as in the common term, *samaṇa,brāhmaṇa*

¹³² M 38,24/1:265 @ SD 7.10.

¹³³ This and the next sentence: *satthā no garu, satthu,gāravena ca mayam vādema*. “The teacher is respected by us,” *satthā no garu*, alt tr: “Our teacher is respected/respectable.” Comy glosses *garu* (“respected”) here means *bhārika* (“grievous, burdensome, to be followed unwillingly,” MA 2:309).

¹³⁴ The two assertions here (§24.1+2) are conflated forming the last of the 10 “doubtworthy positions” (*kaṅkhāniya-ṭṭhānā*) of **Kesaputtiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4, where it is not regarded as a valid source of spiritual knowledge (A 3.65,-3.2/1:189)

¹³⁵ “And we speak at the instruction of the recluse,” PTS Be Se *samaṇā ca na ca mayam*; Ce (Buddha Jayanti) *samaṇa,vacanena ca mayam*. Here, Bodhi proposes that the latter is the better reading, which I follow. “The recluse” here is the Buddha.

¹³⁶ “Would you resort to,” *paccāgaccheyyātha*, or “would you return to, fall back on.”

¹³⁷ “The observances [rules], strange arguments, and auspicious and portentous rites and practices,” *vata,kotūhala,maṅgalāni*. The word *kotūhala* or *kutūhala* here is probably confused with *kolāhala*, “tumult, chaos.” *Kotūhala*: “eagerness, excitement; curiosity; excited talk, vehement discussion.” However, as a cpd with the prefix *-maṅgalika*, the reading should be *kotūhala* or *kutūhala*, thus *kotūhala,maṅgala* (“auspicious and portentous rites and practices”) (A 3:439; J 1:373). Cf A 3:206, 439. See A:H 3:151 n4.

¹³⁸ “Seen,” *diṭṭham*, ie seen with the eye of wisdom (*paññā,cakkhu*) (MA 2:309).

(“recluses and brahmins”),¹³⁹ and *samaṇa* is often applied to the Buddha,¹⁴⁰ or to recluses or religious in general.¹⁴¹ Due to the proliferation of religious teachers during the Buddha’s time, it is difficult to know who is wise and accomplished, and who foolish or false: so one has to be wisely discerning in listening to teachers and teachings.

6 SPIRITUALITY AS A STATE, NOT STATUS

6.1 The problem is more complicated today, where almost any kind of information, especially Buddhist teachings, is easily available in recorded, printed and digital forms, and practically anyone can speak for Buddhism. In the post-industrial society, where everything, including people, can be measured, **status** (religious titles, academic qualifications, wealth, power, charisma) become tokens of good karma, respectability and devotion.

Hence, in the spirit of the Sutta, we should not see a teacher or monastic as being proficient merely because of social status, economic success, academic qualification or charismatic personality. Instead, *we should discern whether the teaching or information given is relevant and helpful for Dharma-spirited personal development*. We must judiciously study such persons whether they measure up to the moral virtue and wisdom they preach. If not, we must avoid them so that we do not give them the wrong message that we accept them despite their falsity.¹⁴²

6.2 A basic guideline for teaching Dharma is given as follows in **the Udāyī Sutta** (A 5.159):

- (1) One should talk on Dharma in a progressive (gradually advanced) manner (*ānupubbi,kathā*).
 - (2) One should speak explaining and illustrating the meaning of teachings and the goal of the Dharma (*pariyāya,dassāvī*).
 - (3) One should teach out of compassion (*anudayataṃ paṭicca*).
 - (4) One should teach not for worldly gain (*na āmisantaro*).¹⁴³
 - (5) One should teach neither harming oneself nor others (*attānañ ca parañ ca anupahacca*).¹⁴⁴
- (A 5.159/3:184), SD 46.1

7 In **the Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta** (A 3.123), and again, but briefly, in **the Mahā Sakul’udāyī Sutta** (M 77), the Buddha explains that through his knowledge and vision, he teaches the Dharma in these 3 ways:

Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma with direct knowledge (*abhiññā*),¹⁴⁵ not without direct knowledge.

¹³⁹ V 2:295; D 1:5, 2:150; A 1:110, 173 f; It 64; Sn 189; or as opposing parties: D 1:13; It 58, 60; Sn p90; V 1:12, 2:110.

¹⁴⁰ As *samaṇa Gotama*, very commonly found throughout the 4 Nikāyas, eg D 1:3; M 1:23; S 1:28; A 1:64; Sn p91, 99; V 1:8, 350.

¹⁴¹ D 1:5, 2:150, 3:16, 95 f, 130 f; S 1:45; A 1:67, 110, 173 f; Dh 184, 189; It 64; V 2:295.

¹⁴² **Nagara,vindeyya S** (M 150) reminds us to neither respect nor support those, esp monastics and teachers, who are still filled with greed, hate, delusion (SD 59.11).

¹⁴³ In a capitalist money-based economy, this point needs to be carefully discerned. In principle, no fees should be charged for Dharma talks, but donations are given by way of appreciation (*muditā*) and merit-making (*puñña*). However, it is common practice that participants have to pay for attending a course or a seminar so that expenses are covered. In the case of full time lay Dharma teachers or speakers, too, in principle, there should be no charge for Dharma talks, but if necessary a fair amount could be stated as “suggested donation,” so that the audience are free to give what they can or even not at all if they are unable to.

¹⁴⁴ For example, not exalting oneself and belittling others. (AA 3:293)

¹⁴⁵ “Direct knowledge” (*abhiññā*), also called “higher knowledge,” of which there are six (*cha-lābhiññā*) are given in detail in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,87-98/2:77-86), SD 8.10. They are: (1) psychic manifestations (*iddhi,vidhā*); (2) the divine ear (*dibba,sota*); (3) mind-reading (*para,citta,vijānanā*); (4) recollection of past lives (*pubbe,nivāsānussati*); (5) the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*); and the most important is (6) the destruction of the influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), ie the destruction of the

Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma with proper cause and reasoning (*sa,nidāna*),¹⁴⁶ not without proper cause and reasoning.

Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma accompanied by wonders (*sappāṭihāriya*), not without wonders.¹⁴⁷

As such, bhikshus, because I teach the Dharma based on direct knowledge, not without direct knowledge ... with proper cause and reasoning, not without proper cause and reasoning ... with wonders, not without wonders, my advice should be followed (*karaṇīya*), my teaching should be followed.

And this, bhikshus, is enough for you to be content (*tuṭṭhiyā*), enough for you to be gratified (*attamanatāya*), enough for you to be joyful (*somanassāya*)—

Fully self-awakened is the Blessed One.

Well-taught is the Dharma [the true teaching].

Well-conducted is the Sangha [the holy community of saints]. (A 3.123/1:276), SD 11.10

8 As clearly stated in **the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta** (M 47), the Buddha himself invites us to examine and test him for ourselves to see if he is truly awakened and liberated [Intro 6]. We are not only to measure him by the excellence of his teachings, but also that he lives up to his teachings. This investigation can be done by way of critically studying the Buddha's life (from the suttas) and his teaching style. If the Buddha himself invites us to examine him, it surely behooves us to investigate other teachers, especially those we choose as our own. After having known that “as they say so they do, as they do so they say” (*yathā,vādī tathā,kārī, yathā,kārī tathā,vādī*),¹⁴⁸ we can live by their teachings, assured that they are reflective of the true Dharma, conducive to spiritual development and liberation. The rule of thumb is that a Dharma talk should be conducive to spiritual development.

9 In **the (Pañcaka) Thera Sutta** (A 5.88), the Buddha warns us that even when an elder monk is of long standing, well known, a recipient of generous donations, or deeply learned, “but is of wrong view and deviant vision.” Such an elder is not only wrong, but would not benefit anyone at all. The positive qualities here must also be attended by right view and non-deviant vision—he would then benefit the many, both gods and humans.¹⁴⁹

§3.2 (1) “When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas, ... ”

This whole section [§3b] is completely absent from the Chinese version [SD 35.4b]. This omission is probably due to transmission error.

The Pali text here is *yadā tumhe Kālāmā attanā'va jāneyyātha*. The Buddha's criterion for rejecting views and ways of knowing, as we can see, is *pragmatic*, but as we shall see in the following passage, it is also *morally ethical*. He is not concerned with philosophical ethics, but with the practical application of the moral life as a basis for further personal development. The appeal here is clearly not to faith, but to wise inference through personal experience and observation. The passage continues as follows:

sense-desires (*kām'āsava*), of becoming (*bhav'āsava*), of views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), and ignorance (*avijj'āsava*) (Vbh 334, cf S 2:121) which accompanies the attainment of awakening or arhathood.

¹⁴⁶ “With proper reasoning” (*sa,nidāna*), ie showing cause and effect, or causality (*sappaccaya*) (AA 1:374).

¹⁴⁷ That is, by way of reversing contrary (negative) qualities (*paccaṇṇika,paṭiharaṇena sappāṭihāriyam eva katvā kathemi*, AA 2:374). The wonder or miracle (*pāṭihāriya*) here is of course that of instruction (*anusāsani,pāṭihāriya*), that is, the miracle of conversion for bad to good, as mentioned in **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,8/1:214), SD 1.7.

¹⁴⁸ **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,11/2:224, 19.26/229); **Pāsādika S** (D 29,29/3:135); **Loka S** (A 4.23,3/2:24 = It 4.13/122); cf Sn 359; **Kakkāru J** (J 326/4:89).

¹⁴⁹ A 5.88 (SD 40a.16).

§3.2 (2) “These things are unwholesome ... blamable ... censured by the wise ... fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering.”

1 The Pali text here is *ime dhammā akusalā, ime dhammā sāvajjā, ime dhammā viññū, garahitā, ime dhammā samattā samādinna ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti*’ti: *atha tumhe Kālāmā pajaheyyātha*. At this point, both the Buddha and the Kālāmas have agreed to a common standard of moral virtue, that is, to say, unwholesome nature and actions have to be rejected for the following reasons.

2 “They are blamable” (sāvajja)

2.1 This means that their action entails a breach of the precept. This refers to moral fear (*ottappa*),¹⁵⁰ that is, an *other-regarding* moral sense that one’s actions affect others, and as such are morally efficacious. Therefore, one is responsible for one’s karma.

2.2 “**They are censured by the wise**” (*viññū, garahita*), that is, disapproved by others, especially, such awakened beings as the Buddha and so on (Nm 2:422). This refers to moral shame (*hiri*),¹⁵¹ that is, a *self-regarding* moral sense, or how others would think of one (for example, that our lack of moral virtue would lead to a loss of respect from others).

2.3 “**They bring about harm and suffering**” (*ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti*), or literally, “they bring about what is not useful (*ahita*) and what is unsatisfactory (*dukkha*).” The humble word *hita* is very interesting: it is an adjective in the form of a past participle of the verb *dahati*, “he puts down, places,” as in the following examples:

<i>mittato daheyya</i>	“would consider (him) a friend”	(S 3:113);
<i>cittam dahati</i>	“he fixes the mind (on an object)”	(A 4:239); and
<i>bālaṃ dahanti mithu añña-m-aññaṃ</i>	“they regard one another as fools”	(Sn 825).

As such, *hita* is often taken to mean “useful, suitable, beneficial, friendly.”¹⁵² As a neuter noun, it means “benefit, blessing, good”;¹⁵³ and in later times, as a noun, it takes on the meaning of “friend, benefactor” (Mahvs 3, 37).

¹⁵⁰ “Moral fear,” *otappa*. The term *ottappa* is derived from *apa* + *√TRAP* (to be abashed) [Skt **āpatrapya* > *apatrapā* (Trenckner)]. Andersen suggests that this etym must be preferred to that of Childers: **autappya* > *uttāpa*, *ut* + *√TAP* (heat) (PG 62). Edgerton (BHSD) has *apatrāpya* and the cpd *hrīr-apatrāpya* (P *hiri, ottappa*). The Abhidhamma def moral shame as “to be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed of, to be ashamed of performing bad and unwholesome deeds” (Pug 24); cf Dhs:R 18 f. It is one of the 7 noble treasures (*ariya, dhanāni*, DA 2:34; ThaA 240; VvA 113), ie treasures of generosity (*cāga, dhanāni*, D 3:163, 251; A 4:5; VvA 113; cf A 3:53): faith, moral conduct, moral shame, moral fear, learning, generosity, wisdom. Cf Sn 77, 462 (= D 1:168), 719. According to Vism, the proximate cause for moral shame is self-respect, while for moral fear it is respect for others. Out of self-respect (*attāna garu katvā*), one, like the daughter of a good family, rejects bad-doing through *moral shame*. Out of other-respect (*paraṃ garu katvā*), one, like a courtesan, rejects bad-doing through *moral fear* (Vism 14.142/464 f). Moral shame is often paired with moral fear (*ottappa*) (eg M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73), and, as the foundation for morality, called “the world-protectors” (*loka, pāla*, A 1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional society. The former is sometimes known as self-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the *shame* the deed entails), while the latter as other-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the healthy *fear* of karmic repercussion). As such these two actions are known as the two bright states that protect the world, if not for which “one would neither respect one’s mother, nor one’s mother’s sister, nor one’s brother’s wife, nor one’s teacher’s wife....” (A 1:50). [In his tr, Ñāṇamoli renders *hiri* as “conscience,” but apparently mistranslates *ottappati* as “is ashamed” and *ottappa* as “shame,” Vism:Ñ 524 f.] See **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9/1:50), SD 2.5.

¹⁵¹ “Moral shame,” *hiri* (Skt *hrī*) ie, a sense of disgust with evil. See prec n.

¹⁵² D 3:211 f; A 1:58, 155 f, 2:191; Dh 163.

2.4 This third quality clearly has to do with “heedlessness” (*pamāda*). In fact, we find such a triad of moral shame, moral fear, and heedlessness, in **the Abhabba Sutta** (A 10.76):

They are lack of moral shame, lack of moral fear, and heedlessness.¹⁵⁴ Without giving up these 3 things, monks, one would be unable to give up disrespect, intractability¹⁵⁵ and bad friendship.
(A 10.76,20/5:146), SD 2.4

“Heedlessness” (*pamāda*), is wrong conduct of the three doors (the body, speech, and the mind) and being habitually subjected to the physical pleasures of the five senses (Vbh 846/350), that is, not working for one’s spiritual development.

2.5 Those under the control of the 3 unwholesome roots—greed, hate, and delusion—“overcome by greed, ... by hatred, ... by delusion, his mind controlled by it, will destroy life, take what is not given, violate the women of others, and tell lies, and he will also make others do likewise, which will bring about harm and suffering for a long time.” That is, they tend to break the five precepts [§§4-6]. But those who are not under the power of these three roots—those who cultivate the non-greed (charity), non-hate (lovingkindness) and non-delusion (wisdom)—are unlikely to break the 5 precepts [§§10-12]. Keeping well to these precepts, they are very unlikely to be reborn in subhuman realms.

3 Criteria for the true Dharma

3.1 Such an admonition is given to the Kālāmas as *lay people*. On a higher level, the Buddha has given various teachings as criteria for the True Teaching. Throughout the Nikāyas, such as in **the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta** (D 9), the Buddha declares that he does not teach those things that do not conduce to “revulsion [disillusionment],¹⁵⁶ to dispassion [fading away of lust], to cessation (of suffering), to inner peace [the stilling of defilements], to direct knowledge (of the four noble truths), to awakening, to nirvana,”¹⁵⁷ but he teaches the 4 noble truths because they conduce to these states.”¹⁵⁸

3.2 Similarly, when **Upāli** requests a “Dharma in brief” on which to reflect during his solitary retreat, the Buddha, in **the Nibbidāya Sutta** (A 7.79), admonishes thus:

This is what, Upāli, you should know regarding the Dharma:

“These things bring about	
total revulsion [disillusionment], ¹⁵⁹	<i>ekanta,nibbidāya</i>
dispassion [fading away of lust],	<i>virāgāya</i>
cessation (of suffering),	<i>nirodhāya</i>
inner peace [the stilling of defilements],	<i>upasamāya</i>

¹⁵³ V 1:4; A 2:96 f, 176; It 78; Sn 233.

¹⁵⁴ “Heedlessness,” *pamāda*, ie, wrong conduct of the doors (body, speech and mind) and being habitually subjected to the 5 strands of sense-pleasures (Vbh 846/350), ie not working for one’s spiritual development.

¹⁵⁵ “Intractability,” *dovacassatā*, that is, not caring, intractability for admonition, being unresponsive to one’s words (V 4:113 = 185 = Dhs 1325 = Vbh 901/359).

¹⁵⁶ On the meaning of **revulsion** (*nibbidā*), see explanation of (5) “the knowledge of the contemplation of revulsion” under (6) “the purification by knowledge and vision” in SD 15.1(11).

¹⁵⁷ See **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,20/1:136 f), SD 3.13 where an eternalist (such as a Creator-God believer) despairs at such a notion.

¹⁵⁸ D 9,28/1:189 @ SD 7.14.

¹⁵⁹ On the meaning of **revulsion** (*nibbidā*), see explanation of (5) “the knowledge of the contemplation of revulsion” under (6) “the purification by knowledge and vision” in SD 15.1(11).

direct knowledge (of the four noble truths),
awakening,
nirvana.

abhiññāya
sambodhāya
nibbānāya saṁvattanti

Of such things, you can be certain:

“This is the Dharma; this is the Vinaya [Discipline]; this is the Teacher’s Teaching.”

(A 7.79/4:143)¹⁶⁰

3.3 A more detailed version of this “Dharma in brief,” that is, a set of criteria for the True Teaching, is given by the Buddha to **Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī**, on her request for a topic of reflection for her solitary retreat, as recorded in **the Vinaya** (Cv 10.5) and **the (Gotamī) Saṅkhitta Sutta** (A 8.53), thus:

This is what, Gotamī, you should know regarding the Dharma: “These things

bring about dispassion, not passion	(<i>virāgāya saṁvattanti no sarāgāya</i>);
bring about detachment, not attachment	(<i>visaṁyogāya saṁvattanti no saṁyogāya</i>);
bring about lessening (of karma), not accumulation	(<i>apacayāya saṁvattanti no ācayāya</i>);
bring about having fewer wishes, not many wishes	(<i>appicchatāya saṁvattanti no mah’icchatāya</i>);
bring about contentment, not discontent	(<i>santuṭṭhiyā saṁvattanti no asantuṭṭhiyā</i>);
bring about solitude, not socializing	(<i>pavivekāya saṁvattanti no saṅgaṇikāya</i>);
bring about arousing of energy, not laziness	(<i>viriy’ārambhāya saṁvattanti no kosajjāya</i>);
bring about frugality, not luxury	(<i>subha, ratāya saṁvattanti no dubbha, ratāya</i>).”

Of such things, you can be certain:

“This is the Dharma; this is the Vinaya [Discipline]; this is the teacher’s teaching.”

(A 8.53/4:280 f = Cv 10.5 @ V2:258 f)

3.4 In short, false Dharma is the Buddhism of greed, the Buddhism of hate, and the Buddhism of delusion. Examples of the false Dharma are very common, and on noticing them, one should keep well clear of them, unless one has the spiritual strength to compassionately and wisely correct them. Here are some local “shadows” cast by **false Dharma**,¹⁶¹ that is to say:

The Buddhism of greed: Monastics breaking the celibacy rule or handling money;¹⁶² money-centred Buddhism; structured fees for blessings and prayer for the dead; favouring rich and influential devotees and neglecting the “lesser” devotees.¹⁶³

The Buddhism of hate: Labelling other groups as “inferior” (*hīna, yāna*, etc); the conceit that only one’s meditation works and others do not; regarding those one dislikes as being unamenable (“cannot change”) (lacking in compassion); the conceit, “I keep the precepts better than you do”; showing respect to others according to status, skin, etc (measuring others).

The Buddhism of delusion: Seeking refuge outside of oneself (such as spirits, amulets and relics); relying on others (including the teacher) to be “saved” (a place reserved in heaven, etc); worshipping relics without wisdom and without practising the Dharma;¹⁶⁴ doing “good

¹⁶⁰ This is stock: D 1:189, 2:251; A 1:30, 3:83, 5:216; U 36.

¹⁶¹ See also **The Three Roots Inc**, SD 31.12.

¹⁶² See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19.

¹⁶³ See eg **Dharma-ending Age**, SD 1.10.

¹⁶⁴ See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (SD 16), SD 9 esp (7ijk) & Appendices 1-2.

works” but not keeping the precepts; the conceit, “I meditate better than you do”; respecting the teacher above the teaching;¹⁶⁵ misquoting the Dharma (vague Buddhism).

3.5 The true Dharma cannot be found outside of oneself, but is found only within oneself.¹⁶⁶ We have to close our eyes and see the inner stillness and clarity. We must constantly reflect on impermanence of both oneself and the world so that we are liberated in this life itself.¹⁶⁷

§4 “What do you think, Kālāmas ...” [also §§5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13]

These are the passages of emphatic affirmation (*avadhāraṇa*)¹⁶⁸ [Comy 7], and are of 2 types: the first set of 4 consecutive passages (§§4-7) affirms what are *unwholesome*, while the second set (§§10-13) affirms what are *wholesome*.

In the following section [Comy 7], the Buddha emphatically affirms what is morally unwholesome on a broader social level.

§7 “What do you think, Kālāmas ... So indeed it is to us in this matter” [Also §13]

1 The Sutta has 2 “moral refrains”—emphatic statements on moral virtue on a broad social level—that is as a universal truth. Moral Refrain 1 [§7], the “emphatic rejection” of moral vice, reads as follows:

This whole section reads:

“What do you think, Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Unwholesome, bhante.”

“Blamable or not blamable?”

“Blamable, bhante.”

“Censured or praised by the wise?”

“Censured by the wise, bhante.”

“These things, fully undertaken, do they bring about harm and suffering?”

“These things, bhante, fully undertaken, bring about harm and suffering for a long time.

So indeed it is to us in this matter.” (*evaṃ no ettha hotīti*) [§7]

Moral Refrain 2, the “emphatic affirmation” of moral virtue, is just the opposite statement [§13].

2 The Udāna Commentary, in its explanation of the term *evaṃ*, gives this passage as an example of an emphasis (*avadhāraṇa*) (UA 7). This is a vital stage in the “word” (*pada*) learning process, so that the text (*vyañjana*) is understood in context (*attha*). The exercise begins with partial rejection of the following:

§4 on the unwholesomeness of greed,

§5 on the unwholesomeness of hate, and

§6 on the unwholesomeness of delusion,

and climaxes with the full affirmation of §7.

¹⁶⁵ See eg **Gāraṇa S** (S 6.2/1:138-140) = **Uruvelā S 1** (A 4.21/2:20 f), SD 12.3.

¹⁶⁶ See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16/2.26), SD 9, also (6c).

¹⁶⁷ See eg **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

¹⁶⁸ See UA 7, commentary on *evaṃ*.

3 In repeating these key points, the Kālāmas not only show their *understanding* of the points, but also their *acceptance* of them on a broader social level. This is highly significant if we note that the preceding section [§§3.2-6] addresses personal accountability and how our actions affect others.

In this section, *how our actions affect others* is stressed. In other words, **right view** is not about endorsing opinions and enforcing dogmas, but living a virtuous life, being a truly good person. This is something clearly universal that any person with some level of wisdom would notice this and agree with it. Having established this consensus, the Buddha goes on to the next stage of his admonition.

See also Comy §4.

§8 “It is for this reason that I have spoken thus”

After exhorting the Kālāmas on the 3 unwholesome roots, that they are to be rejected, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has spoken on the 10 doubtful points. That is to say, these points are not to be taken as a summary rejection of any teaching, nor as an excuse for a carte-blanc or “self-assembled” Buddhism, but as a reminder and criteria for testing *the moral worthiness of a statement*—that they are not blameworthy, not censured by the wise, and do not cause one harm and suffering—before accepting it.

And again at the close of the section, the Buddha reiterates: “Thus I have spoken, Kālāmas; it is for this reason that I have spoken thus.” [§8]

§9.2 “When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas, ‘These things are wholesome ... not blamable ... praised by the wise ... bring good and happiness’”

This is the positive counterpart of the unwholesome qualities (that are to be rejected) [§3b & Comy 3b.2]. None of the 10 doubtful points, singly or otherwise, can really tell us the moral worthiness of a statement. One has to examine them for oneself whether they are wholesome, not blamable, praised by the wise and bring good and happiness—that is, it is personally and collectively wholesome. Otherwise, it should be rejected. [§§3,2.1]

§13 “What do you think, Kālāmas, ... ”

This section comprises the emphatic affirmation of the morally wholesome views of statements. The approach is just the opposite of that explained above [Comy 7 “What do you think, Kālāmas, ... ”].

§14 “It is for this reason that I have spoken thus”

1 This section is the positive counterpart of §8. After exhorting the Kālāmas on the 3 wholesome roots, and that they are to be accepted, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has spoken on the 10 doubtful points. That is to say, these points are not as a summary rejection of any teaching, nor as an excuse for a carte-blanc or “self-assembled” Buddhism, but as a reminder and criteria for testing the moral worthiness of a statement—that they are wholesome, praised by the wise, bring one good and happiness—before accepting it.

And again, at the close of the section, the Buddha reiterates: “Thus I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken thus.” [§14]

2 Let us now look at the relevant passages as a whole. §§4-6 respectively show that through being goaded by greed, hate or delusion, we break the 5 precepts and “makes others do likewise.” And this will bring us harm and suffering (that is, karmic fruits) for a long time. This point is clearly reaffirmed in §7. The Buddha reiterates

his rationale by repeating the 10 doubtful points that should be rejected when they lack moral worth [§8-9.1]. The positive aspects, that is, the moral wholesomeness of the 10 points are then reaffirmed [§§9.2-14].

4 This *moral training* is not an end in itself, but forms the vital basis for mental training, here stated as the cultivation of the divine abodes, which follows.

3 We see here a **progressive teaching** that first points out what are to be rejected, and then what are to be accepted. This is the section on moral training, detailed in **the Veḷu, dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7), which instructs on *the proper practice of moral virtue*, that is, one (1) refrains from breaking the precepts, (2) one exhorts others from breaking the precepts, and (3) one gives positive strokes to those for keeping the precepts.¹⁶⁹ §§10-13 below *affirms the wholesome roots*, elaborated in **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41), that is, *without breaking a precept, one goes on to act on its positive virtue*, summarized in **Table 14**.

	Precepts	Virtue
Body	(1) avoids killing or harming living beings	non-violent, actively shows compassion to all
	(2) avoids taking the not-given	shows generosity individually and with others
	(3) avoids indulging in sexual misconduct	practises contentment
Speech	(4) avoids speaking falsehood	speaks the truth wisely and at the right time
	(5) avoids speaking divisively	unites others and rejoices in concord
	(6) avoids harsh words	blameless and pleasant speech
	(7) avoids useless talk	talk and Dharma-spirited words
Mind	(8) avoids covetousness	practises detachment and letting go
	(9) avoids ill will	practises lovingkindness
	(10) avoids wrong view	understands karma, rebirth, moral virtue

Table 14 The precepts and their virtues

(M 41,11-14/1:287 f), SD 5.7

§15.1 (1) The divine abodes

The Kālāmas, having understood and accepted these basic principles of moral virtue [§§3b-14], are now ready for mental cultivation, which understandably consists of the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), those qualities conducive to beneficent leadership and wholesome community life; that is to say, lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. These practices lead to the “breaking of barriers” between self and other, and so greatly helps in the forging of spiritual friendship and a wholesome community.

The Buddha has very good reasons for teaching the Kālāmas the cultivation of the divine abodes as their first spiritual exercise. First of all, it is a pre-Buddhist practice that the Buddha has adopted as it is not against his teachings. Secondly, the divine abodes help in the cultivation of inner stillness and wholesome social emotions. The cultivation of divine abodes serves as a fertile ground for a still mind for developing insight in due course.

¹⁶⁹ S 55.7/5:352-356 (SD 1.5).

“thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, clearly comprehending, mindful ...”

1 In Pali, this passage is *evaṃ vigatābhijjho vigatāvyāpādo asammūlho sampajāno paṭissato*. From the context, this short but significant passage clearly refers to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances, thus:

<u>Mindfulness</u>		<u>The mental hindrance overcome</u>	
(1) free from covetousness	<i>vigatābhijjho</i>	sense-desire	<i>kāma-c, chanda</i>
(2) free from ill will	<i>vigatāvyāpādo</i>	ill will	<i>vyāpāda</i>
(3) unconfused	<i>asammūlho</i>	sloth and torpor	<i>thīna, middha</i>
(4) clearly comprehending	<i>sampajāno</i>	restlessness and worry	<i>uddhacca, kukkuccha</i>
(5) mindful	<i>paṭissato</i>	doubt	<i>vicikicchā</i>

2 The relationships (reverse pairings)—a chiasmus, as it were—between the 2 sets can be graphically represented thus:

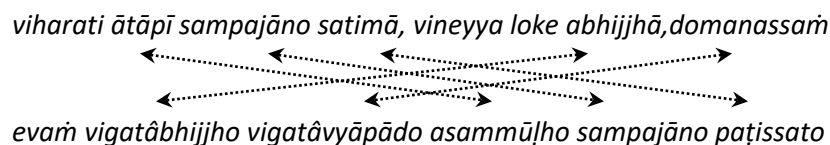


Fig 15a.2 Mindfulness formula and the hindrances

The first 2 factors of the mindfulness formula form the well known dvandva (copulative compound), *abhijjhā, domanassa* (covetousness and displeasure), commonly found in the important satipatthana stock phrase: *viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*, “he dwells (*viharati*) exertive [ardent], clearly comprehending, mindful,¹⁷⁰ ⟨observing the body in the body; | feeling in the feelings; | the mind in the mind; | dharmas in the dharmas⟩, putting away covetousness and displeasure for the world.”¹⁷¹

3 The Commentaries on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta say that the dvandva, *abhijjhā, domanassa*, “covetousness and displeasure [discontent],”¹⁷² signifies the first 2 hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*)—sensual desire and ill will—the principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed.¹⁷³ Although “covetousness and displeasure” are taken by the Sutta Commentaries to refer to only the first two mental hindrances in the early suttas, the dvandva is clearly a synecdoche (short form) for all the 5 hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇā*) themselves, whose removal leads to mindfulness (*sati*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and dhyana (*jhāna*).

¹⁷⁰ “Exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful,” *ātāpī sampajāno satimā* (D 3:58, 77, 141, 211, 276 = M 1:56 ff (MA 1:243), 2:11 = S 5:141-143 (SA 3:180) = A 4:300, 457 = Pm 41 (PmA 175) = Vbh 193 f (VbhA 219 f). These stock terms are def at Vbh 194, 196 = 202; Vism 3; DA 363; MA 1:244; SA 1:204; AA 2:42; ItA 1:105; SnA 157; ApA 310.

¹⁷¹ *Tasmā-t-īha taṃ bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*. See **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**, SD 13.1(4.2), esp 4.2e.

¹⁷² Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, has “desire and discontent” (2003:3). See also Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:49 f.

¹⁷³ DA 3:758 = MA 1:243; SA 3:272.

4 The Netti-p,pakaraṇa, on the other hand, points out, four of the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are present in the same basic satipatthana formula:

<i>ātāpī,</i>	that is to say, the faculty of effort [energy];
<i>sampajāno,</i>	that is to say, the faculty of wisdom;
<i>satimā,</i>	that is to say, the faculty of mindfulness;
<i>vineyya loke</i>	
<i>abhijjhā,domanassaṃ,</i>	that is, the faculty of samadhi. (Nett §481 f/82 f)

It is clear then that *abhijjhā,domanassa* refers to the mental hindrances: for when they are all overcome, even if temporarily, the result is samadhi.

5 The remaining opposing pairs of the mindfulness formula and the 5 mental hindrances are exact antonyms. However, in terms of actual meditation practice, we can see that they do work together *as a set*. Of course, we could pedantically form almost perfect antonymous pairs with (3) *unconfused* against *doubt*, (4) *clearly comprehending* against *restlessness and worry*, and (5) *mindful* against *sloth and torpor*. The form is that the mental hindrances are overcome *altogether*, not one by one.

6 Another interesting point to note is that here (in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta) the phrase *vigatābhijjho vigata,-vyāpādo asammūḷho sampajāno patissato* is mentioned in connection with the 4 divine abodes (*brahma,-vihāra*), and this is still a *part* of the meditation process. The basic satipatthana formula *viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṃ*, however, describes the result of a hindrance-free mind that is just a moment away, as it were, from dhyana. Indeed, if the divine abodes are cultivated properly, the next stage would be described by the basic satipatthana formula. The divine abodes practice can lead one to dhyana.

§15.1 (3) “Thus above, below, in between, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with a mind ⟨of lovingkindness, ... of compassion, ... of gladness, ... of equanimity⟩ that is vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will”

1 Pali: *Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb’attatāya*¹⁷⁴*sabbāvantarṃ lokarṃ ⟨mettā,sahagatena, | karuṇā,-sahagatena, | ditā,sahagatena, | upekhā,sahagatena⟩ cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamaṇena averena avyāpajjhena pharitvā viharati.*

This important refrain repeats at the end of each of the four passages of the divine abodes, showing how each abode becomes fully developed. In simple terms, the phrase **“above, below, in between, everywhere”** (*uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi*) refers to the directional radiating (*pharitvā*) of the divine abode. This divine quality should be cultivated **“to everyone as well as to himself”** (*sabb’attatāya*): the quality is only total and boundless when it also includes oneself. For, one cannot pervade the universe (meaning both the world of beings and one’s awareness of that world) if one does not have that quality oneself.¹⁷⁵

2 The phrase **“a mind ... vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will”** (*cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamaṇena averena avyāpajjhena*) describes a meditator who is *fully focussed*. The word **“vast”** or **“bountiful”** (*vipula*) means he has attained samadhi or full concentration, and as such is **“great”** (*mahaggata*),

¹⁷⁴ For a grammatical analysis, see §15a(1)n above.

¹⁷⁵ On how this practice can lead to spiritual liberation, see **Brahma,vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299), SD 2.10.

that is, free (at least temporarily) of all the mental hindrances,¹⁷⁶ and thereby attained to dhyana. Only such a mind can truly be “boundless” or “measureless” (*appamana*) because, at least momentarily, going beyond conceit, the meditator *does not measure anyone but sees all beings as they really are*, without regarding anyone as a stranger or an enemy, or harbouring any negative thought: he is “free from enmity, free from ill will” (*averena avyāpajjhena*).

3 God-religions, especially Christianity, claim to have a “world vision” to evangelize all men out of “Christian love,” but the reality is that the *power mode* is at work here. Such a view is rooted in the idea that one’s God is the best, hence, one, too, is supreme amongst others and should dominate others. In the Buddhist conception of life, non-humans (such as animals) are included, too, and they too *need* liberation and *can* find liberation. A sentiment like “Christian” love has, by its very definition, to be limited, and as such cannot be universal or selfless love (agape). Lovingkindness, on the other hand, is *not* “Buddhist” love, but simply an unconditional acceptance of all beings.

4 In being *unconditional* in one’s lovingkindness, one does not impose one’s values or even salvation upon another. One simply sees in *all* beings (not just humans) their innate ability to realize their true nature and so be liberated. They are not born in “sin,” but in *ignorance*, and it is this ignorance that fuels *craving*, that is, seeking for fulfillment in the external world based on the false notion that there is an unchanging entity (a soul, etc). If ideas can heal, then just such an idea of unconditional love is more healing than the God-idea has ever been throughout mankind’s history.

§15.2 “his mind without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus—wins these 4 self-assurances right here in this life”

Pali: *Evaṃ avera,citto evaṃ avyāpajjha,citto evaṃ asaṅkhiḷiṭṭha,citto evaṃ visuddha,citto, tassa diṭṭh’eva dhamme cattāro assāsā adhiḡatā honti.*

1 HOW TO FULLY BENEFIT FROM THE 4 SELF-ASSURANCES

1.1 This sentence shows the spiritual progression from the divine abodes practice to the benefitting from the 4 self-assurances (*assāsa*).¹⁷⁷ This is a subtle point often missed if not for a close study. That is to say, to truly benefit by way of the four self-assurances, is not merely a *belief* in karma and rebirth—this would be an intellectual shift, like believing in a God-idea! So what else is needed here?

1.2 To fully benefit from the 4 self-assurances, we must go through an emotional shift (or a positive change of heart), by way of the four divine abodes: we *become* a person of lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity (or, at least of lovingkindness). How does this emotional shift occur? We have already seen how the suppression of the hindrances, even if only temporary, leads to the attainment of dhyana [15a.2]. It is only when we have attained at least the 1st dhyana that we will truly experience the full feeling of lovingkindness without barriers.

¹⁷⁶ See Intro 5.3(2)n.

¹⁷⁷ *Assāsa*, (1) the in-and-out-breath; (2a) comfort, solace (A 4:182,29, 184,32-185,4; KhpA 22,4; (2b) self-confidence, self-assurance (M 1:64,3 ~ 2:149,11; S 2 2:50,25; A 1:192,13-25); (2c) ease, relief (J 6:4,23, 304,18, 587,1). Here 2b applies. See CPD, DP sv.

1.3 In fact, the cultivation of the first three divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion and gladness —can bring us dhyanas right up to the third level. The fourth divine abode, equanimity, can bring us to the 4th dhyana.¹⁷⁸ When we have experienced dhyana, we truly know what happiness really is. Happiness (*sukha*) not only helps us to attain samadhi during meditation, but it is the best prevention against breaking the precepts! When we are truly happy, we do not think of harming ourselves or others, and we sustain a wholesome ambience wherever we go. It is such a person who fully benefits from the 4 self-assurances.

2 HOW THE UNAWAKENED CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SELF-ASSURANCES

2.1 Even an unawakened being who has *mere faith* in karma and rebirth benefits from the 4 self-assurances. The Buddha’s reasoning here is very simple: **To believe in karma** is to accept the fact that our actions (conscious and unconscious)¹⁷⁹ are morally efficacious, that is, *we are responsible for our actions*. **To believe in rebirth** means that we live understanding that in some way, our past karma contributes to our present being, and that the karmic seeds we now create can fruit again in future lives. So how we live *now* —how we conduct ourselves through thought, word and deed—has a direct impact on the quality of our next life and those to come. Believing in karma and rebirth, as such, provides the incentive for quality control over our life. This is, in fact, another way of talking about living a morally virtuous life.

2.2 As noted a number of times before,¹⁸⁰ moral virtue forms the basis for effective mental training [Intro 3.5]: it is easier to meditate if we keep our precepts and practise their virtues, too [Comy 14]. Even if we think we are not a “saint,” that maybe our moral virtue is not as sterling as we would have liked it to be, we can still, indeed, it is to our great advantage, to practise a form of meditation called “mindfulness practice” or satipatthana (*satipaṭṭhāna*).¹⁸¹ A very simple but effective form of mindfulness practice is described in **the Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) as the layman’s accomplishment of wisdom (*paññā, sampadā*) as follows:

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family is wise, possesses wisdom *directed to (noting) the rising and falling away (of phenomena)* that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. (A 8.54/4:285), SD 5.10

2.3 The benefit of this practice is clearly better than even that of the divine abodes, as attested by **the Velāma Sutta** (A 9.20):

And, householder, even though the brahmin Velāma gave those great gifts, and even if he were to cultivate a heart of lovingkindness for just as long as it takes to tug at the cow’s teat (to milk it), greater would be the fruit if he were to cultivate the perception of impermanence for even the moment of a finger-snap! (A 9.20,11/4:395 f), SD 16.6¹⁸²

In short, we can still benefit from the self-assurances even as an ordinary person who makes every effort to live a morally virtuous life and keep our minds healthy.

¹⁷⁸ See Vism 9.119/324 (where the “highest limit” of each abode is discussed); also **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (Diagram 2). See **Metta, saḥagata S** (S 46.54/5:115-121), SD 10.11 esp (3) (Freedom through the divine abodes).

¹⁷⁹ See **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b.

¹⁸⁰ Intro 5.1; Comy 3b.1; Comy 14.

¹⁸¹ *Sati’paṭṭhāna* usually is “focus of mindfulness,” but here I take it as a simple practice as in the “full awareness” section of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.4/2:292), SD 13.2 & **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.8/1:57), SD 13.3.

¹⁸² “For even the moment of a finger-snap,” *accharā, saṅghāta, mattarā*. Also in **Cūḷ’accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5/A 1:10), in the same context of lovingkindness. See SD 16.6 Intro (2-4).

§16 The 4 self-assurances

1 The Buddha's 4 self-assurances are the best spiritual insurance that any religious or philosophical system can ever give. They are the best, not only in the theoretical or philosophical sense, but in a *practical and beneficial way*. They are the ground rules by which we can live together as a healthy family, community and society. Unlike Pascal's wager [Intro 7], the 4 self-assurances or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*), have a gentle and compassionate tone, giving the thinker a free choice of what to believe. At the same time, the Buddha emphatically affirms *the central place of moral virtue*.

2 Moral virtue and ethical living make communal living and society possible. In the Buddhist view, morals and ethics are founded on the principle of the "world protectors" (*loka, pāla*), that is, moral shame and moral fear, where one's actions are neither "blamable," entailing bad karma (one has moral fear), nor "censured by the wise" (one has moral shame) [3b.2].

Without moral virtue, neither civilization nor society is possible. Without some level of social organization, no God-idea is possible: for the God-idea is always closely associated with political power and tribal supremacy. Moral virtue is, however, necessary for social order and personal development, whether we believe in a God or not. Understandably, the 4 self-assurances clearly stand way above Pascal's wager which does not allow one any choice at all!

The serious danger with the God-idea is that it makes all things possible—for those who define God and who control others in God's name. History gives us centuries of unimaginable sufferings and losses of our in-humanity towards our own kind. We start to become truly human only after we have transcended this "power" mode of human imagination.

§17 The Kālāmas' exultation

In a well known stock phrase, the Blessed One is described as teaching in a **progressive affective sequence**:¹⁸³ he is said to have "instructed (*sandasseti*), inspired (*samādapeti*), roused (*samuttejeti*) and gladdened (*sampahamseti*) ... with a Dharma talk."¹⁸⁴ This is also known as the "Buddha's grace" (*buddha, līlā*) when teaching.¹⁸⁵

We can actually see the sequence of the Buddha's discourse here in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta in this manner:

instructed (<i>sandasseti</i>)	§3.1:	the 10 doubtful points;
	§§3.2-9.1:	the 3 unwholesome roots (to be rejected);
inspired (<i>samādapeti</i>)	§9.2-15.1:	the 3 wholesome roots (to be accepted);
roused (<i>samuttejeti</i>)	§15.2-16:	the 4 divine abodes;
gladdened (<i>sampahamseti</i>)	§17:	the 4 self-assurances.

The point here is that one teaches not merely to give *knowledge* (the cognitive leap), but also *joy* (the affective openness).

¹⁸³ The contents of the Buddha's teachings can be said to comprise of a progressive cognitive sequence, otherwise known as "the progressive talk" (*ānupubbī, kathā*): see Intro 3.1.

¹⁸⁴ V 1:18; D 1:126, 149, 2:86, 98, 109, 110, 127, 3:27, 209; M 1:209, 354, 2:139, 3:155; S 2:215, 3:95., 4:183, 5:155; A 3:380, 4:67, 118, 307 (x2), 5:122, 125; U 39, 82, 87.

¹⁸⁵ This is a comy term: DA 1:41; UA 105; VvA 217; ThaA 33.

§18 The Kālāmas go for refuge

With minor variations, this section is a stock passage found throughout the Nikāyas, showing that the listener or audience has understood and appreciates the Buddha's or a noble disciple's teaching.¹⁸⁶

1 “EXCELLENT, BHANTE GOTAMA! EXCELLENT, BHANTE!” (*Abhikkantaṃ bhante gotama, abhikkantaṃ bhante*).¹⁸⁷

The exclamation “excellent!” (*abhikkanta*) reflects the Kālāmas' awe and joy—that is, wonder—at the Buddha's teaching, making it what we might call a “religious experience” for them. As the Buddha declares in **the Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta** (A 3.123): “Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma accompanied by wonders (*sappāṭihāriya*), not without wonders.” [Comy 3.1(10)]. This is a classic example of *the greatest of miracles*, that of instruction (*anusāsani, pāṭihāriya*).¹⁸⁸

It is interesting that they address the Buddha by his clan name, Gotama, which suggests a sense of cordiality they have towards him. They would not show such familiarity if they were ordained monastics (monks or nuns). However, it also means that, if they have attained any level of realization, it would be only streamwinning. See (8) below where they go for refuge “for life.”

2 “JUST AS IF, MASTER GOTAMA, ONE WERE TO PLACE UPRIGHT WHAT HAD BEEN OVERTURNED” (*seyyathāpi bho gotama nikkujjitaṃ vā ukkujjeyya*).

Notice that the Kālāmas' uninhibited exultation is expressed in various colourful imageries, rather than in measured conceptual evaluations. This is the first of four consecutive similes in this stock passage.

Soon after the Great Awakening, Brahmā Sahampati approaches the Buddha and invites him to teach the Dharma to the world, reminding the Buddha that false teachings are widespread to the detriment of the many, and that there are many “with little dust in their eyes” who would benefit from spiritual teachings:

In the past there has appeared (until now) in Magadha
An impure Dharma devised by those still tainted.

Throw open this door to the deathless!
Let them hear the Dharma discovered by the stainless one!¹⁸⁹

3 “OR, WERE TO REVEAL WHAT WAS HIDDEN” (*paṭicchannaṃ vā vivareyya*).

The Commentaries¹⁹⁰ say that since the passing of the previous Buddha, Kassapa, the Teaching was forgotten, “hidden by the thicket of wrong views,” and our Buddha now has revealed it again. All the buddhas teach the same Dharma, leading to the same goal. In **the Uppāda Sutta** (A 3.134), the Buddha declares that whether Buddhas arise or not, it remains a fact that the world is impermanent and suffering, and that all things are not self.¹⁹¹ The Buddha, having arisen fully awakened in this world, declares these truths to it.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ For traditional comys, see eg DA 1:227-230; MA 1:129-137; SA 1:135 f; AA 2:105-107; SnA 1:155-157; UA 286 f = UA:M 746-749; BA 122 f = BA:H 174 f.

¹⁸⁷ Here I follow Ce; but Ee (*peyyāla* based on A 1:184) & Se read: *abhikkantaṃ bho gotama, abhikkantaṃ bho gotama*.

¹⁸⁸ See **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,8/1:214), SD 1.7.

¹⁸⁹ V 1:4-7; M 1:167-69; S 1:136-39; D 2:36-40 Vipassī Buddha; Mvst 3:314-19; cf S 1:234.

¹⁹⁰ For traditional comys, see eg DA 1:227-230; MA 1:129-137; SA 1:135 f; AA 2:105-107; KhA 16-22 = KhA:Ñ 9-16; SnA 1:155-157; UA 286 f = UA:M 746-749; BA 122 f = BA:H 174 f.

¹⁹¹ *Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā, sabbe dhammā anattā*: see also Dh 277-279.

¹⁹² A 3.134/1:286. On how the Buddha teaches the 3 characteristics, see **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,22-29/1:137-139), SD 3:13.

4 “OR, WERE TO SHOW THE WAY TO ONE WHO WAS LOST” (*mūlhasa vā maggaṃ ācikkheyya*).

The meaning here is that to those who have fallen into wrong ways, the Buddha directs them to the right one by disclosing *the way to heaven* (through the four divine abodes) [§15] and to *liberation* (such as through understanding the nature of impermanence) [Intro 5.3(2)]. The path imagery is a popular one in Buddhism: the way to liberation is known as the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*).¹⁹³

The Nagara Sutta (S 12.65) gives the famous parable of the city, where nirvana is represented as a lost frontier city, linked by an ancient path through deep jungle. The city is still inhabited by wise citizens (the saints), and the ancient path (the noble eightfold path) is rediscovered by a man who rushes back to civilization to tell others to clear the path and renovate the city (that is, to practise the True Teaching).¹⁹⁴

5 “OR, WERE TO HOLD UP A LAMP IN THE DARK SO THAT THOSE WITH EYES COULD SEE FORMS” (*andha, kāre vā tela, -pajjotaṃ dhāreyya, cakkhumanta rūpāni dakkhinti ti*).

In teaching the Dharma, the Buddha is like one who brings a bright lamp to one lost in the dark or half-light, that is, bringing understanding to one who was lost in the darkness of ignorance or dimness of *delusion*. This imagery again aptly shows how the Dharma works: the truth is always there, and we only need to open our inner eye to see it. To elaborate on the lamp imagery, one could add that the true lamp is one's own mind, and the Buddha's teaching is the flame that lights it up so that we become lamps unto ourselves.

6 “IN THE SAME WAY, IN NUMEROUS WAYS, HAS THE DHARMA BEEN MADE CLEAR BY MASTER GOTAMA” (*evam eva bhotā gotamena aneka, pariyāyena dhammo pakāsito*).

In a stock passage, it is said that “the Blessed One instructed (*sandassetvā*), inspired (*samādapetvā*), roused (*samuttejetvā*) and gladdened (*sampahamsetvā*) ... with a Dharma talk.”¹⁹⁵ The Commentaries¹⁹⁶ explain this action sequence: by instructing, the Buddha dispels the listener's *delusion*; by inspiring him, *heedlessness* is dispelled; by rousing him, *indolence* is dispelled; and by gladdening, brings the practice to a *conclusion* [17]. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to *bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and jubilation* to the audience. These four qualities,¹⁹⁷ according to **the Ānanda Sutta** (A 3.61), form the sixth or last of the ideal skills of a Dharma speaker.¹⁹⁸

7 “WE GO TO MASTER GOTAMA FOR REFUGE, TO THE DHARMA, AND TO THE COMMUNITY OF MONKS” (*ete mayam bhavantaṃ gotamaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāma, dhammañ ca bhikkhu, saṅghaṃ ca*).

When religious conversion is imposed on another in a situation where “one believes so that one can understand,” the convert is but a shadow of the faith, blindly, unthinkingly and lifelessly following its every gesture, and knowing no other. Here we see the Kālāmas, having *understood* the Buddha's teaching, jubilantly celebrate their self-realized faith through knowing, and take refuge in the 3 jewels.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ See eg **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117/3:71-78), SD 6.10.

¹⁹⁴ S 12.65/2:104-107 @ SD 14.2.

¹⁹⁵ V 1:18; D 1:126, 149, 2:86, 98, 109, 110, 127, 3:27, 209; M 1:209, 354, 2:139, 3:155; S 2:215, 3:95., 4:183, 5:155; A 3:380, 4:67, 118, 307 (x2), 5:122, 125; U 39, 82, 87.

¹⁹⁶ Eg DA 1:293; cf VA 1:65; MA 2:35.

¹⁹⁷ See L S Cousins, in his review of *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (tr Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi) in JBE 4, 1997:272, where gives a slightly different listing of the above.

¹⁹⁸ A 3.61/3:361 f. See **Sīla, sampanna S** (It 4.1.5/107), where these qualities are part of a morally virtuous Dharma teacher that would benefit others.

¹⁹⁹ On going for refuge, see SD 3.1-3.

8 “MAY MASTER GOTAMA REMEMBER US AS LAY FOLLOWERS WHO HAVE GONE TO HIM FOR REFUGE FROM THIS DAY FORTH FOR LIFE” (*upāsake no bhavaṃ gotamo dhāretu ajja-t-agge pāṇ’upete saraṇaṃ gate’ti*).

8.1 Considering that using this stock formula the Kālāmas (or anyone else) request the Buddha to be a witness to their going for refuge “for life” (*pāṇ’upete*, alternately, “as long as life lasts”) —this reflects the depth of their faith. It is likely that this also marks the attaining of streamwinning.²⁰⁰ Then, such a refuge-going is “supramundane” (*lok’uttara saraṇa,gamana*) (Dh 190-192). If the refuge-goer is still a worldling, then, the refuge-going is a “mundane” one (*lokiya saraṇa,gamana*) (D 20,4/2:255).²⁰¹

Method	Formula	Example
1 By personal undertaking (<i>upeta</i>)	“Bhante, we go to the Blessed One and the Dharma as refuge. May the Blessed One remember us as lay followers.” ²⁰²	Tapassu & Bhallika (V 1:4)
2 By becoming a pupil (<i>sisṣa,bhāv’-upagamana</i> ,)	“Bhante, the Blessed One is my teacher; I am a disciple [listener] (<i>sāvaka</i>).” ²⁰³	Mahā Kassapa (S 2:220)
3 By inclination (<i>tap,poṇatta</i>)	“When this was spoken, the brahmin Brahmāyu rose from his seat, arranged his robe to one side, and approached the Blessed One. Holding his palms lotuswise, he made the inspired utterance, <i>Namo tassa bhagavato arhato sammā,sambuddhassa ...</i> (×3).” ²⁰⁴	Brahmāyu (M 2:140)
4 By final goal (<i>tap,-parāyanatā</i>)	“I shall wander from village to village, from city to city, worshipping the self-awakened one and the excellence of the Dharma.” ²⁰⁵	Āḷavaka (Sn 192)

Table 8. Right was of refuge-going

8.2 The Commentaries²⁰⁶ mention another **2 kinds of refuge-going**, by way of breach (*duvidho saraṇa,gamana,-bhedo*), namely: the blameworthy (*sāvajja*) and the blameless (*anavajja*): they both apply only to worldly refuge-goers, that is, those who have not attained any spiritual state. The blameworthy refuge-goer is one who, having

²⁰⁰ Comy to **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193/2:190-194), SD 35.10 (which contains the same 10 doubtful points & §§3.2-15.1) says that at the conclusion of the discourse, Bhaddiya becomes a streamwinner. (AA 3:173)

²⁰¹ These 2 types of refuge-going (*duvidhaṃ saraṇa,gamanam*) are mentioned in Comys (MA 1:132, 134; KhA 17).

²⁰² *Ete mayaṃ bhante bhagavantaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāma dhammaṃ ca upāsake no bhagavā dhāretu.* (VA 1:230-234; MA 1:133-137)

²⁰³ *Satthā me bhante bhagavā, sāvako ‘ham asmī ti.* (VA 1:230-234; MA 1:133-137)

²⁰⁴ *Evaṃ vutte Brahmāyu brāhmaṇo utthāy’āsanā ekaṃsaṃ uttarā,saṅgaṃ karitvā yena bhagavā ten’añjalim paṇāmetvā tikkhattuṃ udānaṃ udānesi: namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassa... (×3).* (VA 1:230-234; MA 1:133-137)

²⁰⁵ *So ahaṃ vicarissāmi gāmaṃ gāmaṃ purā purā namassamāno sambuddhaṃ dhammassa ca sudhammatan ti.* (KhA 16 f)

²⁰⁶ Eg MA 1:135; KhA 17.

gone for refuge, “turns to another teacher,” that is, either he does not keep up a moral life, or converts to another religion. This, of course, refers to the mundane refuge-goer who is still weak in faith. The blameless refuge-goer is one who remains so until death, but does not yet gain any spiritual state.

8.3 In most cases, however, refuge-going is a mark of profound joy (*pasāda*) and faith (*saddhā*), and as such it greatly conduces to our spiritual development. This is because they give the 3 jewels the highest priorities in their lives, thinking: “This is my refuge, this is my final goal” (*esa me saraṇaṃ esa me parāyanaṃ*).²⁰⁷ **The Commentaries** record various ways by which the early disciples go for refuge, the main ways as shown in **Table 8**.

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²⁰⁷ KhA 17,8; cf 18,33.

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