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## Cūḷa Dukkha-kkhandha Sutta

The Shorter Discourse on the Mass of Suffering | M 14

Theme: The nature of true happiness

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Mahānāma's problem

**1.1 Mahānāma the Sakya**, the Sutta's interlocutor, was Sukk'odana's son and the brother of the monks Anuruddha and Ānanda. As such, he was Suddhodana's nephew and a cousin of the Buddha. However, he chose to remain a householder, while Anuruddha became a monk.<sup>1</sup> In **the Cūḷa Dukkha-kkhandha Sutta** (M 14), Mahānāma complains to the Buddha that he (Mahānāma), despite understanding the nature of the three unwholesome roots, still has defiled mental states, especially lustful thoughts.

The Buddha replies that this is because Mahānāma, as a layman, still enjoys sense-desires, and that he would not be able to transcend them unless he experiences "zest and joy (*pīti,sukha*) that are apart from sensual pleasures or something more peaceful than that" [§4], that is, the purely mental bliss of dhyana (*jhāna*).<sup>2</sup>

**1.2** The "zest and joy that are apart from sense-desires" here refers to the *pīti* and *sukha* of the first and second dhyanas. "Something more peaceful than that" refers to the higher dhyanas. "From this passage, it seems that a disciple may attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane *jhāna*" (M:ÑB 1201 n208). According to **Bodhi**,

The first part of this statement implies that the subject is at least a stream-enterer, for he is referred to as a "noble disciple" (*ariya-sāvaka*). Though the term *ariya-sāvaka* is occasionally used in loose sense that need not be taken to imply attainment of stream-entry, here the expression "seeing with perfect wisdom" [4] seems to establish his identity as at least a stream-enterer. Yet the second part of the statement implies he does not possess even the first *Jhāna*, for the phrase used to describe what he lacks ["zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something more peaceful than that"] precisely echoes the wording of the basic formula for the first *Jhāna*. The state "[has clearly seen with right] wisdom" [*santatarām*] would, of course, be the higher *Jhānas*" (Bodhi 2001:52)

This is one of the passages that Bodhi quotes as "instances of stream-enterers who are not attainers of *Jhānas*" (2001:51 f).

**1.3** It should be noted here that *kāma* as used in this Sutta, has a broad sense, that is, both as the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or "sense-desire" and as the object of desire (*vatthu*) or "(objects of) sensual pleasure."<sup>3</sup> In other words, *kāma* translates into English as "sense-desire" as well as "sensual pleasure," depending on the context, but the one sense should be taken as implicit in the other in the English translation.

<sup>1</sup> See Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha*, 1972:80 f.

<sup>2</sup> On the importance of zest and joy (*pīti,sukha*) in meditation and *jhāna* in general, see SD 8.4; on the differences between the 2, see SD 8.4 (6.3 f)..

<sup>3</sup> Nm 1.1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f. See Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:192 f.

## 2 The Sutta's remarkable features

**2.1** The Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta is remarkable in two ways: firstly, it contains a statement suggesting that dhyana (*jhāna*) need not be attained even up to the second stage of sainthood, ie, the stage of once-returning (*sākadāgāmi*) (that has been attained by Mahānāma) [§§2-5] and, secondly, it contains an interesting discussion between the Buddha and the nirgranthas (early Jains) [§§15-22].

**2.2** The middle portion of this Sutta closely parallels **the Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 13,7-15) with a definitive explanation of sense-desire, the battle simile and graphic examples of suffering [§§6-14]. This section is able to stand on its own and, in fact, fits better in the Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta than here. The two Suttas should be studied together since they deal with the same topic of *dukkha*.

**2.3** The concluding half of the Sutta contains an excellent example of how the Buddha uses the Socratic method (ie the patient questioning of the audience so that it recognizes the true conclusion without the teacher telling that it is true) in a discussion with the nirgranthas (early Jains) and Mahāvīra (the founder of Jainism) himself [§§15-22]. In this connection, this Sutta should be studied with the **Devadaha Sutta** (M 101).<sup>4</sup>

**2.4** The Buddha's closing remark that he "dwells more happily than Seniya Bimbisāra" [§22] gives a familiar echo of **the (Hatthaka) Ālavaka Sutta** (A 3.34/1:136 f).<sup>5</sup>

**2.5** In **the (Gati) Mahānāma Sutta 1** (S 55.21) and **the (Gati) Mahānāma Sutta 2** (S 55.22), the Buddha instructs on how a lay practitioner can be assured to die as a saint S 55.21/5:369-371), SD 23.1a.<sup>6</sup>

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## Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta The Shorter Discourse on the Mass of Suffering

M 14

**1 [91]** Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Nigrodha's Grove<sup>7</sup> near Kapilavastu in the Sakya country.

<sup>4</sup> M 101/2:214-228 (SD 18.4).

<sup>5</sup> **(Hatthaka) Ālavaka Sutta** (A 3.34/1:136 f), SD 4.8.

<sup>6</sup> S 55.21/5:369-371 (SD 23.1a) & S 55.21/5:369-371 (SD 23.1a).

<sup>7</sup> Nigrodha was a Sakya who donated his park to the Sangha. It was here that the Buddha rose up into the air and performed the twin wonder (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*), in which water and fire sprayed out of his pores, to convince his proud relatives of his attainment. At the end of the psychic display, a shower of rain fell wetting only those who wished to be wet, and, in this connection, he related **Vessantara J** (J 547) (V 1:82; J 1:88 f, 6:479; BA 295; DhA 3:163; Mvst 3:101, 107, 114, 138, 141, 179). It was here too that Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī first requested to join the Order but was turned down (V 2:253; A 4:274). It is said that the Buddha, during his first stay here, delivered **Cariyā,piṭaka** and **Buddha,vaṃsa** to Sāriputta (CA 1, 7; BA 5).

## The 3 unwholesome roots

2 Then, Mahānāma the Sakya approached the Blessed One, and having saluted him, sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, Mahānāma the Sakya said this to the Blessed One:

2.2 “For a long time has the Dharma been taught by the Blessed One thus:

‘Lust is a mental impurity; hate is a mental impurity; delusion is a mental impurity.’

2.3 And I, too, understand the Dharma taught by the Blessed One

that *lust* is a mental impurity,

that *hate* is a mental impurity,

that *delusion* is a mental impurity,

2.4 and yet, at times some thoughts of *lust*, thoughts of *hate*, thoughts of *delusion* assail my mind and remain.

2.5 I have wondered, bhante, what state is still not abandoned by me internally, on account of which at times these thoughts of *lust*, of *hate* and of *delusion* assail my mind and remain?”<sup>8</sup>

3 “Mahānāma, there is still that state that is not yet abandoned internally on account of which the thoughts of lust, thoughts of hate, thoughts of delusion assail your mind and remain.

3.2 For, Mahānāma, if that state had been abandoned, you would not be living the household life, you would not be enjoying sense-desires.

3.3 But, Mahānāma, because that state has not been abandoned, you are still<sup>9</sup> living the household life, still enjoying sense-desires.<sup>10</sup>

## Suprasensory pleasure

4 Mahānāma, even if a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is, with right wisdom, that sense-desires bring little solace [gratification], but much suffering, much despair, even greater danger here,<sup>11</sup>

4.2 so long, as he does not gain zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or that is something more peaceful than that, he would not be able to be unaffected by sense-pleasures.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Comy says that Mahānāma had long ago attained the fruit of once-returning, which only weakens lust, hate and delusion, but does not eradicate them. He had the mistaken notion that lust, hate and delusion were eradicated by the path of once-returning. Thus, when he saw that they were not abandoned and asked the Buddha the cause of their arising. Even saints on the path (short of arhats) can be mistaken about which defilements are abandoned by which path (MA 2:61).

<sup>9</sup> “Still,” from *yasmā ... tasmā*, “because ... therefore”.

<sup>10</sup> “Sense-desires,” *kāme*. The word *kāma* is also tr as “sensual pleasure” and may refer to either the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or the object of desire (*vatthu*) (Nm 1,1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f).

<sup>11</sup> See V 4:134.

<sup>12</sup> The whole para: *App’assādā kāmā bahu, dukkhā bah’upāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiyyo’ti— iti ce’pi, mahā, nāma, ariya, sāvakassa yathā, bhūtaṃ samma-p, paññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññat’eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pīti, suchaṃ nādhigacchati, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ, atha kho so n’eva tāva anāvaṭṭi kāmesu hoti*. The “zest and joy that are apart from sense-desires” here refers to the pīti and sukha of the first and second dhyanas. “Something more peaceful than that” refers to the higher dhyanas. “From this passage it seems that a disciple may attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane jhāna” (M:ÑB 1201 n208). **Bodhi**: “The first part of this statement implies that the subject is at least a stream-enterer, for he is referred to as a ‘noble disciple’ (*ariya, sāvaka*). Though the term *ariya-sāvaka* is occasionally used in loose sense that need not be taken to imply attainment of stream-entry, here the expression ‘[has clearly seen with right] wisdom’ seems to establish his identity as at least a stream-enterer. Yet, the second part of the statement implies he does not possess even the first Jhāna, for the phrase used to describe what he lacks [“zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something

4.3 But, Mahānāma, when a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is, with right wisdom, that sense-pleasures bring little solace, but much suffering, much despair, even greater danger here, and when he gains zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that,<sup>13</sup> he would be able to be unaffected by sense-desires. [92]

5 Before my awakening, Mahānāma, when I was still only **an unawakened Bodhisattva**, I, too, clearly saw as it really is with right wisdom

*that sense-desires bring little satisfaction, but much suffering, much despair, even greater danger here,*

5.2 *but that, so long as I did not gain zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something more peaceful than that, I was not be able to be unaffected by sense-desires.*

5.3 But, Mahānāma, when I clearly saw it as it really is, with right wisdom, that sense-desires bring little satisfaction, but much suffering, much despair, even greater danger here,

and when I gained **zest and joy** that are apart from unwholesome states, but is something more peaceful than that, then I was able to be unaffected by sense-desires.

### SENSE-DESIRES<sup>14</sup>

#### Gratification of sense-desires

6 (1) And what, Mahānāma, is the gratification with regards to sense-desires?<sup>15</sup>

6.2 Mahānāma, there are these **5 cords of sensual pleasure.**<sup>16</sup> What are the five?<sup>17</sup>

Visual forms cognizable by the eye

that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing,  
connected with sensual pleasure, arousing lust.

more peaceful than that”] precisely echoes the wording of the basic formula for the first Jhāna. The state “more peaceful than that” [*santatarām*] would, of course, be the higher Jhānas” (2001:52). This is one of the passages that Bodhi qu as “instances of stream-enterers who are not attainers of Jhānas” (2001:51 f).

<sup>13</sup> “Something more peaceful than that,” *tato santatarām*. Comy explains that while zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*) pertain to the first 2 dhyanas, “something higher” is connected with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> dhyanas (MA 2:63). On the 4 dhyanas, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,75-82/1:73-76), SD 8.10; for details, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

<sup>14</sup> §§6-14 here parallels **Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 13,7-15/1:85-88), SD 6.9.

<sup>15</sup> *Kamānaṃ assāda*. The 3 factors—gratification (*assāda*) [6], disadvantage (or danger) (*ādinava*) [7], and escape (*nissaraṇa*) [not mentioned here but at **Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha S**, M 13,6/1:85, SD 6.9]—form the latter part of the “7 cases” (*satta-ṭ,thāna*), viz, understanding of the 5 aggregates (form etc), their arising, ending and the way to their ending; understanding the gratification, the dangers and the escape in the case (*thāna*) of each aggregate (**Satta-ṭ,thāna S**, S 22.57/3:61-65), SD 29.2. On this passage, cf **Saññoga S** (A 7.48/4:57-59), SD 8.7, on how sexual feeling arise. The following section occurs in **Araṇa,vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9/3:234), SD 7.8, **Mahā Suññatā S** (M 122,-14/3:114), SD 11.4.

<sup>16</sup> “The 5 cords of sensual pleasure” (*pañca kāma,guṇa*), so called because they are the objects of the 5 physical senses (V 1:3, 17, 225, 293, 3:111; D 1:172, 2:243, 3:60, 238; M 1:47; S 1:9, 132; A 3.411.3 ff; Dh 48, 415; Sn 436; Tha 254; J 3:466, 4:172, 173, 469. 6:127; Ap 547; Nm 1; Vbh 256; Mvst 3.417.2; MA 1:199, 131, 2:261). They are also the qualities of desire, ie, that which brings pleasure to the senses, or desirable sense-experience, as listed in the passage here. They are “cords” (*guṇa*) because they bind one to them, and they “multiply” (*guṇa*) themselves as a result, binding one ever tighter to them. *Kāma* is also desire personified, ie the god of love, sometimes identified with Māra (Tha 3.88; BA 289). It is interesting to note here that there is no “mental pleasure” (*somanassa*) in the list. Such mental pleasures generally arise through mental focus or meditation, and as such are not regarded as *guṇa*, insofar as they provide a lasting sense of satisfaction and inner peace that lead to letting-go.

<sup>17</sup> As at D 1:245; M 1:85, 3:234; A 3:411.

<u>Sounds</u>	cognizable by the ear that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sensual pleasure, arousing lust.
<u>Smells</u>	cognizable by the nose that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sensual pleasure, arousing lust.
<u>Tastes</u>	cognizable by the tongue that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sensual pleasure, arousing lust.
<u>Touches</u>	cognizable by the body that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sensual pleasure, arousing lust.

These, Mahānāma, are the 5 cords of sensual pleasure.

6.3 Now, Mahānāma, the (physical) joy and (mental) pleasure<sup>18</sup> arise on account of these 5 cords of sensual pleasure. This is the gratification with regards to sense-desires.

### The disadvantage with regards to sense-desires

7 (2) And what, Mahānāma, is the **disadvantage** with regards to [the dangers of] sense-desires?

7.2 Here, Mahānāma, a son of family **earns a living** by means of various skills—finger-counting or accounting or calculating or farming or trading or husbandry or archery or the civil service or some other craft—

7.3 facing the cold, facing the heat, being afflicted by<sup>19</sup> gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, creeping things (and reptiles); even dying from hunger and thirst.

7.4 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, [M 1:86] the cause being simply<sup>20</sup> sense-desires.

8 Mahānāma, if he finds that **no wealth accrues to him** from his striving, exertion and effort, he sorrows, suffers, weeps, beats his breasts and becomes distressed, crying:

‘Alas! My striving is in vain! Alas! My effort is fruitless!’

8.2 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

9 Mahānāma, if wealth accrues to him from his striving, exertion and effort, he feels pain and displeasure on account of **having to protect his wealth**, thinking:

9.2 ‘What (shall I do) now so that *kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not wash it away, unloving heirs would not take it away?*’<sup>21</sup>

9.3 Yet, even as he guards and protects his wealth,

kings seize it, thieves steal it, fire burns it, water washes it away, unloving heirs take it away.

9.4 He sorrows, suffers, weeps, beats his breasts, and becomes distressed, crying: ‘What was mine is no more!’

<sup>18</sup> “(Physical) joy and (mental) pleasure,” *sukha,somanassa*.

<sup>19</sup> “Being afflicted by,” *samphassehi rissamāno*, lit “being hurt by the touches (of gadflies, etc).”

<sup>20</sup> “Simply,” *eva*.

<sup>21</sup> This quotation occurs in **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.5/4:281 f), SD 5.10, where a lay follower is instructed on how to guard his wealth. Here, however, where the teaching, being addressed to a saint, has a more realistic tone. See also (**Asi,bandhaka,putta**) **Kulā S** (S 42.9/4:322-324), SD 7.11.

9.5 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

**10** Again, Mahānāma, with **sense-desire** as the cause, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis,

10.2 kings quarrel with kings, kshatriyas quarrel with kshatriyas, brahmins quarrel with brahmins, householders quarrel with householders, mother quarrels with son,<sup>22</sup> son quarrels with mother, father quarrels with son, son quarrels with father, brother quarrels with brother, sister quarrels with sister, companion quarrels with companion,

10.3 And here, having fallen into quarrels, strife and disputes, they come to blows with one another using fists, clods of earth, sticks and knives—bringing upon themselves death and deadly suffering.

10.4 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause,

10.5 a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

### The battle imageries

**11** Again, Mahānāma, with sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires,

11.2 they, holding sword and shield, wearing quiver and arrow, charge ahead into battle arrayed in double ranks, arrows flying, spears flying, swords flashing.

11.3 Here, arrows wound them, spears wound them, swords chop off their heads. Here, they suffer death and deadly suffering.

11.4 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

**12** Again, Mahānāma, with sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires,

12.2 they, holding sword and shield, wearing quiver and arrow, they clamber up the fortress wall freshly smeared (with lime),<sup>23</sup> arrows flying, spears flying, **[M 1:87]** swords flashing.

12.3 Here, arrows wound them, spears wound them, boiling cow-dung<sup>24</sup> rain down on them, spiked weights<sup>25</sup> crush them in large numbers, swords (then) chop off their heads.

Here, they suffer death and deadly suffering.

12.4 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

<sup>22</sup> *Puttena* throughout according to ancient Indian idiom; we may take this as “child” in our context.

<sup>23</sup> “They clamber up the fortress wall freshly smeared [with lime],” *addāva, lapenā upakāriyo*. M:ÑB has “they charge slippery bastions”. See Comy (MA 2:58).

<sup>24</sup> “Boiling cowdung,” *pakkaṭṭhiyā* (boiling), Be *chakaṇakāyā* (which Comy glosses as *kuthita, gomaya*, which could mean “cooked cowdung” or “stinking cowdung”).

<sup>25</sup> “Spiked weights,” *abhivaggena* (lit “with large heavy objects”) = *sata, dantena* (with a hundred teeth) (MA 2:58).

## Dangers of immoral conduct

**13** Again, Mahānāma, with sense-desires as the cause,  
sense-desires as the source,  
sense-desires as the basis,  
the cause being simply **sense-desires**,

13.2 they break into houses,<sup>26</sup> they carry away their plunder, they commit burglary, they wait in ambush, they go with the women of others.

13.3 Kings then seize them, inflicting on them various kinds of torture:<sup>27</sup>

13.4 having them whipped, caned, clubbed, their hands cut off, their feet cut off, their limbs cut off, their ears cut off, their noses cut off, their ears and noses cut off;

13.5 having them subjected to ‘the porridge pot,’ to ‘the polished-shell shave,’ to ‘Rāhu’s mouth,’ to ‘the fiery garland,’ to ‘the flaming hand,’ to ‘the blades of grass, to ‘the bark dress,’

13.6 to (being strapped to the ground by an iron ring around each limb, fastened by iron spikes and then surrounded by fire, called)<sup>28</sup> ‘the black antelope,’

13.7 to (having pieces of their flesh cut and hung on) ‘the meat hooks,’ to ‘the coins’ [disc-slice], to ‘the lye pickling’ [immersion in strong alkaline solution], to ‘the pivoting pin [where a spike is driven in his skull from ear to ear], to ‘the rolled-up straw mat’ [being beaten up]; and

13.8 having them splashed with boiling oil, and having them thrown to the dogs to be devoured, having them impaled alive on stakes, and having their heads cut off with a sword.

13.9 Here, *they suffer death and deadly suffering*.

13.10 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

**14** Again, Mahānāma, *with sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires*:

14.2 Having miscondacted themselves through body, through speech and through mind, after death, when the bodies have broken up,

they re-appear in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell.

14.3 Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.<sup>29</sup>

## Austerities of the Nirgranthas<sup>30</sup>

**15** Now, Mahānāma, at one time, I was staying on **Mount Vulture Peak** (*gijjha, kūṭa*) outside Rājagaha.

<sup>26</sup> “They break into houses,” *sandhim pi chindanti* (J 1:187 f, 2:388).

<sup>27</sup> As at **Bala, paṇḍita S** (M 129,4/3:164), SD 2.22 & as the 4<sup>th</sup> divine messenger in **Devadūta S** (M 130,7/3:171), SD 2.23.

<sup>28</sup> NmA 278 ad Nm 154 = M 13,14 (1:87,15).

<sup>29</sup> Comy notes that “escape” (*nissaraṇa*) is not mentioned here (as in **Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S**, M 13,16-17/-1:87), SD 6.9, as this teaching is given in connection with the “middle way” (V 1:10), avoiding the extremes of sensual indulgence and of self-mortification (MA 2:63). The following section, giving an example of the extreme of self-mortification, in fact, shows how “escape” is effected.

<sup>30</sup> A passage very similar to this section appears at the beginning of **Deva, dāha S** (M 101,3-5/2:214 f), SD 18.4.



15.2 At that time, some **nirgranthas**,<sup>31</sup> living on Kāla,silā [Black Rock] on Isi,gili’s side were suffering<sup>32</sup> sharp, piercing, racking pains through standing upright, refusing seats.<sup>33</sup>

16 Then, Mahānāma, when it was evening, having emerged from my retreat, I approached the nirgranthas and said this to them:

16.2 ‘Avuso nirgranthas, why are you suffering sharp, piercing, racking pains through standing upright, refusing seats.’

17 Mahānāma, when this was said, the nirgranthas said this to me:

17.2 ‘Avuso, the nirgrantha Nāta,putta<sup>34</sup> [Mahā,vīra] is omniscient, all-seeing—he claims to have complete knowledge and vision thus:<sup>35</sup>

17.3 “Whether I am walking or standing or sleeping or [93] awake, knowledge and vision are continuously and uninterruptedly present in me.”<sup>36</sup>

17.4 He says thus:

“Nirgranthas, you have done bad deeds before. *Exhaust them through sharp painful austerities. And restraining your body, speech and mind right here and now, you would not be committing further karma.*

17.5 Thus, by the destruction of old karma through asceticism<sup>37</sup> and by doing no fresh karma, there will be no more flow<sup>38</sup> of karma through its being destroyed.

17.6 With the destruction of karma, there is the destruction of suffering; with the destruction of suffering, there is the destruction of feeling; with the destruction of feeling, all suffering will be exhausted.”

17.7 And this is what we find pleasing and approve of, and in which we rejoice.’

18 When this was said, I said to the nirgranthas:

18.2 ‘Avuso nirgranthas, do you know for sure<sup>39</sup> that you actually existed before or that you did not?’<sup>40</sup>  
‘No, avuso.’

<sup>31</sup> *Nigaṇṭha*, ie the Jains, led by nirgrantha Nāta,putta (also called Mahā,vīra).

<sup>32</sup> “(They) were suffering...pains,” *vedanā vediyanti*, lit “feeling feelings”.

<sup>33</sup> *Tena kho pana samayena sambahulā nigaṇṭhā isigili,passe kāla,silāyaṃ ubbhaṭṭhakā honti āsana,paṭikkhittā, opakkamikā dukkhā tibbā kharā katukā vedanā vedayanti*. As at M 1:78; A 1:296, 2:206. For refs on underscored, see **Sabba,kamma,jaha S** (U 3.1.5/21) @ SD 39.3 n. The Nirgranthas or Jains believe that severe austerities are needed to remove the accumulation of past karma. “The Buddha brings in the Jain practice of asceticism to demonstrate that his own teaching is a ‘middle way’ free from the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification.” (M:ÑB 1201 n 209).

<sup>34</sup> *Nigaṇṭha nāta,putta*.

<sup>35</sup> Nirgrantha Nātaputta’s claim to omniscience, see M 2:31, A 3:74. In criticizing the notion that a teacher could be omniscient, **Jayatilleke**, argues that “his lack of omniscience would be evident from his actions. For instance, he enters an empty abode and receives no alms, a dog bites him, he meets a fierce elephant, horse or bull, has to ask for the names of people, of villages or hamlets or to find his way.” (1963:202-204). **Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi** similarly say that “The fact that he makes bad judgements and must ask questions belies his claim to omniscience.” (M:ÑB 1283 n753). See **Sandaka S** (M 76.21/1:519), SD 35.7.

<sup>36</sup> This Nigaṇṭha’s claim of omniscience is also made in **Cūḷa Sakul’udāyi S** (M 79,6/2:30), which is criticized by the Buddha himself. Both Pūraṇa Kassapa and nirgrantha Nātaputta make this claim in **Lok’āyatikā Brāhmaṇā S** (A 9.38/4:428 f), SD 35.2. At **Sandaka S** this claim is attr to “some teacher” (M 76,21/1:519), SD 35.7. Cf A 1:220, 221. See Jayatilleke 1963:203 f.

<sup>37</sup> “Asceticism,” *tapa*, lit “burning” (cf Lat *tepor*, heat), ie the burning away of defilements (usually through self-mortification). From here up to §19, similarly expressed in **Deva,daha S** (M 101,2-5/2:214 f), SD 18.4.

<sup>38</sup> “Flow,” *anavassava*. Comy is silent. In a parallel passage in **Nigaṇṭha (Nātaputta) S** (A 3.74) the word *setu,-ghata* (“bridge-destroying”) is used (A 3.74/1:220 f). Cf V 2:89; M 2:246.

<sup>39</sup> “For sure,” *pana*.

<sup>40</sup> *Kim pana tumhe ... jānātha: ahuvām eva mayarṇ pubbe, na nāhuvamhā ti*, lit “Do you know for sure, ‘We actually existed before that it is not the case we did not exist?’”



18.3 ‘Avuso nirgranthas, do you know for sure that you actually did not do any bad before or that the contrary is the case [that you did not do them]?’

‘No, avuso.’

18.4 ‘Avuso nirgranthas, do you know for sure that you did not do such and such a bad action?’

‘No, avuso.’

18.5 ‘Avuso nirgranthas, do you know for sure that so much suffering has been exhausted; so much suffering *should* be exhausted; with the exhaustion of so much suffering, *all* suffering would be exhausted?’

‘No, avuso.’

18.6 ‘Avuso nirgranthas, do you know for sure *what unwholesome karma* you have abandoned, *what wholesome karma* has been cultivated here and now?’

‘No, avuso.’

19 ‘So, avuso nirgranthas, it seems that you do not know *whether you have existed before or not*.

19.2 You do not know *whether you have done bad karma before or not*.

19.3 You do not know *which particular bad karma you have done*.

19.4 You do not know *how much suffering* has been exhausted; how much suffering should be exhausted; with the exhaustion of how much suffering, all suffering would be exhausted.

19.5 You do not know what *unwholesome karma* you have abandoned, what *wholesome karma* has been cultivated here and now.

19.6 That being the case, avuso nirgranthas, those who are violent, with blood on their hands, doers of cruel deeds,<sup>41</sup> when they are reborn amongst human beings, they renounce the world as nirgranthas!’<sup>42</sup>

### How is happiness gained?

20 ‘Avuso Gotama, happiness [pleasure] is not to be found through happiness [pleasure]; but happiness is to be found through pain.<sup>43</sup>

20.2 For, [94] avuso Gotama, if happiness were to be gained through happiness, then, Seniya Bimbisāra, the rajah of Magadha, would have gained happiness;

then, Seniya Bimbisāra, the rajah of Magadha, would be living more happily than the venerable Gotama.’

20.3 ‘Surely these words have been uttered by the venerable nirgranthas rashly, without reflection, that happiness is not to be gained through happiness; but happiness is to be gained through pain.

20.4 If happiness were to be gained through happiness, then, Seniya Bimbisāra, the rajah of Magadha, would be living more happily than the venerable Gotama.’

20.5 But surely, I, too, should be counter-questioned here,<sup>44</sup> thus:

<sup>41</sup> “Cruel deeds,” *kurūra, kammantā*. As at A 3:383.

<sup>42</sup> The Buddha’s trademark humour is evident here. The Jains believe that whatever one experiences is due to one’s past karma. If that were so, the Buddha argues, the severe pains to which they subjected themselves as part of their ascetic practice would be rooted in the unwholesome actions in previous lives. For the Buddha’s positive answer to this Jain wrong view, see **Kukkura, vatika S** (M 57,11/3:390 f), SD 23.11.

<sup>43</sup> *Na kho āvuso gotama sukkena sukhaṃ adhigantabbam, dukkhena kho sukhaṃ adhigantabbam*. **Sukha** means both “happiness” and “pleasure,” and both senses apply here. **Adhigantabbam** (M 1:93,36; It 104,17\*; Miln 243,-17; Vism 219,6) is fut pass part of *adhigacchati*, “to get to, attain, acquire; understand.” This is a key teaching of the Jains. Prince Bodhi declares this in **Bodhi Rāja, kumara S** (M 85,9.2/2:93), where his view seems broader (SD 55.2).

<sup>44</sup> *Api ca aham eva tattha paṭipucchitabbo*. Note the number of nested narration here: the Buddha is speaking to the Nirgranthas, about what they should ask, and this whole passage is related to Mahānāma, retold to us by the



22.4 I, avuso nirgranthas, can dwell without moving my body, without saying a word, for 5 nights and 5 days.

22.5 I, avuso nirgranthas, can dwell without moving my body, without saying a word, for 6 nights and 6 days.

22.6 I, avuso nirgranthas, can dwell without moving my body, without saying a word, **for 7 nights and 7 days**, experiencing only happiness!<sup>46</sup>

22.7 What do you think, avuso nirgranthas, that being the case, who dwells more happily: Seniya Bimbisāra, the rajah of Magadha, or I?’

22.8 ‘That being the case, **[95]** the venerable Gotama indeed dwells more happily than Seniya Bimbisāra, the rajah of Magadha.’<sup>47</sup>

22.9 The Blessed One said this. Satisfied, Mahānāma the Sakya rejoiced<sup>48</sup> in the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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<sup>46</sup> Comy says that the Buddha is referring to his own experience of the joy of fruition attainment (*arahatta, phala, samāpatti*), ie the attainment of the fruit of arhathood. Qu at Kvu 459. **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16) contains an interesting episode of the Buddha’s transfiguration following the offering of “golden” robes by Pukkusa, a pupil of Āḷāra Kālāma, who meets the Buddha resting under the tree. Pukkusa, proud of his teacher, Āḷāra, who was also the Bodhisattva’s first teacher, boasts that Āḷāra was such a remarkable meditator who “neither saw nor heard 500 carts passing nearby”. The Buddha replies that he himself, when meditating, is totally unaffected by a greater commotion: “while conscious, not to see or hear anything in heavy rainstorm, when lightning flashes and thunder crashes”— which, he asks Pukkusa, is more difficult to do? In fact, when the Buddha was staying in the threshing-house (*bhus’-āgāra*, i.e. where harvest is threshed) at Ātumā, a village between Kusinagara and Sāvattihī, there was a bad thunderstorm, where “two farmers, brothers, and four oxen were killed; and a lot of people went out of Ātumā to where the two brothers and four oxen were killed.” The Buddha was walking in meditation just outside the building, but was totally unaffected by the whole incident. (D 2:131 f; cf V 1:249 f.)

<sup>47</sup> On a similar note, see (**Hatthaka**) **Āḷavaka S** (A 3.34/1:136 f), SD 4.8.

<sup>48</sup> “Joyfully approved,” *attamanā ... abhinandurū*.