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Dvedhā Vitakka Sutta

The Discourse on the 2 Kinds of Thoughts | M 19

Theme: Dealing with the duality of thoughts

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2015, 2019

1 Introduction

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The Dvedhā Vitakka Sutta, the “discourse on the 2 kinds of thoughts,” preserves the Buddha’s pre-awakening division of thoughts into the wholesome and the unwholesome.¹ It has a parallel in the Chinese Madhyama Āgama (MĀ 102).² The Sutta and its MĀ version are closely parallel, reporting how the Buddha, during his struggle for awakening, developed a clear distinction between the 3 types of unwholesome thoughts and their opposites.

1.2 THE COWHERD METAPHOR

1.2.1 Realizing that unwholesome thoughts lead to mental habits that bring us harm and also harm to others, he made an effort to dispel such thoughts.³ Both versions show the Bodhisattva’s ability to quickly dispel any unwholesome thought as illustrated in **the metaphor of a cowherd**. A cowherd has to closely guard the cows so that they do not stray into ripening corn for a meal and thus damaging the harvest; this will then cause the cowherd to be punished. Just as the cowherd fears punishment, whenever we notice any unwholesome thought arising, we at once dispel them.⁴

Both versions start off by saying that **an unwholesome thought** is harmful. The two versions then differ in the sequence of their presentation: M 19 states that frequent thinking forms a mental habit, and closes with the metaphor. The Chinese MĀ 102, on the other hand, gives the metaphor, and closes with stating that frequent thinking leads to mental habit (*nati*).⁵

1.2.2 Thus, M 19 first takes up the Bodhisattva’s reflection on the danger inherent in an unwholesome thought, next describes how the mind follows the course set by whatever we frequently think about, and then presents the cowherd metaphor. The MĀ 102 parallel version instead follows with the cowherd metaphor, and then closes with the general nature of the mind that is influenced by what we often think about.

The Sutta applies the metaphor to highlight the thought inclination or habit (*nati*)—just as a cow is in the habit of gravitating into a cornfield for a meal. This fits the flow of ideas very well. However, the

¹ The same twofold distinction of thoughts recurs as a sutta on its own in It 3.4.8/82,9+21.

² MĀ 102/T1.589a11-590a25, 念經 *niànjīng* “discourse on thoughts,” <https://legacy.suttacentral.net/lzh/ma102>. MĀ 102 agrees with M 19 on locating the discourse in Jeta’s Grove by Sāvattihī. Parts of MĀ 102 have been tr by A BAREAU, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtra-piṭaka et le Vinaya-piṭaka anciens, De la quête de l’éveil à la conversion de Sariputra et de Maudgalyāyana*, Paris: ÉFEO, vol 1, 1963:63-66. MĀ 102 has been studied and partly tr by THICH MINH CHAU, *The Chinese Madhyama Agama and the Pali Majjhima Nikaya*, 1964 1:33,194 f. For a study, see ANALAYO, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya*, Taipei, 2011 vol 1:138-140.

³ M 19/1:115,1 and MĀ 102/T1.589a18, which specifies that this type of practice was undertaken while the Buddha was dwelling alone and in seclusion, 在遠離獨住 *zài yuǎn lí dú zhù*. A quotation from this part of the Sutta can be found in the *Mahāvibhāṣā (T1545/T27.226b11).

⁴ M 19/1:115,35 and MĀ 102/T1.589b2.

⁵ M 19/1:115,21; a similar statement can be found in the Sikāsāsamuccaya in Bendall 1902:53,19, introduced as a quote from the Candrapradāpa Sūtra; cf Saundarananda Kāvya 15.18 in Johnston 1928:105,1.

MĀ version sees the metaphor as pointing to the cowherd's fear of unwanted consequences, instead of exemplifying that a proliferation of a particular kind of thought leads to its corresponding mental inclination.

2 Mental concentration

2.1 THOUGHTS AND MENTAL HABITS

The 2 versions continue with **the wholesome thoughts**, which, due to their harmless nature, are allowed to proceed. This is comparable to the cowherd being able to relax, once the harvest has been brought in. In regard to these wholesome thoughts, both versions report the Buddha reflecting that too much thinking, even of a wholesome nature, will hinder the development of concentration, a reflection that motivates him to steady his mind internally and let it become concentrated.⁶

2.2 THE DHYANAS

2.2.1 Both versions describe that gaining concentration in this way brings about the attainment of **the 4 dhyanas**. However, while in M 19, the dhyanas are still part of the Bodhisattva's own pre-awakening development,⁷ in its MĀ parallel, the narrator switches the subject from the Buddha to "a monk" in general, who, by overcoming wholesome thoughts, will be able to attain dhyana.⁸

2.2.2 Another difference in relation to the same statement is that the Chinese version proceeds directly from leaving behind wholesome thoughts to the attainment of the 2nd dhyana, while M 19 includes the 1st dhyana in its account.⁹ M 19 continues after the 4 dhyanas with the attainment of the 3 higher knowledges. MĀ 102, however, mentions only the 3rd higher attainment, the destruction of the influxes.¹⁰

2.3 THE DEER STALKER METAPHOR

2.3.1 Both discourses continue with **the parable** of a man who tries to lure a deer-herd into a false path by covering up the right path, in order to bring about their ruin.¹¹ Both versions contrast this with an-

⁶ M 19/1:116,14 and MĀ 102/T1.589b21.

⁷ M 19/1:117,6: *so kho ahaṃ ... paṭhamañ jhānaṃ ... catutthañ jhānaṃ upasampajja vihāsim.*

⁸ MĀ 102 at T1.589c7: 若比丘 ... 得第二禪成就遊 ... 得第四禪成就遊.

⁹ A similar absence of the 1st dhyana is seen in M 125/3:136,27, which proceeds directly from the overcoming of thoughts to the 2nd dhyana. However, the parallel MĀ 198/T1.758b26 does refer to the 1st dhyana. Notably, in the case of M 125 and MĀ 198 as well as in the present case of M 19 and MĀ 102, the dhyanas are preceded by a reference to letting go of thinking. This suggests that the omission of the 1st dhyana in M 125 and in MĀ 102 may be a transmission error that happened during oral recitation, where the circumstance of letting go of "thought" (*vitakka*) has just been mentioned may have misled the reciter(s) to continue with the standard formulation of the 2nd dhyana, which mentions such a letting go of *vitakka*, thereby unintentionally omitting to recite the 1st dhyana; cf Analayo 2012d.

¹⁰ In regard to this difference, it should be kept in mind that MĀ 102 is no longer concerned with the Buddha's own approach to awakening, but only with the practice of a monk in general. Bareau 1963, possibly influenced by the Pali parallel, translates this passage as if it were representing the Buddha's own awakening (76) and then discusses it as an account that differs from the standard descriptions of the Buddha's awakening (81). A close inspection of the present passage, however, shows that whereas the part concerned with the presence of wholesome thoughts still refers to the Buddha's own experience, the development of the dhyanas and the subsequent destruction of the influxes in MĀ 102/T1.589c6 has 比丘 *bhīqū* "a monk" as its subject, a subject change already noted by Schmithausen 1981:221 n75.

¹¹ M 19/1:117,23 and MĀ 102/T1.589c23.

other man who **reopens the right path**, moved by the wish to protect the deer-herd. Similar to the second man, the Buddha has opened up the right path for his disciples, namely, the noble eightfold path.

2.3.2 The two versions close with the Buddha exhorting the monks that they should retire into seclusion and meditate, lest they later regret it. This is the Buddha’s famous call for his followers, especially the renunciants, to meditate.¹² Broadly interpreted, this is a call for us, who follow the Buddha’s teaching, to be mindful, a habit when properly cultivated, becomes the foundation for meditation training.

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Dvedhā Vitakka Sutta

The Discourse on the 2 Kinds of Thoughts

M 19

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying at Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery park in Jeta’s Grove outside Sāvattthī.

There he addressed the monks thus:

“Bhikshus.”

“Bhante,” they replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

The unwholesome thoughts

2 “Bhikshus, before my awakening, while I was still only an unawakened bodhisattva, it occurred to me:

‘Suppose that I dwell working with my thoughts in 2 ways.’¹³

2.2 Then, I set, on one side, thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill will, thoughts of cruelty, and I set, on the other side, thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-ill will, and thoughts of non-cruelty.¹⁴

(1) THOUGHTS OF SENSUAL DESIRE

3 As I dwelled thus, diligent, ardent and resolute, **[115]** a thought of **sensual desire** arose in me. I understood thus:

‘This thought of sensual desire has arisen in me.

¹² M 19/1:118,20 and MĀ 102/T1.590a18. For refs, see §29 n.

¹³ *Yaṃ nūnāhaṃ dvidhā katvā dvidhā katvā vitakke vihareyyan’ti*. The Bodhisattva deals with his thoughts in these 2 ways during his 6 years seeking for awakening. (MA 2:79,19-35). For another sutta dealing with a similar dichotomy of thoughts, as unwholesome and wholesome, see **Andha,karaṇa S** (It 3.4.8/82 f).

¹⁴ The language here is apophatic (“negative”) [SD 40a.1 (6.3)]. In positive terms, these are, respectively, “thoughts of charity (*cāga*) and letting go (of unwholesome states) (*nekkhamma*),” “thoughts of lovingkindness (*mettā*) and thoughts of compassion (*karuṇā*).

3.2 This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, to the affliction of both,¹⁵
it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, leads away from nirvana.¹⁶

When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,'	it subsided in me; ¹⁷
when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, leads away from nirvana,'	it subsided in me.

Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

(2) THOUGHTS OF ILL WILL

4 As I dwelled thus, diligent, ardent and resolute, a thought of **ill will** arose in me.

I understood thus:

'This thought of ill will has arisen in me.

4.2 *This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, to the affliction of both;
it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, leads away from nirvana.'*

When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, leads away from nirvana,'	it subsided in me.

Whenever a thought of ill will arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

(3) THOUGHTS OF CRUELTY

5 As I dwelled thus, diligent, ardent and resolute, a thought of **cruelty** arose in me.

I understood thus:

'This thought of cruelty has arisen in me.

5.2 *This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, to the affliction of both;
it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, leads away from nirvana.'*

When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,'	it subsided in me;
when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, leads away from nirvana,'	it subsided in me.

Whenever a thought of cruelty arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

Mental inclinations

6 Bhikshus, whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, *that* will become **an inclination of his mind** [a mental habit].¹⁸

¹⁵ *So ca kho atta, vyābādāhāya pi saṁvattati, para, vyābādāhāya pi saṁvattati, ubhaya, vyābādāhāya pi saṁvattati.*

¹⁶ *Paññā, nirodhiko vighāta, pakkhakiko anibbāna, saṁvattaniko.*

¹⁷ *Abbhattham gacchati* = Skt *abhy-astam* [CPD: cf ³*attha*, the western mountain (where the sun sets)], "towards home or setting" only with *gacchati*, "to disappear, subside, become extinct, comes to an end" (M 1:115,6; *niruj-jhati*, Comy; 119,12; Nett 31,26). Of *vedanā*, etc: M 1:124,12 f = A 4:32,25 = 33,17 = 168,13. See CPD & DP: *abbhat-tham*.

If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of he has abandoned the thought of <u>renunciation</u> to cultivate the thought of then, his mind inclines to thoughts of	sensual desire, <i>sensual desire;</i> <i>sensual desire.</i>
If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of he has abandoned the thought of <u>non-ill will</u> to cultivate the thought of then, his mind inclines to thoughts of	ill will <i>ill will;</i> <i>ill will.</i>
If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of he has abandoned the thought of <u>non-cruelty</u> to cultivate the thought of then, his mind inclines to thoughts of	cruelty, <i>cruelty;</i> <i>cruelty.</i>

The parable of the thick corn [§12]

7 Bhikshus, just as in **the last month of the rains**, in the autumn, when the corn is thick, a cowherd would guard his cows by again and again tapping and prodding¹⁹ them on this side and that with a stick to stop and check them.²⁰

7.2 Why is that? Because he sees that he could be flogged, or imprisoned, or fined or blamed²¹ (if the cows strayed into the corn and devoured it).²²

7.3 So, too, in unwholesome states I saw *danger, decline, defilement*, and in **wholesome states** the benefits of renunciation, pertaining to *cleansing*.²³

Freeing the mind

[116]

8 As I dwelled thus, bhikshus, diligent, ardent and resolute, a thought of **renunciation** arose in me. I understood thus:

‘This thought of renunciation has arisen in me.

¹⁸ *Yañ,ñad eva bhikkhave bhikkhu bahulam anuvitakketi anuvicāreti, tathā tathā nati hoti cetaso.* On *nati* (inclination or habit), see **Cetanā S 3** (S 12.40), SD 7.6c.

¹⁹ “Tapping and prodding,” *ākoṭeyya paṭikoṭeyya. Ākoṭeyya*, from *ākoṭeti* (also *akoṭayati, ākoṭṭeti*; BHS *ākoṭayati*), “to beat down, trample, pound, stamp; to beat (on), knock (at), strike (at), hammer (in), hit” (V 1:149,2, 2:138,-4; D 2:336,16-17; M 1:115,31). *Paṭikoṭeyya*, from *paṭikoṭṭeti (paṭi, “against; again” + koṭṭeti, caus of kuṭati, “becomes crooked; bends, curves”)*, “to bend away, to make refrain from” (M 1:115; S 2:265, cf A 4:47). Comy: He would strike them straight, on their backs (*ujukam piṭṭhiyam pahareyya*), or across, on the ribs (*tiriyam phāsukam pahareyya*) (MA 2:82,8 f).

²⁰ The parable: *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave vassānam pacchime māse sarada,samaye kiṭṭha,sambādhe go,pālako gāvo rakkheyya, so tā gāvo tato tato daṇḍena ākoṭeyya paṭikoṭeyya sannirundheyya sannivāreyya.* On *kiṭṭha*, “corn; cornfield” (M 1:115; A 3:393; S 4:195, 196; J 1:143, 338). *Kiṭṭha*, like *sassa*, can mean both “corn” and “crop” [§12]. *Sannirundheyye*, pot of *sannirumbhati* (or *~rundhati*), “to restrain, block, impede.”

²¹ “Could be flogged, or imprisoned, or fined or blamed,” *vadham vā bandhanam vā jānim vā garaham vā. Vaddha* by itself usu means “killing, slaughter, execution, destruction”; in cpd, usu means “striking, flogging,” eg *vadha,bandhana*, “flogging and binding [imprisonment].” *Bandhana* means “binding, being bound,” usu refers to “imprisonment” (as here). Cf **Laṭukikōpama S** (M 66/1:449,18 SD 28.11; **(Tika) Mūla S** (A 3.69/1:201-204), SD 18.2.

²² *Tam kissa hetu. Passati hi so bhikkhave go,pālako tato,nidānam vadham vā bandhanam vā jānim vā garaham vā.*

²³ *Evam eva kho aham bhikkhave addasam akusalānam dhammānam ādīnavam okāram saṅkilesam kusalānam dhammānam nekkhamme ānisamsam vodāna,pakkham.* This passage recurs in **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60/1:408,-12-15), SD 35.5. Cf a similar tone in connection with gradual teaching: **Upāli (Gahapati) S** (M 56/1:379), SD 27.1; Mv 1.7.5 (V 1:15).

8.2 This does *not* lead to my own affliction, nor to others' affliction, nor to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, brings no trouble, leads to the arising of nirvana.²⁴

8.3 But, bhikshus, even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a night,
even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a day,
even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a night and a day,
 I see nothing to fear from it.

8.4 But with excessive thinking and pondering, I may tire my body,²⁵
 when the body is tired, the mind becomes agitated [afflicted];
 when the mind is agitated, it is far from concentration.'

8.5 So, bhikshus, internally,
 I stilled my mind, quieted it, settled it, made it one-pointed, concentrated it.²⁶
 Why is that? So that my mind should not be agitated.²⁷

9 As I dwelled thus, bhikshus, diligent, ardent and resolute, a thought of **non-ill will** arose in me. I understood thus:

'This thought of non-ill will has arisen in me.

9.2 This does not lead to my own affliction, nor to others' affliction, nor to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, brings no trouble, leads to the arising of nirvana.

9.3 But, bhikshus, even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a night,
even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a day,
even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a night and a day,
 I see nothing to fear from it.

9.4 But with excessive thinking and pondering, I may tire my body,
 and when the body is tired, the mind is agitated;
 and when the mind is agitated, it is far from concentration.'

9.5 So, bhikshus, internally,
 I stilled my mind, quieted it, settled it, made it one-pointed, concentrated it.
 Why is that? So that my mind should not be agitated.

10 As I dwelled thus, bhikshus, diligent, ardent and resolute, a thought of **non-cruelty** arose in me. I understood thus:

²⁴ Prec line and this: *So ca kho n'ev'atta,vyābādhāya saṁvattati, na para,vyābādhāya saṁvattati, na ubhaya,-vyābādhāya saṁvattati, paññā,vuddhiko avighāta,pakkhiko nibbana,saṁvattaniko.*

²⁵ This and foll 2 lines: *Api ca kho me aticiraṃ anuvitakkayato anuvicārayato kāyo kilameyya, kāye kilante [vl kilamante] cittaṃ ūhaññeyya, ūhate citte ārā cittaṃ samādhimhāti. Ūhanati², "to shake, be restless, be agitated": ūhata (mfn), "hit; afflicted; distressed" (M 1:116,13 ūhate); ūhaññati, pass pres 3 sg (M 1:116,13; V 1:48,13); Caus ugghāṭeti, "lifts up, removes; elevates, elates" (DP). The restless mind here prob = *uddhata* [SD 50.12 (2.4.4)]. Further, see §8.5 "should not be afflicted" n.*

²⁶ *So kho ahaṃ bhikkhave ajjhataṃ eva cittaṃ saṅghapemi sannisīdemi (Be sannisīdemi) ekodirā karomi samādahāmi.* Cf **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122,7/3:111,18), SD 11.4; **Samādhi S 3** (A 4.94/2:94,21+34), SD 41.3.

²⁷ *Mā me cittaṃ ūhaññī:* Be Ce so; Ee ūhanī (wr); Se ugghāṭī. **Ūhaññī**, aor 3 sg of *ūhanati*², "hits at, strikes; hurts, damages, afflicts, spoils" (DP). Comy: Excessive thinking and pondering leads to agitation. To tame and soften the mind, the Bodhisattva would enter a meditative attainment; then, he would emerge from it and cultivate insight. (MA 2:83,21-30). [§8.4 "tire my body" n.]

‘This thought of non-cruelty has arisen in me.

10.2 This does not lead to my own affliction, nor to others’ affliction, nor to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, brings no trouble, leads to the arising of nirvana.

10.3 But, bhikshus, even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a night,
even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a day,
even if I were to think and ponder upon this thought for a night and a day,
I see nothing to fear from it.

10.4 But with excessive thinking and pondering, I may tire my body,
and when the body is tired, the mind becomes agitated;
and when the mind is agitated, it is far from concentration.’

10.5 So, bhikshus, internally, I stilled my mind, quieted it, settled it, make it one-pointed, concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be agitated.

Thoughts of renunciation, non-ill will, non-cruelty

11 Bhikshus, whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind.

If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of **renunciation,**
he abandons the thought of sensual desire to cultivate the thought of renunciation,
then, his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation.

11.2 *Bhikshus, whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon,* that will become the inclination of his mind.

If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of **non-ill will,**
he abandons the thought of ill will to cultivate the thought of non-ill will,
and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-ill will.

11.3 *Bhikshus, whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon,* that will become the inclination of his mind.

If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of **non-cruelty,**
he abandons the thought of cruelty to cultivate the thought of non-cruelty,
and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-cruelty.

The parable of the harvested corn [§7]

12 ²⁸Bhikshus, just as in **the last month of the hot season,** when all the crops²⁹ have been brought into the village, **[117]** a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the foot of a tree or out in the open, since he only needs to be mindful that the cows are there;³⁰ so too, there was need for me only to be mindful that those states were there.³¹

²⁸ The parable: *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave gimhānaṃ pacchime māse sabba,sassesu gāma’anta,sambhatesu go,pālako gāvo rakkheyya, tassa rukkhā,mūla,gatassa vā abbhokāsa,gatassa vā sati,karaṇīyam eva hoti etā*²⁸ [vl ete] *gāvo’ti. Evam evaṃ kho bhikkhave sati,karaṇīyam eva ahosi ete dhammā’ti.*

²⁹ *Sassa*, “corn, crop” (M 1:116; J 1:86, 143, 143, 152; V 1:238 *susassa*, “abounding in corn”); cf §7 parable where *kiṭṭha* is used instead. *Sassa*, like *kiṭṭha*, can mean both “corn” and “crop” [§7].

³⁰ Comy says that he needs not herd them (as he did before) but must be mindful of them (MA 2:84,25-27).

13 Tireless effort was aroused in me, bhikkhus, undistracted mindfulness was established, my body was tranquil and untroubled, my mind concentrated and unified.³²

THE FULL AWAKENING PERICOPE

(§§14-24)³³

THE 4 DHYANAS

14 Bhikkhus, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and dwelt in **the 1st dhyana**,³⁴ accompanied by initial application and sustained application, with zest and joy born of solitude.³⁵

15 With the stilling of initial application and sustained application, I entered upon and dwelt in **the 2nd dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, with zest and joy born of stillness [samadhi].³⁶

16 And with the fading away of zest, I remained equanimous, mindful and clearly knowing, and felt joy with the body.³⁷

I attained and dwelt in **the 3rd dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’

17 And with the abandoning of joy and pain,³⁸ and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,

³¹ *Evam evaṃ kho bhikkhave sati, karaṇīyam eva ahoṣi ete dhammā’ti.* Comy: These states are calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) (MA 2:84,27 f). See **Samata & vipassanā**, SD 41.1.

³² *Āradham kho pana me bhikkhave vīriyam ahoṣi asallīnam, upaṭṭhitā sati asammuṭṭhā, passaddho kāyo asā-raddho, samāhitam cittaṃ ek’aggam.*

³³ This whole section (§§14-24)—**the full awakening pericope**—is at **Bhaya, bherava S** (M 4,27-33), SD 44.3 = **Dvedhā Vitakka S** (M 19,18-24), SD 61.1; **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,34-44), SD 49.4. The same stock recurs in **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39,19-21), SD 10.13, with similes for the 4 dhyanas, as the fuller awakening pericope. The same stock recurs in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,76-100)—with more details and similes, and a unique passage on “knowledge of the mind-made body” (D 2,87-88)—and called the comprehensive awakening pericope (D 2,93-98), SD 8.10.

³⁴ The description of the 4 dhyanas here as at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,81-84), SD 8.10.

³⁵ “Born of solitude,” *viveka, ja*; ie it is the result of abandoning the hindrances: on the 3 kinds of solitude, see **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (1.5). On the omission of “one-pointedness of mind” (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) and “stillness” (*samādhi*) here, see **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5.

³⁶ The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṇhī, bhāva*) because within it initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, *vitakka, vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī, saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 1:161,4.3), SD 1.11, the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie, either discuss Dharma or meditate). See **Jhāna Pañha S 2** (S 40.2/4:263 f), SD 24.12.

³⁷ On this point, see **The Buddha discovers dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.4.1) On coming out of dhyana.

³⁸ “Joy and pain,” *sukha, dukkha*, refers to bodily feelings. The next phrase, “pleasure and displeasure,” *domanassa-somanassa*, refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended (let go of) earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome first so that the mind by itself is undistracted. Then, all the other feelings (arising from the bodily sense-contacts) are transcended: on its significance, see **Sall’atthena S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.

I attained and dwelled in **the 4th dhyana**
that was neither painful nor pleasant, and
with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.³⁹

The great awakening: the 3 knowledges⁴⁰

18 (1) When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to unshakable steadiness,⁴¹

18.2 I directed it to **the knowledge of the recollection of past lives**.⁴²

18.3 I recollected my manifold past lives, that is,

1 birth, 2 births, 3 births, 4, 5,

10, 20, 30, 40, 50,

100, 1,000, 100,000,

many aeons of cosmic contractions, many aeons of cosmic expansions,

many aeons of cosmic contractions and expansions, (recollecting),

18.4 ‘There I had such a name,

belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance.

Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain,

such the end of my life.

Passing away from that state, I re-arose there.

There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance.

Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span.

Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.⁴³

19 This, bhikshus, was **the 1st true knowledge** won by me in the 1st watch of the night.

Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.

20 (2) When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness,

20.2 I directed it to **the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings** [of death and rebirth of beings].⁴⁴

20.3 By means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],⁴⁵ purified and surpassing the human—I see beings passing away and reappearing, and

³⁹ Here, **Vibhaṅga** gives 3 factors of the 4th dhyana—equanimity (upekhā), mindfulness (sati) and one-pointedness of mind (cittassa ek’aggatā)—according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), and 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164; Vism 4.183/165). See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5.4).

⁴⁰ The term “one with the threefold knowledge” (*te,vijja*) refers to an arhat with these 3 realizations in counterpoint to the masters of the 3 Vedas: see **Te,vijja S** (D 8), SD 1.8. This whole section—the 3-knowledge pericope—is stock: see §34 header, “The full awakening pericope” n.

⁴¹ *So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu,bhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñ-ja-p,patte.*

⁴² *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati,ñāṇa*, detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

⁴³ As at **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4,27/1:22), SD 44.3. Be & Se abbreviate: “Even so, Aggi,vessana, with my mind thus concentrated, I recollect my manifold past lives ... in their modes and details.”

⁴⁴ *Sattānaṃ cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*, detailed at Vism 13.72-101/423-429.

⁴⁵ *dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §102).

know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate,
faring in accordance with their karma:

20.4 ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who reviled the noble ones,
held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
after death, when the body has broken up,
have reappeared in a plane of misery, a bad destiny, a lower realm, in hell.

20.5 But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who did not revile the noble ones,
who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views —
after death, when the body has broken up,
have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

20.6 Thus, by means of *the divine eye*,
I see beings passing away and re-appearing, and
know how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate,
faring in accordance with their karma:

20.7 ‘These beings—who were endowed with *bad* conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who reviled the noble ones,
held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
after death, when the body has broken up,
have reappeared in a plane of misery, a bad destiny, a lower realm, in hell.

20.8 But these beings—who were endowed with *good* conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who did not revile the noble ones,
who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views —
after death, when the body has broken up,
have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

21 This, bhikshus, **was the 2nd true knowledge** won by me in the middle watch of the night.
Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose,
as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.

22 (3) Bhikshus, when my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imper-
fection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to unshakable steadiness,

22.2 I directed it to **the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes**.⁴⁶ I directly knew as it really is:

‘This is **suffering**;
This is the arising of suffering;
This is the ending of suffering;
This is the path leading to the ending of suffering.’⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) has been variously translated as taints, corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The list of **3 influxes** (omitting the influx of views) 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 Abhidhamma lists **4 influxes**, those of: (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*ditṭh’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*). See BDict under *āsava*.

These are **the influxes**;
 This is the arising of the influxes;
 This is the ending of the influxes;
 This is the path leading to the ending of the influxes.⁴⁸

23 The mind is **freed**.
 When the mind is freed,⁵⁰
 there is the knowledge in the freedom: 'Freed!'⁵¹
 I directly knew:
 '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.'⁵²

*cittam vimuccittha*⁴⁹
vimuttasmiṃ
vimuttam iti ñāṇam ahoṣi
[abbhaññāsīm]
khīṇā jāti
vusitaṃ brahma,cariyaṃ
kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ
nāparam itthattāyāti abbhaññāsīm

24 This, bhikshus, was **the 3rd true knowledge** won by me in the last watch of the night.
 Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose,
 as happens in one who dwells diligent, ardent and resolute.

Parable of deer in the mountainside forest

25 Suppose, bhikshus, **a large herd of deer** lived in a wooded mountainside⁵³ near a great low-lying marsh on which it depends (as its grazing ground).⁵⁴

⁴⁷ These 4 statements on suffering pose an interesting problem: they are not called noble truths here (and in **Sāmañña,phala S**, D 2,97/1:83), SD 8.10 . Norman remarks that “since they appear to be subordinate to the 4 statements about the *āsavas*, it is possible that the statements about misery are a later addition, which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of 4 statements being evolved about the *āsavas*, to provide symmetry. See Schmit-hausen 1981: 205 & Norman 1982: 377-91, 1990:130.

⁴⁸ As in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,97/1:83 f), SD 8.10.

⁴⁹ This is more often in the present tense: “When the mind is freed” (*cittam vimuccati*) (eg D 1:84; M 1:38; S 3:45; A 1:165); less often in the past tense, *cittam vimuccittha*, mostly in Majjhima (eg M 1:23,22), and apparently, never in Dīgha and Saṃyutta. Comy only glosses on the pres tense version. I’ve tr it as present tense to harmonize with the rest of the passage.

⁵⁰ *Cittam vimuccittha*. Comys: “By ‘**when it is freed**’ the fruition-moment is shown” (*vimuttasmin’ti iminā phala-k,khaṇam dasseti*) (DA 1:225,14 omits *dasseti*; PugA 244,3). PugA adds: “The mind is freed in the path-moment; there is the freedom in the fruition-moment” (*magga-k,khaṇe hi cittam vimuccati, phala-k,khaṇe vimuttam hoti*, PugA 244,4 f). Philosophically, while the path is an event (is freed”), the fruition is a state (“freedom”). See prec n.

⁵¹ *Vimuttam iti ñāṇam hoti*. Sutta Comy: “By ‘there is the knowledge, “it is freed,” review-knowledge is shown” (*vimutt’amhīti ñāṇam hotīti iminā paccavekkhaṇa,ñāṇam*) (DA 1:225,15 f). Abhidhamma Comy: “By ‘When it is freed, there is the knowledge “Freedom!” review-knowledge is shown” (*vimuttasmiṃ vimuttam iti ñāṇan’ti iminā paccavekkhaṇa,ñāṇam dasseti*) (PugA 244,5-7). Although the 2 Comy readings differ, their sense is practically the same. This is a case where the lineages in the oral tradition remembered the same idea or sense of the passage, but worded it in slightly different ways.

⁵² *Nāparam itthattāya*: lit, “there is no more of ‘thusness/here-ness,’” where *ittha* can mean either “thus” or “here.” Hence, *ittha* refers to *this* samsaric state of rebirth and redeath. See SD 53.1 (3.2.2).

⁵³ “Wooded mountainside,” *araññe pavane*. Comy takes these 2 words as synonyms, that *pavana* = *vana,saṇḍa*, “forest grove, woodland thicket” (MA 2:85,2). On *pavana* as “mountainside, declivity”: D 2:254; 1:117; S 1:26, 2:95, 105; Tha 1092; as “wood, woodland,” cf Mvst 2:272, 382; see PED sv.

⁵⁴ *Seyyathā’pi bhikkhave araññe pavane mahantaṃ ninnaraṃ pallalāraṃ, tam enaṃ mahā,miga,saṅgho upa-nissāya vihareyya*.

25.2 Then, there appeared a man **wishing them no good, only harm, bondage**.⁵⁵
 He closed up the safe and good path on which one travelled happily, and
 opened up a false path on which he placed a decoy stag, set up a decoy doe.⁵⁶
 In this way, bhikshus, the large herd of deer would later meet with disaster, ruin, loss.⁵⁷

25.3 But another man came **wishing them good, welfare, security**.
 He opened up the safe and good path leading to their happiness, and closed up the false path.

25.4 He removed the decoy stag, drove away [destroyed] the decoy doe.⁵⁸
 As such, bhikshus, the large herd of deer would in time come to growth, increase, abundance.

Meaning of the parable

26 Bhikshus, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. [118]
 Here is the meaning:

‘**The great low-lying marsh**’ is an expression for sensual pleasures.

‘**The large herd of deer**’ is an expression for beings.

‘**The man wishing them no good, only harm and bondage**’ is an expression for Māra the bad one.

‘**The false path**’ is an expression for the wrong eightfold path, that is:

Wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration.

‘**The decoy stag**’ is an expression for delight and lust (*nandī, rāga*).

‘**The decoy doe**’ is a term for ignorance.

‘**The man desiring their good, welfare, security**’ is a term for the Tathagata, the arhat, fully self-awakened.

‘**The safe and good path on which one travelled happily**’ is a term for the noble eightfold path, that is:

Right view, right intention,
 right speech, right action, right livelihood,
 right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

27 Thus, bhikshus, the safe and good path on which one travelled happily has been opened up by me, the wrong path has been closed off, the deer decoy removed, the doe decoy destroyed.

The call to meditate

28 Bhikshus, whatever a teacher should do out of compassion for the good of disciples, for the sake of their welfare, this has been done to you by me.

⁵⁵ *Tassa kocid eva puriso uppajjeyya anatta, kāmo ahita, kāmo ayoga-k.khema, kāmo.*

⁵⁶ *So yvāssa maggo khemo sovatthiko pīti, gamanīyo, taṃ maggaṃ pidaheyya, vivareyya kummaggaṃ, odaheyya oka, caraṃ, thapeyya oka, cārikaṃ.*

⁵⁷ *Evaṃ hi so bhikkhave mahā, miga, saṅgho aparena samayena anaya, vyasanaṃ tanuttaraṃ [Be omits tanuttaraṃ] āpajjeyya.*

⁵⁸ *Ūhaneyya oka, caraṃ, nāseyya oka, cārikaṃ.* There is a play on both the verbs, *ūhaneyya* (“would remove” the stag decoy) and *nāseyya* (“would destroy” the dummy decoy), which can mean, respectively, “(he) would disturb (the decoy stag)” (*ūhaneyya*; such as by slapping it) so that it would break its bonds and flee, and “free the decoy doe” (*nāseyya*, from *nāseti*, caus pres 3 sg, “drives away”: DP 2:517).

29 These, bhikshus, are the foot of trees;⁵⁹ these are empty abodes.⁶⁰

Meditate,⁶¹ bhikshus! Be not heedless! Regret not later!

This is our instruction to you.”⁶²

30 The Blessed One said this. Satisfied, the monks rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁹ “Those are the foot of trees,” *etāni rukkha,mūlāni*. “Foot” here is usually single, like “bottom.”

⁶⁰ Sometimes rendered as “empty place”.

⁶¹ “Meditate!” *jhāyatha*, lit “cultivate *jhāna*” (M 1:45, 118; S 4:133, 4:359, 361, 362, 368, 373; A 3:87, 89, 4:139, 392). Syn *bhāvētha* (2nd pl), “cultivate!” See **Buddha Discovers Dhyana**, SD 33.1b (3.3.2).

⁶² This is stock: **Sallekha S** (M 8,18/1:46), SD 51.8; **Dvedhā,vitakka S** (M 19,27/1:118), SD 61.1; **Āneñja,sappāya S** (M 106,15/2:266 f), SD 85.13; **Indriya,bhāvanā S** (M 152,18/3:302), SD 17.13; **(Nava Purāna) Kamma S** (S 35.146/-4:133), SD 4.12; **Kāya S** (S 43.1/4:359), SD 12.21; & all suttas in the same **Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta** (S 43.2-44/4:360-373); **Bhikkhuṇ’upassaya S** (S 47.10/5:157), **Dhamma,vihārī S 1** (A 5.73/3:87), SD 69.2; **Dhamma,vihārī S 2** (A 5.74-/3:89), SD 69.3; **Araka S** (A 7.70,4/4:139), SD 16.17; cf **Mahā Palobhana J** (J 507). The sentence “regret not later” (*mā pacchā vippaṭisārino ahuvattha*), in the second para, also occurs at **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.19+20/2:147, 16,6.5/2:155 ×3, the Buddha’s last words) = **Kusinārā S** (A 4.76/2:79 f); **Devatā S** (A 9.19/4:392), SD 57.14; cf **Mahā Palobhana J** (J 507). For comy, see MA 1:195 f; SA 3:111 f, 266 f.