

SD 61.16**(Māra) Godhika Sutta****The (Māra) Discourse on Godhika****S 4.23**

also **(Saṃyutta) Godhika Sutta** The (Saṃyutta) Discourse on Godhika

Theme: An arhat's rebirth-consciousness cannot be found

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017, 2024

1 Sutta summary and significance**1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY & KEY NOTES****1.1.1 Sutta summary**

The (Māra) Godhika Sutta is a Saṃyutta account of the monk Godhika, living at the black rock on the Isigili slope outside Rājagaha, who got into the temporary freedom of mind 6 times, but failed to gain arhathood. On the 7th attempt, he killed himself just when he had attained it and attained final nirvana. When Māra noticed Godhika was going to kill himself, he tried to induce the Buddha to stop Godhika so that Godhika would live on unawakened and so be under Māra's power. When the Buddha and the monks arrived to look at Godhika's body, the Buddha declared that the consciousness of an arhat who has attained nirvana cannot be found since it is "unestablished."

1.1.2 Godhika

1.1.2.1 Godhika was the son of a Malla chief in Pāvā¹ in northern India. He went to Kapilavatthu with his friends, Subāhu, Valliya and Uttiya, and there he saw the twin miracle done by the Buddha, and joined the sangha and later attained arhathood. (But see below, 1.1.2.2.)

1.1.2.2 According to **the Godhika Sutta** (S 4.233,2 + 14 f),² Godhika lived at the black rock (*kāḷa-sīlā*) on the side of Isigili mountain. There, he tried 6 times to gain arhathood, achieving only temporary freedom of mind, from which he then fell away, apparently because of a sickness brought about by hard work (DhA 1:431 f).

On the 7th attempt, he decided to commit suicide by cutting his throat. Māra saw this and reported it to the Buddha, hoping that the Buddha would stop him, so that Godhika would live unawakened and so remain under Māra's power. The Buddha, knowing that Godhika had already died, went with some monks to find him lying "on the bed with his shoulders twisted" [§16].

The Buddha declared that Godhika had attained nirvana. The Commentary states that, after cutting his throat, Godhika suppressed his final agony so that he gained arhathood (SA 1:183,23-28).

1.1.2.3 The Apadāna and the Theragāthā Commentary tell us that 87 world-cycles ago Godhika was 7 times king, under the name of Mahāsenā.³ Even in past lives, Godhika, Subāhu, Valliya and Uttiya were

¹ Pāvā was located about 20 km (12 mi) SE of Kusiṇārā (modern Kushinagar) in Uttar Pradesh, N India. (Carlleyle, "Pāvā" in *Report of Tours in Gorakhpur, Saran and Ghazipur in 1877-78-79 and 80* vol 22, Calcutta: Archaeological Survey of India, 1995:29-35.

² S 4.233/1:120-122; SA 1:182; also DhA 1:431 f.

³ Tha 51; ThaA 1:132 f; Ap 1.102/1:140. Ñāṇa,saññaka, his namesake is at Ap 1.128/1:161 f *pabbate himavant-amhi vasāmi pabbat'antare*. However, Comy calls the latter Ñāṇa,thomana Thera (ApA 430 f).

good friends, pure in moral virtue. They lived in the time of Siddhattha Buddha (the 9th before ours) and of Kassapa Buddha (just before our Buddha).

The Theragāthā Commentary relates that in the time of Kassapa Buddha, the 4—Godhika, Subāhu, Valliya and Uttiya—were good friends. In our Buddha’s time, they were reborn as the sons of 4 Malla rajahs.⁴ They went on some embassy mission to the Sakyas at Kapilvatthu which coincided with the Buddha’s 1st visit.

Seeing the Buddha’s performance of the twin wonder,⁵ they were profoundly moved and decided to join the sangha. Not long after that, they all attained arhathood and lived in the forest. When they visited Rājagaha, king Bimbisāra invited them to spend the rains there. Bimbisāra built for each of them a hut, but forgot to have them roofed.

The virtuous elders dwelled in their unroofed huts, and the rain did not fall. The king, wondering the reason for the lack of rain, realized his neglect, and at once had the huts roofed, and made offerings to the sangha. The elders entered their huts and went into the attainment of lovingkindness. Then, from the north and the east arose great rain-clouds, and, just as the elders emerged from their attainment, rain fell.

Aroused by the thunder of the storm, Godhika uttered this verse:

<i>vassati devo yathā sugitaṃ channā me kuṭikā sukhā nivātā cittaṃ susamāhitañ ca mayhaṃ atha ce patthayasi pavassa deva ti</i>	Tha 51	The rain falls melodiously; my little hut is roofed pleasantly, draught-free; and my mind is well-focused. So fall, O rain, if you wish.
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And each of the other 3 elders, too, uttered an identical verse, except for **line c** in each case, which reads thus respectively as follows:

Subāhu: <i>cittaṃ susamāhitañ ca kāye</i>	and my mind is well-focused on the body	Tha 52
Valliya: <i>tesaṃ viharāmi appamatto</i>	I dwell in it heedfully	Tha 53
Uttiya: <i>tassaṃ viharāmi adutiyaṃ</i>	I dwell in it alone	Tha 54 (ThaA 1:133 f)

1.1.2.4 However, other details do *not* seem to support the view that the (Thera,gāthā) Godhika and the (Saṃyutta) Godhika are the same person.

The Thera,gāthā Commentary identifies Godhika with a monk, Ñāṇa,saññāka (or *-saññāka*). He is said to have venerated Siddhattha Buddha (Ap 102.3/1:140). However, there is neither mention of his suicide nor his 3 friends [1.1.2.1]. They are only mentioned in the Thera,gāthā and its Commentary, which speaks of 4 friends who obtained arhathood together and lived near each other, each in his own hut.

From this information, the (Thera,gāthā) Godhika here is different from (Saṃyutta) Godhika the suicide. Godhika is not a rare name in the suttas.

⁴ Amongst the Sakyas, Koliyas, Mallas, and Licchavīs, their leading clansmen were called “rajah” (*rāja*), which simply meant “noble” (n).

⁵ **Yamaka pāṭihāriya**, the “twin wonder,” is a psychic phenomenon performed only by the Buddha who is able to rapidly switch dhyanas, ie, between the water and fire kasinas. What others see is a rainbow swirl of thin jets of water and of fire as his halo. Further, he projects his clone to teach the Dharma to those assembled. Def in detail at Pm 1.592-594/1:125 f (ch 70); also described at DA 1:57; DhA 14.2/3:213-216; J 4:263-267; BA 31 f; ItA 1:129; cf KhpA 132. Pm is the only canonical text to mention the twin wonder. PvA 137 says it is performed, beginning on the Āsāḷha full moon day. See DhA:B 3:35 n; DPPN sv (682 f). See also **Miraculous Stories** SD 27.5b (3.1.2, 3.2.2).

1.1.3 Freedom of mind (*ceto,vimutti*)

1.1.3.1 The Sutta tells us that Godhika only got **temporary freedom of mind** (*samāyika ceto,vimutti*) and was thus unable to attain arhathood, since he kept falling back into the ordinary mind. His meditating mind, as it were, was unable to remain free long enough to be able to be cut itself off from the defilements to keep his mind fixed (*appit'appita*) on the freedom [§§2-8].

The Commentary explains that the reason for Godhika's inability to remain in the freedom of mind was because of sickness (*sābādhattā*) [2.1]. Each time he entered upon an attainment, he soon fell away from it [1.1.3.2].

1.1.3.2 The “temporary freedom of mind” (*samayika vimutti* or *samaya,vimutti*), simply, “temporary freedom,” refers to the mundane meditative attainments (*lokiya samāpatti*), that is, the form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*) and formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*). It is so called because the mind has momentarily abandoned (*tad-aṅga pahāna*) its opposing mental hindrances and is resolved upon its object. However, then the mind reverts to its ordinary worldly state.⁶

2 Godhika's sickness and monastic health

2.1 GODHIKA'S SICKNESS

2.1.1 The elder Godhika was able to get into meditation but was keep his mind on the mental freedom because he suffered from “**a chronic excess of winds, bile and phlegm**” (*vāta,pitta,semha,vasena anu-sāyiko ābādhō atthi*). The Commentary explained this as chronic illness due to winds, bile, and phlegm (the “**3 peccant humours**” (Skt *tridoṣa*) of traditional Indian medicine), that is, a case of a “combination” of causes of illness (*sannipātikāni*).⁷

The Comentary explains that the *sannipātikāni* (S 4:230,29)⁸ as “originating through disturbance of the three, bile and so forth” (*tiṅṅam pi pitt'ādīnaṃ kopena samuṭṭhitaṃ*, SA 3:81,22 f); that is, by way of an imbalance of “bile, phlegm and wind.” The Aṅguttara Subcommentary explains this ailment as being due to the combination (*sannipātikāni*) of the humours—bile and so forth—which are out of balance (*pitt'ādīnaṃ tiṅṅam pi visamānaṃ sannipātena jātāni*) (AAT:Be 2:318,22 f).

Early Buddhist medicine was based on observed symptoms in relation to the nature of the body in terms of the 4 basic elements (earth, water, fire and wind).⁹ In simple terms, **wind** (*vāta*) often has to do with “internal winds” as perceived basically within the head (brains), the throat, the heart and respiratory system. The resulting illness here is often described in modern terms as rheumatism (inflammation and pains in the joints, muscles and fibrous tissue).

2.1.2 By “**bile**” (*pitta*) is generally meant digestion, food and waste, and also noted in one's complexion (such as paleness) and body temperature (such as fever). “**Phlegm**” (*semha*; Skt *śleṣman*) generally has to do with a pathological condition of the chest, heart and lungs. Since this is basically the “water” element (liquid), it is observed in the symptoms in the tongue, mouth and throat.

⁶ SD 4.25 (2.1.2.3).

⁷ The traditional Indian Ayurveda, which made use of early Buddhist medicine, termed this the “3 peccant humours” (Skt *tridoṣa*). “Peccant” here means “bringing illness.”

⁸ S 36.21/4:230,29 (SD 5.6).

⁹ On the 4 primary elements (*dhātu*) or “great primaries” (*mahā,bhūta*), see **Mahā Rāhu'ovāda S** (M 62,8-11, with §12 on “space”), SD 3.11; **Mahā Hatthi,pādōpama S** (M 28,6-12), SD 6.16.

2.2 EARLY BUDDHIST MEDICINE

2.2.1 The practice of Buddhist monastic medicine started with forest monks’ “**4 material supports**” (*catu paccaya*)—the basic allowable life-supports—of almsfood, rag-robles, shelter and medicines.¹⁰ As “medicines” (*gilāna.paccaya, bhesajja, parikkhāra*, “medicine, support and necessities for the sick”), the early wandering forest monks were allowed fermented cow’s urine.¹¹

The idea then was that the solitary forest monks, or even those living in small groups, in a **remote forest**, would be vulnerable to sickness, ill-health and bodily harm—such as being bitten by an animal, or breaking a limb when falling, which might require medicine. Hence, the Buddha introduced the proper use of the 4 supports. Every renunciant should be aware of such basic health conditions to stay safe and independent since it would be difficult to get help from others while living in such remote solitude.

2.2.2 As the Buddha’s sangha grew and the wandering renunciants became more settled into organized monasteries, **the monastic medical tradition** also grew for the sake of monastic self-support in terms of personal health. Early Buddhist medicine was systematized and developed by **Jīvaka Komara, bhacca**, a disciple of the Buddha. His teachings and methods became the basis for traditional medicine in countries like Thailand.¹²

2.2.3 The principles and practice of early Buddhist medicine are recorded mostly in **the Bhesajja Khandhaka** (the chapter on medicine), that is, chapter 6 of the Mahā, vagga (“the great chapter”) of the Vinaya. It contains various rules (said to be introduced by the Buddha himself) regarding, among other things, proper diet, hygiene and medical treatment, including the use of herbs and surgical instruments.¹³

3 Suttas relating to monk suicides

3.1 SUTTA ACCOUNTS OF MONK SUICIDES

3.1.0 There are 3 suttas dealing with monk suicides in some detail, that is:¹⁴

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|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------|---------|
| • Godhika Sutta | S 4.23/1:120-122; DhA 3.11/1:431-434 | SD 61.16 | |
| • Vakkali Sutta | S 22.87/3:119-124 | SD 8.8 | [3.1.1] |
| • Chann’ovāda Sutta | M 144/3:263-266 = S 35.87/4:55-59 | SD 11.12 | [3.1.2] |

3.1.1 Either there are 2 versions of the Vakkali story, or there are 2 Vakkalis: **Vakkali 1** who was sick and bedridden, and **Vakkali 2** a youth who became a monk to gaze on the Buddha’s physical beauty. The latter is said to have attempted suicide but the Buddha appeared to him to prevent it.¹⁵

The suicide Vakkali is probably **Vakkali 1**, who is only mentioned in **the Vakkali Sutta** (S 22.87),¹⁶ and the Saṃyutta Commentary. Due to the sufferings that his illness brings upon him, he reflects on the non-

¹⁰ **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,13-16), SD 30.3; **Santutṭhi S** (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

¹¹ S Awale, Myint Than, Thein Zaw Linn, Swe Thein, “An amazing cow’s urine therapy practice in Myanmar,” *J of Traditional Medicine* 23, 2006:178-183. [[ResearchGate](#)] 26 July 2024.

¹² Jean Mulholland, “Thai traditional medicine: ancient thought and practice in a Thai context,” *J of the Siam Society* 67,2 1979:80-115. [[SiamSoc](#)] 26 July 2024.

¹³ V 1:199-252. Cf Rules about storing medicine: Nis 23 (V 3:251,14-18), Bhī Nis 25.

¹⁴ For a longer list of suicide cases, see SD 11.12 (1.1).

¹⁵ See SD 8.8 (1.1.2).

selfness of the 5 aggregates. Then, he is said to have “used the knife,” that is, killed himself.¹⁷ Following the story of another monk, Godhika, who dies in a similar manner, Vakkali conditions himself in such a manner that just upon attaining temporary release through dhyana, he kills himself.¹⁸

3.1.2 There are at least 3 monks named **Channa** in the suttas. **Channa 1** is the Bodhisattva’s erstwhile charioteer, **Channa 2** is the suicide monk, and **Channa 3** the wanderer.¹⁹ Identical accounts of Channa’s suicide are recorded in **the Chann’ovāda Sutta** (M 144)²⁰ and the Channa Sutta (S 35.87),²¹ which has a parallel account in a Chinese translation in the Saṃyukta Āgama (SĀ 1266).²²

All 3 versions locate the discourse at Rājagaha. All the accounts open by saying that Sāriputta and another monk visit the ailing Channa. While the Pāli accounts say that this other monk is Mahā Cunda [§2], the Saṃyukta Āgama version says he is Mahā Koṭṭhita.²³ Otherwise, the Pali and the Sanskrit versions generally agree very closely, differing only in minor details.²⁴

3.2 THE BUDDHA’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUICIDE

3.2.1 Taking life, even one’s own, is wrong

3.2.1.1 First of all, it should be stated that the Buddha and early Buddhism are clear on their attitude towards suicide: it is a destruction of one’s own life, and is as such a moral wrong and against the Vinaya and the precepts. **The 3rd Pārajika rule** unequivocally forbids monks from suicide, even to condone it, thus:

*Yo pana bhikkhu sañcicca manussa, viggahaṃ jīvitā voropeyya satth’ahāraṃ vāssa pari-
yeseyya maraṇa, vaṇṇaṃ vā samvaṇṇeyya maraṇāya vā samādapeyya ambho purisa kiṃ tuyh’-
iminā pāpakena dujjīvitena? mataṃ te jīvitā seyyo ti, iti citta, mano citta, saṅkappo aneka, pari-
yāyena maraṇa, vaṇṇaṃ vā samvaṇṇeyya maraṇāya vā samādapeyya, ayaṃ pi pārajiko hoti
asaṃvāso.*

Whatever monk should intentionally deprive a human being of life, or seek a life-taking weapon for him, or should utter praise of death, or should urge him towards death, saying, “Good man, what use to you is this miserable life? Death is better for you than life,” having such thoughts in mind and such intentions in mind, in many ways, should utter praise of death, or should urge him towards death, he too becomes **defeated**, not in communion.

(V 3:73,10-16)

It should be noted here that “monk” here means “a living monk” since the rule cannot be broken by a dead monk. It should thus be understood that the rule is still relevant to discourage other monks from committing suicide.

¹⁶ S 22.87/3:119-124 (SD 8.8)

¹⁷ For a study on the early Buddhist view of suicide, see **Chann’ovāda S** (M 144), SD 11.12.

¹⁸ See SD 8.8 (1.1.1, 1.2-1.4).

¹⁹ See SD 11.12 (1.2).

²⁰ M 144/3:263-266 (SD 11.12).

²¹ S 35.87/4:55-59 (SD 11.12).

²² SĀ 1266 = T2.347b-348a.

²³ SĀ 1266 = T2.347b,18: [Chinese 摩訶拘絺羅 *mó hē jū chī luó*].

²⁴ See M 144 = S 35.87 (SD 11.12).

It has also been argued that the phrasing of the Pārājika rule above does not include an arhat committing suicide. An arhat is not reborn. An unawakened person, even a monk, will be reborn, and will have to face the karmic consequences of his suicide. Instead of suicide, such a monk could have made use of his renunciant life to resolve his difficulties (such as by way of spiritual counselling and proper meditation), and live his monastic life fully.

For the laity, there is **the 1st precept**, that against killing or destroying life,²⁵ human or non-human. This is part of the 5 precepts of natural morality, that is, they are karmically potent. Breaking any of them—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication—means that we will have to bear the karmic consequences, whether we “take them up” or not, whether we are “Buddhist” or not.

3.2.1.2 As a rule, any Vinaya precept that is in some way an extension of any of the 5 natural precepts—against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication—is karmically potent as well as regarded as a breach of the Vinaya. This is clear in the case of a suicide (like Godhika, Channa and Vakka-li) who died as arhats. In other words, they have attained nirvana and will not be reborn. Hence, they are beyond karma and the Vinaya rules no more apply to them.

3.2.2 The suicide arhat is blameless

3.2.2.1 The Chann’ovāda Sutta (M 144 = S 35.87) relates the events connected with the suicide of the monk **Channa 2** [3.1.2], who, like Godhika, was ill and struggled with his meditation to attain arhat-hood. Of the 3 suicides, Channa seemed to be the one who suffered the most. Channa describes his unbearable agonies in graphic terms (M 144,7-11). Despite counselling by both Sāriputta and Cunda, and Sāriputta’s offer to provide Channa with proper food, suitable medicine and an attendant, Channa declined them, since he had no need of them. His only regret was that, as a disciple, he had been unable to attend to the Buddha, his teacher.

Soon after Sāriputta and Cunda left, Channa committed suicide.

3.2.2.2 When Sariputta informed the Buddha of Channa’s suicide, the Buddha replied that Channa did not commit any offence or do any wrong:

Sāriputta, when one lays down the body and takes up a new one, then I say one is blame-worthy.

This did not happen with the monk Channa:

the monk Channa used the knife blamelessly (anupavajja).²⁶

Thus remember this, Sāriputta.” (M 144,27/3:266 = S 35.87/4:60), SD 11.12

The fact that Channa is not reborn means that karma does not arise in him. Since his consciousness is unestablished, there is no one to take any blame for any offence. The same applies to any arhat.

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²⁵ “Killing” is defined as the stopping of “the breath” (*pāṇa*), ie, killing a breathing being, one with a mind. In Pali, this is **pāṇātipātā**: *pāṇa* (Skt *prāṇa*, “life”) + *atipāta* (“letting fall”). “Killing” includes praising death and letting someone or something die when we are able to prevent it.

²⁶ Ie, without being reborn. Alt tr “The monk Channa is blameless in using the knife” (*anupavajjo channo bhikkhu sattham āhāresi*) (M 144,27/3:266) or “the knife was used blamelessly by the monk Channa” (*anupavajjam channena bhikkhunā sattham āharitam*) (S 35.87,27/4:60). See Intro (3).

(Māra) Godhika Sutta

The (Māra) Discourse on Godhika

S 4.23

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the squirrels' feeding ground in the bamboo grove outside Rājagaha.

2 Now at one time, **the venerable Godhika**²⁷ was staying at the black rock²⁸ on the Isigili Slope.²⁹

3 Then, while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind, but he fell away from that temporary freedom of mind.³⁰

4 A second time, *while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind, but he fell away from that temporary freedom of mind.*

5 A third time, *while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind, but he fell away from that temporary freedom of mind.*

6 A fourth time, *while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind, but he fell away from that temporary freedom of mind.* [121]

7 A fifth time, *while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind, but he fell away from that temporary freedom of mind.*

8 A sixth time, *while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind, but he fell away from that temporary freedom of mind..*

9 **A seventh time**, while the venerable Godhika was dwelling diligent, ardent, and resolute, he reached temporary freedom of mind.

10 Then, it occurred to the venerable Godhika:

“Six times already I have fallen away from temporary freedom of mind. Let me use the knife.”³¹

11 Then, Mara the evil one, having known with his own mind the reflection in the venerable Godhika's mind, approached the Blessed One and addressed him with these verses:³²

²⁷ On Godhika, see (1.1.2).

²⁸ **Isigili** (today, Sona Hill) was one of the 5 mountains around Rājagaha and one of the beauty-spots of the city (D 2:116); it gave a panoramic view of the other 4 hill-crests around Rājagaha: Vulture's Peak, Vebhāra, Paṇḍava and Vepulla (M 3:68 f). On one side of it was a **black rock** (kāḷa,silā) (SA 1:182,26, a favourite remote haunt of the Buddha and the monks (V 2:76, where Dabba Malla,putta was asked by monks to provide accommodation for them there; see also V 3:41). It was also the location of the suicides of Godhika (S 4.23) and of Vakkali (S 22.87), and of the brutal murder of Moggallāna by brigands (J 5:125 f; DhA 3:65). Comy speaks of a “black rock vihara” (*kāḷa,silā vihara*) (SA 2:314,18). See S Dhammika, *Middle Land, Middle Way*, 2nd ed, 1999:97 (map).

²⁹ *Tena kho pana samayena āyasmā godhiko isigili,passe kāḷa,silāyamaṃ.*

³⁰ “Temporary freedom of mind” (*samayika ceto,vimutti*) [1.1.3]. See SD 4.25 (2.1.2).

³¹ *Sattham āhareyya*. A euphemistic expression for suicide; see **S 22.87**/3:123,10.26, **35.87**/4:57,6), and **54.9**/-5:320,24-25. Comy: He reflected thus: “Since the destination after death of one who has fallen away from dhyana is uncertain, while one who has not fallen away is certain of rebirth in the brahma world, let me use the knife.” On the Buddha's own attitude towards suicide, see **S 35.87**/4:60,1-5 (SD 11.12).

³² Comy: Māra thought, “This recluse desires to use the knife. This indicates that he is unconcerned with body and life, and such a one is capable of attaining arhathood. If I try to forbid him, he will not desist, but if the Teacher forbids him he will.” Therefore, pretending to be concerned for the elder's welfare, he approaches the Blessed One with pretence of respectful faith. (SA 1:183,11-17)

- 11.2 *mahā, vīra mahā, paññā
iddhiyā yasasa jalam
sabbe vera, bhayātīta
pade vandāmi cakkhumā* **S 490** O great hero, great in wisdom,
Blazing forth with power and glory!
I worship your feet, One with Vision,
Who has overcome all enmity and fear.
- 11.3 *sāvako te mahā, vīro
maraṇam maraṇābhibhū
ākaṅkhati cetayati
taṁ nisedha jutindhara* **S 491** O great hero who has vanquished death,
Your disciple is longing for death.
He intends [to take his own life]:
Restrain him from this, O luminous one!
- 11.4 *katham hi bhagavā tuyham
sāvako sāsane rato
appattamānaso sekho
kālam kāyirā jane sutā ti* **S 492** How, O Blessed One, can your disciple,
one delighting in the teaching,
a trainee seeking his mind's ideal,
take his own life, O widely famed?³³

12 Now on that occasion the venerable Godhika had just used the knife.³⁴

13 Then the Blessed One, having understood, “This is Mara the Evil One,” addressed him in verse:

- 13.2 *evam hi dhīrā kubbanti
nāvakaṅkhanti jīvitam³⁵
sa, mūlam taṅham abbuyha
godhiko parinibbuto ti* **S 493** Such indeed is how the steadfast act:
they are not attached to life.
Having drawn out craving with its root,
Godhika has attained final Nibbana.

14 Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Come, bhikshus, let us go to the black rock on the Isigili Slope, where the clansman Godhika has used the knife.”

“Yes, bhante,” those monks replied.

15 Then, the Blessed One, together with a number of monks, went to the black rock on the Isigili slope.

16 The Blessed One saw in the distance the venerable Godhika lying on the bed with his shoulder twisted.³⁶ [122]

³³ Comy: *Jane sutā ti jane vissuta*, lit, “heard among the people = famed among the people,” ie, widely famed. Māra usu addresses the Buddha discourteously as “recluse”; there is an ironic humour in the above 3 verses depicting Māra showering him with glowing epithets.

³⁴ Comy: The elder, thinking, “What is the use of living?” lay down and slit his jugular vein with a knife. Painful feelings arose. He suppressed them, understood the pains (with insight), set up mindfulness, explored his meditation subject, and attained arhathood as a “**same-header**” (*sama, sīsī*; Pug 13,25-27) (SA 1:183,19-184,20). He was a *jivita, samasīsī*, as one who attains the destruction of defilements and the end of life simultaneously. (Another kind of *sama, sīsī* recovers from a grave illness at the same time that he attains arhathood.) (PugA 186 f).

³⁵ This line recurs in **Chann’ovāda S** (M 144,5/3:264,10 = S 4:57,6); **Godhika ... Vatthu (DhA 14.11/1:432)**; **Bhikkhā Paramparā J** (J 496/4:371,21), **Cūḷa Haṁsa J** (J 533/5:340,3 ~ *348,18-20; J:Be 5/60* f), **Mahā Haṁsa J** (J 534/-5:*377,26-28; J:Be 5:*166 f).

³⁶ *Addasā kho bhagavā āyasmantaṁ godhikaṁ dūrato va mañcake vivatta-k, khandham semānam* [only Se; others *seyyamānam*]. *Semānam* (pres part of *seti, sayati*, “to lie down”: D 2:24; M 1:88; S 1:121; J 1:180). Comy: *vivatta-k, khandhan ti parivatta-k, khandhani*, “with his shoulder twisted,” means with turned shoulder. He had

17 Now on that occasion a cloud of smoke, a swirl of darkness, was moving to the east, then to the west, to the north, to the south, upwards, downwards, and to the intermediate quarters.

18 Then, the Blessed One then addressed the monks thus:

“Do you see, bhikshus, that cloud of smoke, that swirl of darkness, moving to the east, then to the west, to the north, to the south, upwards, downwards, and to the intermediate quarters?”

“Yes, bhante.”

19 “That, bhikshus, is Mara the evil one searching for the consciousness of the clansman Godhika, wondering:

‘Where now has the consciousness of the clansman Godhika been established?’

However, bhikshus, with consciousness unestablished, the clansman Godhika has attained final nirvana.”³⁷

20 Then, Mara the evil one, taking a lute of yellow bilva-wood, approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:

*uddham adho ca tiriyaṃ
disā anudisā svāhaṃ
anvesaṃ nādhigacchāmi
godhiko so kuhiṃ gato ti*

S 494

Above, below, and across,
in the four quarters and in between,
I have been searching but find not
where Godhika has gone.

21 [The Blessed One:]

21.2 *so dhīro dhiti,sampanno
jhāyī jhana,rato sadā
aho,rattam anuyuñjaṃ
jīvitaṃ anikamayaṃ*

S 495

That steadfast man was resolute,
a meditator always rejoicing in meditation,
applying himself day and night
without attachment even to life.

21.3 *jetvāna maccuno senaṃ
anāgantvā punabbhavaṃ
samūlaṃ taṇhaṃ abbuyha
godhiko parinibbuto ti*

S 496

Having conquered the army of death,
not returning to renewed existence,
having drawn out craving with its root,
Godhika has attained final nirvana.”³⁸

been lying on his back when he took the knife, but because he was accustomed to lying on his right side, he had turned his head towards the right and had so remained. (SA 1:184,14-26)

³⁷ *Appatiṭṭhena ca bhikkhave viññāṇena godhiko kula,putto parinibbuto.* **Comy:** Mara was searching for Godhika’s rebirth-consciousness (*patisandhi,citta*), but Godhika had passed away with rebirth-consciousness unestablished; meaning that because it found no footing (*appatiṭṭhita,kāraṇā*, or, with unestablished cause). **Subcomy:** *Appatiṭṭhena* is an instrumental used as an indication of modality (*ittham,bhūta,lakkhaṇa*). The meaning is: with (consciousness) not subject to arising (*anuppatti dhammena*); for, if there were an arising, consciousness would be called “established.” But when the commentator says, “because it was unestablished,” what is meant is that the cause for the non-establishment of consciousness was precisely the cause for his *parinirvana* (*yadeva tassa viññāṇassa appatiṭṭhāna,kāraṇaṃ tad eva parinibbāna,kāraṇaṃ*). A similar case of suicide is reported of the monks **Channa** (M 144 = S 35.87) [3.1.2] and **Vakkali** (S 22.87) [3.1.1]. When the monk is said to attain final nirvana with “consciousness unestablished,” this should not be taken to mean that after death, consciousness survives in an “unestablished” state (as held by Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995a:208-210). We have sutta texts clearly stating that when an arhat passes away, his consciousness too ceases and no longer exists (eg, S 4.23,19).

22 [The elders:]³⁹ MĀRA'S LUTE

*tassa soka,paretassa
vīna,kacchā abhassatha⁴⁰
tato dummano yakkho
that'ev'antaradhyathā⁴¹ ti*

497

So much was he stricken with sorrow
that his lute dropped from his armpit.
Then, that disappointed yaksha
disappeared right there and then.

evaṃ

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³⁸ The verse (prob inserted by the redactors) occurs at **Sn 449**, where, however, it follows the verses that correspond to **S 504 f**. In **S 497**, Mara is spoken of as *yakkha*, “yaksha or spirit,” ie, a nonhuman with special powers [SD 61a (2.1.3.1)].

³⁹ This verse recurs as **Sn 449** [foll n] where Comy states that was “said by the Council elders’ but some do not agree with us here” (*saṅgīti,kārā ahaṃsū ti eke amhākaṃ pan’etaṃ na-k,khamatīti*, SnA 394,5) [Sn 3.2 *25d n + 3.3.1].

⁴⁰ This verse closes **Padhāna S** (Sn 449), SD 51.11. Sn 449 = **S 497b** poses a puzzle. Comy explains that this veena, called Beḷuva,paṇḍu, was presented by Sakra to the heavenly minstrel Pañca,sikha (SnA 393 f). But this does not tell us how Māra came to possess it. But in **Godhika S** (S 4.23) the verse is placed here instead of **S 505 f** of **Satta,-vassa S** (S 4.24), SD 36.5, as suggested by the **Sn 449** context. The Skt parallel at **Mvst 2:240,16** reads *vināśaṃ gacchi ucchriti*, “his pride was all shattered” (Jayawickrama’s tr), which “probably expresses the original idea” (1978: 12,5), prior to the importation of the vīṇā reading, whose significance is now lost to us.

⁴¹ **Antaradhāyatha**: aorist; PED states that it is 3 sg middle, without making it clear that it is a past tense formation (Sn:N 253 n449).