

SD 61.18 Māra in the early Vinaya

The first 2 accounts of Māra in the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya

Mv 1.11-13 (V 1:20,36-22,36)

Translated with notes by TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) ©2024

0 The 2 Māra,kathās of the Mahā,vagga

0.1 “TALKS ON MĀRA”

0.1.1 This is a study of the early appearances of Māra to the Buddha in the 1st year of the ministry, as recorded in the Vinaya. We will also see how this Vinaya chronology connects with the theme-based teachings of the suttas.

0.1.2 There are 2 “Talks on Māra” (*māra,kathā*) in the Mahā,vagga of the Vinaya (V 1:20-22), describing 2 early, probably the first, appearances of Māra to the Buddha,¹ along with an intervening episode, as follows:

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|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| • Māra,katha 1: the great awakening | (Mv 1.11 @ V 1:20,36-21,23) | Pāsa Sutta 2 (S 4.5) | [1] |
| • Admission by way of the 3 refuges | (Mv 1.12 @ V 1:21,24-22,23) | | [2] |
| • Māra,katha 2: the start of the 2 nd year ² | (Mv 1.13 @ V 1:22,24-36) | Pāsa Sutta 2 (S 4.4) | [3] |

This series of episodes overlap with (Mv 1.11) and continue from **SD 11.2**.³

0.2 THE GREAT COMMISSION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The great commission (**mahā,cārika*) is significant for at least these 2 key reasons:

- (1) By sending out the 60 missioners, the Buddha declares his awakening and teachings to the world, which officially makes him a “**fully self-awakened buddha**” (*sammā,sambuddha*); otherwise, he would technically be only a “private” or individual buddha (*pacceka,buddha*), anglicised as “pratyeka-buddha” (*pacceka*), who, though self-awakened, does not teach the Dharma as an organized religion.
- (2) By opening up the Buddha Dharma to the world, early Buddhism rejects the old priestly dispensation of Brahmanism, and teaches the “**priesthood of the individual**,” that is, spiritual self-reliance, by way of self-understanding, self-accountability and self-awakening.
- (3) By introducing the “ordination by way of going for the 3 refuges” (*ti,saraṇa,gamana upasampadā*) the Buddha extends his charisma, so to speak, to the sangha (that is, a properly constituted chapter of monks) to admit qualified candidates into the sangha for spiritual training for the path. By this gesture, the Buddha empowers the sangha as a “legal body” that acts through the Vinaya to regulate and train others beyond the Buddha’s life. Sociologically speaking, the Buddha has routinized his charisma in a positive sense: we may even say that the sangha becomes a democratic body author-

¹ Prob the previous appearance of Māra was to the Bodhisattva under the Bodhi tree just before the great awakening: SD 61a (2.1.4).

² “Rains” (*vassa*) is often the shortform for the 3-month “rains-retreat” (*vass’āvāsa*), to the years of monastic seniority, and also the years of the ministry (the Buddha taught for 45 rains).

³ See SD 11.2(11) which deals with Mv 1.11.1, ie, the great commission.

ized and guided by a constitution (the Pātimokkha) and laws (the Vinaya), and inspired by the Dharma.⁴

- (4) Historically, it makes early Buddhism the world's *first missionary religion* by declaring itself to be a “natural faith” or “natural religion” in the sense of not built around the understanding of the unique dogmas of an organized hierarchical Church, but rather seeing, experiencing and understanding true reality for oneself.

0.3 VINAYA RULES, DHARMA LIFE

As a text, **the Vinaya** presents a historical or narrative record of later legal developments in early Buddhism. Historically, then, the Vinaya plays 2 vital roles. First, it legitimizes early Buddhism as the “root” (*mūla*) of its own growth, that is, its future so that those who are capable and qualified may take up **renunciation** and live as renunciants (*pabbajita*).

Secondly, the Vinaya keeps a living connection between the Vinaya-spirited renunciants and the early Buddhist **sangha of the path** (the arhats, non-returners, once-returners and streamwinners), so that the post-Buddha renunciants, too, will gain the path of awakening within this life-time. Without the Vinaya, the members of the Buddhist Sangha would revert to Brahminical priestcraft or to being religious royalty or a spiritual business, or at worst becomes a means of living an easy secure life of retirement out of fear of old age and death. This is the antithesis of early Buddhism.

0.4 VINAYA NARRATIVE, SUTTA TEACHINGS

0.4.1 While the Vinaya, especially the Mahāvagga, gives us an idea of “**the Buddha-centred narrative**,” a presentation of early Buddhism as a chronology of spiritual encounters and awakenings, **the suttas** are based on selective themes of the Dharma—especially the Buddha’s awakening experiences and those of the arhats. The reader or student then works to connect himself with that experience or narrative of awakening.

If we are the celibate sangha, a proper reading and understanding of the suttas inspires us with a vision of awakening and an aspiration towards **world renunciation** (“renouncing the world”). Or as lay practitioners rooted in “**meditative renunciation**,” we can experience renunciation through, for example, the breath meditation, or the renunciation of *violence, selfishness, exploitation, falsehood and un-mindfulness* by keeping to the 5 precepts.

The 2 **Pāsa Suttas** (S 4.4 + 4.5) remind us of how the world keeps encroaching upon us to hold us in a swirl of habitual tendencies so that we lose touch with our “true self”—how we can be better individuals—and become but cogs and wheels of numbers and measures in a hierarchy of mutual exploitation. **The (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1** (S 4.4) presents the Buddha, at the start of the 2nd year of his ministry, as addressing newly ordained monks (who responded to the great commission) that **awakening is real** (the Buddha and the arhats have attained it) and possible (they can and must attain it).

Meantime, the world (Māra) desires to hold us back in the habitual oblivion of cyclic life, a never-ending virtual role-playing game of *gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, joy and pain*. Then, we realize that we have been playing this same game all our lives, and have had enough of it. This realization is called **samvega** (*samvega*), a sense of urgency to seek awakening and freedom.

0.4.2 In this study, we see how the 2 **Pāsa Suttas** (S 4.4 + 4.5) are related to one another in the chronology of early Buddhism. While **Pāsa Sutta 1** (S 4.4) shows the Buddha, at the start of the 2nd rains

⁴ For an interesting description of this, see **Go,paka Moggallāna S** (M 108), SD 33.5.

(year), as admonishing new monks on the availability and urgency of awakening, **Pāsa Sutta 2** (S 4.5) goes back to the 1st rains, when the Buddha launched the great commission.

- **(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2** (S 4.5), SD 61.20 the great commission (the sending of the 60 arhats);
- **(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1** (S 4.4), SD 61.19 after the great commission: admonishing the new monks.

We shall here look at the events of these 2 related Suttas in chronological sequence.

1 Māra,katha 1 (Mv 1.11 @ V 1:20,_{36-21,23})

PARALLEL: **MĀRA PĀSA SUTTA 2** (S 4.5), SD 61.19

1.1 THE GREAT COMMISSION (*MAHĀ,CĀRIKA, MV 11.1) [02]

1.1.1 [1]⁵ Then, the Blessed One addressed the monks:

“Bhikshus!”

“Bhante!” the bhikkhus replied.

1.1.2 [2] The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikshus, I am freed from all snares (*sabba,pāsehi*), both divine and human.

You too, bhikshus, **[21]** are freed from all snares, both divine and human.

1.1.3 [2.2] Go forth, bhikshus, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare and happiness of devas and humans.

Let not two go the same way.⁶

1.1.4 [2.3] Teach, bhikshus, the Dharma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, with its meaning and phrasing.

Proclaim holy life, utterly whole and pure.

1.1.5 [2.4] There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away through not hearing the Dharma.⁷ There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.⁸ ||11.1||

1.2 MĀRA’S FIRST APPEARANCE TO THE BUDDHA

1.2.1 [2.5] I, too, bhikshus, will go to Senani,nigama⁹ in Uruvela to teach the Dharma.”¹⁰

⁵ The italicised numbers [within square brackets] refer to the Sutta paragraph numbering.

⁶ *Mā ekena dve agamittha*. So Be Ce Se V; Ee reads *agamettha*. Comys: “Let not 2 persons take the same road” ***Mā ekena dve ti eka,maggena dve janā mā agamattha*** (SA 1:172,1 f), *ekena maggena dve mā agamittha* (VA 5:966,24 f). SA 1:172,2 f adds: “Going in this way when one is teaching Dharma, the other monk/s need not remain silent” (*evañ hi gatesu ekasmim dhammaṃ desente, ekena tuñhī,bhūtena thātābbaṃ hoti*). This is a brilliant strategy to have the monks cover the widest area possible: 60 monks in 60 different directions of the compass, as it were!

⁷ This sentence is also spoken by Mahā Brahmā when beseeching the Buddha to teach the Dharma: SD 54.3d (3.4.3.3).

⁸ For comy on the great commission, see SD 61.19 (1.3).

⁹ Be Ee Se *senā,nigamo*; only Ce so. Senānigama = Senāni-nigama by way of haplology, ie, the loss of one of the syllables *-ni-* or the two are combined into one. See Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, rev Norman, Oxford, 2000: §65.2. This is the original name as found in the Canon (eg V 1:21; M 1:166. 240; A 1:106). Comys give it as Senānī,nigama, the market town of Senānī, on the Nerañjarā bank near Uruvelā, and where Sujātā gives milk-rice to the Bodhisattva, which is his last meal before the awakening J 1:68; MA 2:173; SA 1:172; AA 1:401; BA 7; ApA 72; DhsA 34). **Lalita,-vistāra** calls it Senāpati,grāma (Lalv 311.248).

1.2.2 [3] Then **Mara the evil one** approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:¹¹

1.2.3 [3.2] *baddho'si sabba,pāsehi*
ye dibbā ye ca mānusā
mahā,bandhana,baddho'si
na me samaṇa mokkhasī ti [S 454] You are bound by all the snares,
 both divine and human;
 you are bound by the great bondage:
 You won't escape me, recluse!"

[The Blessed One:]

1.2.4 [4] *muttôham¹² sabba,pāsehi*
ye dibbā ye ca mānusā
mahā,bandhana,mutto'mhi
nihato tvam asi antakā ti [S 455] I am freed from all the snares,
 both divine and human;
 I am freed from the great bondage.
 You're defeated, end-maker!

[Māra the evil one:]¹³

1.2.5 [4.2] *antalikkha,caro pāso*
yvāyaṃ carati mānaso
tena taṃ bādhayissāmi
na me samaṇa mokkhasī ti [S 476] There is a snare that moves through the skies;
 that which is mental, that moves about¹⁴
 by means of that I will bind you--
 you will not escape from me, recluse!

[The Blessed One:]

1.2.6 [4.3] *rūpā saddā gandhā¹⁵ rasā*
poṭṭhabbā ca manoramā
ettha me vigato chando
nihato tvam asi antakā ti [S 477] Forms, sounds, smells, tastes,
 and touches that the mind delights in—
 desire for these here has vanished from me:
 you're defeated, end-maker!

1.2.7 [5] Then, Mara the evil one, thinking,
 "The Blessed One knows me, the well gone knows me!"
 sad and disheartened, disappeared right there.¹⁶ ||11.2||

¹⁰ This is the Buddha's famous "great commission" to the first 60 arhat disciples to go forth and spread the Dharma. The passage recurs in V 1:20,36-21,16 (= Mv 1.11 except the 2nd verse), and historically precedes **S 4.4. S 476-477** (S 4.15, SD 61.10) follow immediately, but here they are separated and assigned to an encounter in Sāvattḥī. A BHS parallel, incl the verses, is at Mvst 3:415 f (tr Mvst:J 3:416 f). Comy explains the threefold goodness of the Dharma in various ways pertaining both to teaching and practice: moral virtue is the beginning; eg, calm, insight and the path are the middle; the fruits and nirvana are the end; or a sutta's opening is good, so too its middle portion and its conclusion (SA 1:172,4-18). When the Buddha went to Uruvelā, he converted the 3 matted-hair (*jaṭila*) fire-worshipping ascetics and their followers, who attained arhathood after listening to **Āditta (Pariyāya) S** (S 35.28/4:19 f = Mv 1.21 (V 1:34 f)), SD 1.3.

¹¹ Comy: Mara approached the Buddha, thinking: "Like one directing a great war, the recluse Gotama instructs the 60 men to teach the Dharma. I am not pleased even if one should teach, let alone 60. Let me stop him!" (SA 1:173,3-9)

¹² Ce Ee Se so; only Be *muttôham*.

¹³ The foll 2 verses are from **(Māra) Mānaso S** (S 4.15), SD 61.10. They are not found in **(Māra) Pāsa S 2** (S 4.5), SD 61.19.

¹⁴ *Antalikkha,caro pāso | yvāyaṃ carati mānaso*. Comy states: "The snare is the snare of lust (*rāga,pāsa*), which binds even those who move in the sky (ie, by psychic power).¹ It is more likely *antalikkha,caro* refers to the incorporeal nature of lust, which can propel the mind across vast distances; see S 210b, 211b.

¹⁵ Here, **V 1:21** version put "smells" before "tastes" (... *gandhā rasā* ...) in the usual way. **S 4.15/1:111** reverses the order (... *rasā gandhā* ...); cf Mv 5.1.27; A 3:69; Sn 387, 759, Tha 455, 643.

2 Admission¹⁷ by way of the 3 refuges (Mv 1.12 @ V 1:21,²⁴-22,²³)

2.1 THE BUDDHA'S REFLECTION

2.1.1 At that time the monks brought (to the Blessed One) from various regions and countries, those wishing for the going forth and the ordination, thinking:

“The Blessed One will let them go forth and ordain them.”

The monks became tired, and so did those wishing to go forth and ordain.

2.1.2 Then, while the Blessed One was in solitary retreat, a reflection arose in him:

“Why don't I allow the monks to give the going-forth and the ordination right there in those various regions and countries.” ||12.1||

2.1.3 In the evening, the Blessed One emerged from solitary retreat, gave a teaching, and addressed the monks about his reflection ... “Why don't I allow the monks to give the going-forth and the ordination right there in those various regions and countries.” ||12.2||

2.2 ALLOWANCE FOR GOING-FORTH AND ORDINATION

2.2.1 “I allow you, bhikshus, to give the going-forth and the ordination right there in those various regions and countries.

And, bhikshus, one should let go forth and ordain in this way:

First, the candidate should shave off his hair and beard and put on chore robes. He should then arrange his upper robe over one shoulder, pay respect at the feet of the monks, squat on his heels, and raise his joined palms.

2.2.2 He should then be told to say this:

buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

To the Buddha, for refuge I go.

dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

To the Dharma, for refuge I go.

saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

To the sangha, for refuge I go.

dutiyam pi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the second time, to the Buddha, for refuge I go.

dutiyam pi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the second time, to the Dharma, for refuge I go.

dutiyam pi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the second time, to the sangha, for refuge I go.

tatīyam pi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the third time, to the Buddha, for refuge I go.

tatīyam pi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the third time, to the Dharma, for refuge I go.

tatīyam pi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the third time, to the sangha, for refuge I go.

I allow, bhikshus, the going forth and ordination by way going for the 3 refuges.”¹⁸

¹⁶ *Dukkhi dummano tatth'ev'antaradhāyi*. Ee omits this para. This is stock occurs some 32 times in Saṃyutta in connection with Māra [SD 61.9 (3.1.2)].

¹⁷ “Admission” is a convenient term for the “going-forth” (*pabbajjā*) as a novice (*sāmaṇera*), keeping to the 10 precepts [Khp ch 2], and the “(full) ordination” (*upasampadā*) as a monk (*bhikkhu*) or nun (*bhikkhunī*).

¹⁸ The 1st and oldest method of admission was done by the Buddha himself, ie, the *ehi-bhikkhu* and *ehi-bhikkhunī* ordinations. The 2-refuge admission was the 2nd method instituted by the Buddha empowering the sangha to admit candidates into the sangha. For an overview of the ordination methods used in early Buddhism, see *Pabbajjā*, SD 45.16.

3 Māra,katha 2 (Mv 1.13 @ V 1:22,²⁴⁻³⁶)PARALLEL: **MĀRA PĀSA SUTTA 1** (S 4.4), SD 61.18**3.1 THE BEGINNING OF THE 2ND YEAR OF THE BUDDHA'S MINISTRY**

When the rains retreat was over, the Blessed One addressed the monks:¹⁹

[2] “Bhikshus, by proper attention, by proper right striving, I have attained unsurpassed freedom, I have realized unsurpassed freedom.

You too, bhikshus, by proper attention, by proper right striving, must attain unsurpassed freedom, must realize unsurpassed freedom.”²⁰ ||13.1||

3.2 MĀRA'S 2ND APPEARANCE TO THE BUDDHA

3.2.1 [3] Then, Mara the evil one approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:²¹

3.2.2 [3.2] <i>baddho'si māra,pāsenā, ye dibbā ye ca mānusā māra,bandhana,baddho'si na me samaṇa mokkhasī ti</i>	[S 452]	You are bound by Mara's snare, both divine and human. You are bound by Mara's bondage: You won't escape me, recluse!” ²²
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[The Blessed One:]

3.2.3 [4] <i>muttôham²³ māra,pāsenā, ye dibbā ye ca mānusā māra,bandhana,mutto'mhi nihato tvam asi antakā ti</i>	[S 453]	I am freed from Mara's snare, both divine and human; I am freed from Mara's bondage: You're defeated, end-maker!
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3.2.4 [5] Then, Mara the evil one, thinking,
“The Blessed One knows me, the well gone knows me!”
sad and disheartened, disappeared right there.²⁴ ||13.2||

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¹⁹ *Atha kho bhagavā vassaṃ vuṭṭho bhikkhu āmantesi.* That is when the 1st rains retreat was over. This line is only in this Vinaya account.

²⁰ Comy: Proper attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is attention that is the right means (*upāya,manasikāra*). Proper right striving (*yoniso samma-p, padhāna*) is effort that is the right means, effort that is the causal basis (*upāya,virīya karaṇa,virīya*). Unsurpassed freedom (*anuttara,vimutti*) is freedom of the fruit of arhathood (SA 1:171,13-15). On the role of proper attention, see (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Āhāra S** (S 46.51/5:105 f), SD 7.15. Right striving is the fourfold right effort: (**Magga**) **Vibhaṅga S** (S 45.8/5:9), SD 14.5; (**Catu**) **Padhāna S** (A 4.14/2:16 f), SD 10.2; SD 10.16 (6.3).

²¹ Comy: Mara approached and spoke, thinking: “He won't be satisfied that he himself put forth effort and attained arhathood. Now he is eager to get others to attain it. Let me stop him!” (SA 1:171,15-18). On this passage, cf the experience of the monk Gavesi in the time of Kassapa Buddha: **Gavesī S** (A 5.180/3:218), SD 47.16.

²² Comy: **Mara's snare** (*māra,pāsa*) is the snare of the defilements, ie, the divine and human cords of sensual pleasure. (SA 1:171,19-23)

²³ So Ce Ee Ke; only Be Se *muttôham*.

²⁴ *Dukkhi dummāno tatth'ev'antaradhāyi.* This stock occurs 32 times in Saṃyutta in connection with Māra [SD 61.9 (3.1.2)].