

SD 61.19 (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2

The Second (Māra) Discourse on the Snare

S 4.5

The Second (Māra's) Snare Discourse

Theme: The great commission

Translated by Piya Tan ©2011, 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 SUTTA CONTEXT

The **(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2** (S 4.5) describes the Buddha's great commission to the first 60 arhat disciples, sending them out to preach the Dharma for the first time. This momentous event makes Buddhism the first "missionary" religion in the world, that is, a teaching that is open to others and welcomes them to take up the training provided by the Buddha.

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

The **(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2** (S 4.5) describes events that precede those of **(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1** (S 4.4), SD 61.20.

For a chronological narrative incorporating both these Suttas, see **Māra in the early Vinaya** (SD 61.18).

1.2 THE GREAT COMMISSION: SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 The (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2 (S 4.5) records the well known episode of the Buddha's "great commission" to the first 60 arhat disciples to go forth and spread the Dharma. The passage recurs in the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya.¹ Historically or narratively, it precedes **the (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1** (S 4.4). The verses **S 476-477** (S 4.15) follow immediately, but here they are separated and assigned to an encounter in Sāvattī. A Sanskrit parallel, including the verses, is found in **the Mahāvastu**.²

1.2.2 When the Buddha went to Uruvelā, he converted the matted-hair (*jaṭila*) fire-worshipping ascetics, the 3 Kassapa brothers (*te, bhātika jaṭilā*) Uruvelā Kassapa, Nadī Kassapa and Gayā Kassapa and their 500, 300 and 200 followers, respectively, all of whom attained arhathood after listening to **the Āditta (Pariyāya) Sutta** (S 35.28).³

¹ V 1:20,36-21,16 (Mv 1.11 except the 2nd verse),

² Mvst 3:415 f (tr Mvst:J 3:416 f).

³ S 35.28/4:19 f = Mv 1.21 (V 1:34 f), SD 1.3.

1.3 THE GREAT COMMISSION: A COMMENTARY

1.3.1 “Go forth, bhikshus” [§2.2]

1.3.1.1 “Go forth” (*caratha ... cārikam*), wander to wherever there are those who will hear the Dharma. Proclaim **the Blessed One’s well-taught teaching** (*svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo*). This is the natural thing to do since the Buddha has arisen in our world, we are touched by the Dharma, and we are moved to present this Buddha Dharma to the world.

The original opening words were *caratha bhikkhave cārikam*, “Go forth, monks!” The Buddha addressed the first 60 arhats (the Buddha, too, was an arhat, the first amongst equals). The Buddha exhorted them to go forth for our sakes, even today: especially today, when we are so far away in time from the Buddha. We do not even know an arhat when we meet one, but we can still know the Dharma by our practice and understanding. The first “going-forth” empowers us even today with the power and freedom for self-understanding and self-liberation.

1.3.1.2 For those of us who are still unawakened, those not even on the path, to **go forth** with the Dharma means that we need to study, understand and live the suttas. We must first go forth ourselves, move ahead with our own study and practice of the Dharma. The reason for this is simple and vital: we need to know and be the Dharma before we have it to give to others. This is the “Assaji effect”; just as the wanderer Sāriputta, on first seeing the arhat Assaji, was moved by his radiant calm and composure.⁴

The early saints did not go forth with wealth, title, power or things, or for any gain, fame or praise, but simply out of their Dharma-spirited peace, joy and love. This is the going-forth of the freedom of wise silence, that is, the renunciation of evil, the cultivation of good and the freeing the mind.

1.3.2 “For the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many” [§2.2]

1.3.2.1 The Buddha exhorts the arhat monks to go forth “for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many” (*bahu.jana, hitāya bahu.jana, sukhāya*). There are a number of beautiful ways of explaining this line. I will take the approach of the 2 kinds of happiness: the worldly and the spiritual. As we well know, there are many suttas that teach us **happiness here and now** (*ditṭha, dhammika sukha*), where we are reminded to keep our body and speech pure for personal purity and mental health, and respecting the life, happiness, freedom, reality and mindfulness of others.

1.3.2.2 Happiness here and now thus encompasses both our own happiness and that of others. At this worldly level, we can only be truly happy when we help others be happy, too. This is living in a socially healthy environment of unconditionally accepting others: this is called *mettā*, the love that embraces all life, since it is what runs through all beings capable of cultivating their minds and reaching the path of awakening. “Going forth” means helping such beings along to move nearer the path, or at least not away from it by keeping the moral precepts.

1.3.2.3 Early Buddhism teaches us the meaning of true **wealth** (*atthi*), that is, joyful wealth. **The Anāṇa Sutta** (A 4.62) records the Buddha teaching us the 4 joys of wealth, thus:

(1) the joy of ownership	<i>atthi sukha</i>	benefits of having	the result of diligence
(2) the joy of enjoying [using]	<i>bhoga sukha</i>	benefits of being	the result of watchfulness
(3) the joy of debtlessness	<i>anaṇa sukha</i>	benefits of giving	the result of balanced livelihood

⁴ On the Assaji effect, see SD 58.1 (1.2.2.2).

(4) the joy of blamelessness *anavajja sukha* benefits to come spiritual friendship and spirituality (A 4.62/2:69-71), SD 2.2

The Buddhist practical philosophy of wealth is crystallized in a single word, **atthi**, which is polysemous; it has a number of meanings that can apply at the same time or to the same person. *Atthi* basically means “to have”; when we **have** things, especially useful and beautiful things, and many of them, we are said to be “wealthy.” We may have them, but we may not be happy; something we have is basically good when we can use them in a beneficial way. Then, those things *become* us; it is then not just a matter of *having*, but also of **being** (*atthi*).

We treasure wealth because we have **wants** (*atthi*); this means that other people (and beings) have wants, too. Hence, when we have much or more than others, we are extending ourselves to others by sharing our wealth according to their needs. This is the blessing of giving (*dāna*) or charity (*cāga*).

1.3.2.4 Finally, and the most meaningful joy of wealth is that it makes us see our true **purpose** (*atthi*) in life. When we lack wealth and are needy, our purpose in life has to be *instrumental*, that is, we have needs and wants, and have to work for it, and wealth is the instrument or means for us to gain the many ends that we have in mind. Our wealth is thus of “instrumental value.”

Wealthy people are not always happy because wealth has only instrumental value; it can buy or get things, but there is a limit to this, as there are some things we can only work for ourselves, like happiness of body and mind. In other words, happiness is of **intrinsic value**. In an important way, wealth can have an intrinsic purpose: when we use it for the greater happiness of others who have serious needs. When we understand this and respond with compassion and generosity, we are working towards our spiritual happiness [1.3.2.5].

1.3.2.5 Spiritual happiness is the feeling that our life and collective lives (as a family, group, society, etc) has a greater purpose, that is, how the future can turn out for us and for others. Hence, it is simply called “future happiness” or “the happiness that conduces to benefits hereafter” (*sampāriyak’attha saṁvattanika, dhamma sukha*). The term *samparāyika* has both the senses of “a future state or world” and “the next life or world.”

The Dīgha, jānu Sutta (A 8.54) records the Buddha as instructing these qualities as conducing to benefit us hereafter, in the future here and hereafter, that is, the accomplishments of *faith, moral virtue, charity* and *wisdom*. Basically, **faith** (*saddhā*) keeps us firm in our belief in the wholesome meaning and beneficial purpose of our life and work, and that we have the power to inspire joy and goodness in others.

Moral virtue (*sīla*) is the commitment to keeping our body healthy as the basis for our mental health. We see the values of life, happiness, freedom, truth and mindfulness respectively rooting the 5 precepts, that is, moral virtue is the basis for a good and productive family and society.

Charity (*cāga*) is seeing in others the same 5 values that we see as holding up our own life and those of our near and dear ones. In appreciation of the being of others, we share what we *have* (wealth, skills, etc) and what we *are* (kindness, attention, etc). We give because we have faith in the goodness of others and the work they are doing.

Wisdom is the understanding of the nature of knowledge and experience as they really are, that they are mostly sense-based and measured. This understanding is a start for liberating wisdom, when we see all that we have, all that we are and our relationships are conditioned by impermanence, conflicting and nonself. We have to accept that all things and people change in some way, and to be ready for it. We must understand the nature of conflicts, how they arise, how they can be prevented, and how they can be ended. Most of all, we must see our “self” for what it really is; there is no fixed view of ourself except that we, too, are subject to change, we can never really own things but only have them for

the moment. When we understand that all relationships somehow change, people change physically and mentally, we learn to value how we relate to others, and try to be our best to them while we can.

1.3.3 “Out of compassion for the world” [§2.2]

1.3.3.1 When we learn the Dharma, we begin to understand that “**world**” (*loka*) has 3 senses: (1) the physical space around us (space-time), (2) the people, beings and things that fill that space (beings), and (3) what we make of that space and things (formations). There are serious limits to how we exploit **space-time**, that is, the world around us, and we have to learn to live with it, enjoy it naturally, or lose it.

The world of **beings** is the living world beginning with our own self, and encompassing our family, society and nature, everything exists in intimate interdependence of one another. When we respect this harmony, especially through the 5 precepts, there is likely to be general happiness and sustainable nature. How we treat others and nature will, in turn, be the way that we will be treated by them in time. This is where good begets good when we allow it to be so. We simply need to show **compassion** for the world since it is not always what it seems, and it rarely turns out to be the way we want it.

1.3.3.2 When teaching Dharma, the rule is that we must have “compassion for the world” (*lokānu-kampāya*). This world is a crowd of unthinking insects, drawn to the naked flames of emotions and sensations, propped by promises and appearances of life-sucking gurus that smother us with doubts so that we wait on them like trained dancing bears chained by belief.

An important sense of compassion, especially for ourselves, is that we happily accept the situation even when we don’t seem to deserve it. We may not be able to do anything about it now, but a time will come when we can; but by then we may not have the same mind anyway. In this sense, compassion always works. We must know the time to move on; that is the essence of Buddhist training.

1.3.4 “For the good, welfare and happiness of devas and humans” [§2.2]

1.3.4.1 When we are properly taught the Buddha Dharma, it is, as a rule, structured on the 3 trainings, that is, moral virtue, mental concentration and insight wisdom. We start by laying the foundation for the whole Dharma-based life, that is, keeping to a life of wholesome action and speech. When our body and speech are harmoniously restrained, they are unlikely to distract the mind that is directed to samadhi, holding on to a single mental object to prime the mind with inner stillness so light that it will naturally rise above the moorings of the physical senses.

1.3.4.2 Once the mind is able to rise beyond the body, it becomes fully unified with all its powers of joy and light. The joy arises from the freedom the mind enjoys; the light is its own inner radiance in which it sees its own nature and true reality. This is the beginning of self-knowing, which when developed leads to self-liberation. Such a meditator emerges and lives joyfully.

Hence, it is said, the Buddha’s teaching is for “good, welfare and happiness” (*atthāya hitāya sukhāya*). **Good** is moral virtue; we are pure in body and speech; we **fare well** with a calm and clear mind living in true reality; and we are truly **happy** on account of our wisdom that gives insight into life.

1.3.4.3 While almost all world religions place some idea of God or almighty agency at the top of a pyramid supported by preachers, priests, and believers, who in turn stand above unbelievers, and so on, Buddha Dharma sees *the whole universe as self-sustaining with neither beginning nor end*. Just as **time** has neither beginning nor end but keeps running, so too life in the universe keeps running without end.

All beings in the universe—animals, humans, gods, whatever that live—are subject to the same law of impermanence. Aliens who come here from some distant quadrants of the universe may find our

glorification of unseen supreme beings quite primitive and inhuman, or would surely see the theologians creating these Gods to be highly imaginative and exploitative.

Surely, if these aliens are intelligent beings, they would understand why the Buddha declares that the Dharma is “**for the good, welfare and happiness of devas and humans**” (*atthāya hitāya sukhāya deva,manussānaṃ*). Considering that the devas and brahmas of the suttas are said to live astronomical distances away from earth, they could well be aliens themselves. Or, at least, we have in Buddhism a place for alien beings, too.

1.3.5 “Let not two go the same way” [§2.2]

1.3.5.1 We may well wonder why the Buddha instructed the first 60 arhats to each go by their own path. Is it because there is only one true and noble eightfold path? But that path is not a road put there but an inner journey we make renouncing our self-views, craving, existence and ignorance. Or perhaps, it is to remind the first missionaries that they are celibate renunciants; but they know that very well, and arhats do not need to be reminded of what they have already rightly abandoned.

The only commentarial explanation for this strategy of not having one monk “going by the same way” (*mā ekena dve agamittha*) is found in **the Saṃyutta Commentary**. It explains thus: “Going in this way when one is teaching Dharma, the other monk/s need not have to remain silent.” (*evañ hi gatesu ekasmiṃ dhammaṃ desente, ekena tuñhī, bhūtena ṭhāttabbaṃ hoti.*) (SA 1:172,2 f). The idea then clearly is that every monk should be a missionary to others.

1.3.5.2 To keep it easy, we can simply say the Buddha is a good missionary strategist: with each of the 60 arhats going their own way, 60 directions are well covered. This means that a maximum of area will be presented the Dharma and see or hear it for themselves. Indeed, within the first year, each arhat brought back a great number of converts, and the Buddha had to introduce a new way of admitting candidates into the sangha, that is, by way of **going for the 3 refuges**.⁵

1.3.6 “Teach, bhikshus, the Dharma” [§2.3]

1.3.6.1 Despite the long passage of the great commission, the Buddha’s actual instruction is short and simple: “**Teach, bhikshus, the Dharma**” (*desetha bhikkhave dhammaṃ*). Almost everything else in the great commission explains this basic instruction or expands on it. In teaching the Dharma, each of the arhat becomes an extension of the Buddha, since “One who sees Dharma, sees me,” says the Buddha.⁶ Indeed, the purpose of any Buddhist mission, if it is Dharma-spirited, is to teach Dharma.

1.3.6.2 What does it mean to “**teach Dharma**”? It means to present the 6 virtues of the Dharma, the true teaching. Firstly, the Buddha Dharma is **well taught** (*svākkhāta*), as already mentioned: it is well taught in the beginning, well taught in the middle, well taught in the end; it is well taught in all the 3 trainings.[1.3.7]

The Dharma is to be seen for oneself **right here and now** (*sandiṭṭhika*). It is not some reward we are promised for some prayers or belief, that is, as a reward after death. Just listening to the Dharma can bring us to the path, just as Sāriputta heard only two lines of the verse spoken by Assaji, and attains the path of streamwinning.

The Dharma **has nothing to do with time** (*akālika*). When we understand and live the Dharma, we find that we always have time for good and joy. Doing bad takes our time away, and we waste our prec-

⁵ See SD 61.20 (1.1.1.1).

⁶ See **Vakkali S** (S 22.87,13/3:120), SD 8.8; SD 10.4 (2.2.5); SD 51.25 (2.2.2.6); SD 55.8 (1.2.2.2).

ious life. Finally, when we attain nirvana, we gain the timeless, time-free reality, beyond space-time, the death-free.

The Dharma invites us to **come and see** (*ehi,passika*) it for ourselves. Although we are taught the Dharma, it is not like someone is jumping into the sea of samsara to pull us out of it; rather, it is like we are being taught how to swim well, with all the proper exercise, mental focus and endurance, and the wise strategies. We are able to cross the waters of suffering safely by our own effort and reach the safe farther shore.

Once we start learning the Dharma the right way, it is **accessible** (*opanayika*) to us, inspiring us to progress to see and build our own goodness, our inner calm and our mental clarity. Thus, we become wise, understanding true reality in the manner **to be personally know by the wise** (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*).⁷

Basically, the Dharma relates to or re-enacts the Buddha's awakening, reminding us that we, too, are capable of self-awakening. It is because of the great commission that the Buddha's teaching has come down to us to this day, that we are celebrating it right here and now.

1.3.7 “(The Dharma) that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end” [§2.3]

1.3.7.1 The Commentary explains the threefold goodness of the Dharma—“good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end” (*ādi,kalyāṇam majjhe,kalyāṇam pariyosāna,kalyāṇam*)—in various ways pertaining both to teaching and practice. Moral virtue is the beginning; mental calm, insight and the path are the middle; the fruits of the path 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).

1.3.7.2 In terms of time, we can reflect on **the 3 jewels** (*ti, ratana*), that is, the Buddha, the Dharma and the noble sangha. Our past is the recollection of **the Buddha** as the self-awakened one, the first arhat amongst many others. We live emulating the Buddha in renouncing evil, seeking the good and freeing the mind.

Our living present in **the Dharma**: the records of the Buddha's awakening and teachings of how we can emulate him or any of the great arhats. We see the Dharma in the way we live and everything connected with us. They are all teaching us Dharma; we only need to learn to see and listen deeply. In the unceasing changes of reality lies the Dharma: we are ourselves that change. We only need to see it.

The future is the **sangha** that is the noble path of all those who keep to the 3 trainings and attain streamwinning in this life itself and with the last breath. As lay practitioners, we see *renunciation* in our moments of breath; as monastics, we keep to the Vinaya and live the Dharma of full renunciation leading to awakening.

1.3.8 “With its meaning and phrasing” [§2.3]

1.3.8.1 The Buddha's teachings are preserved in the letter (*vyañjana*) in Pali and propagated in the spirit in interpretation and translation. As a rule, the teachings should be properly taught both in the letter and the spirit. The Pali idiom, however, places “spirit” first, thus: *sāttham sabyañjanam*.

The Dīgha Commentary explains the phrase as follows:

One who is concerned only with the explanation of food, women, men and so on, only teaches “without the meaning.” The Blessed One, having abandoned this manner of teaching,

⁷ Dhammānussati, SD 15.9.

teaches the 4 focuses of mindfulness and so on. Therefore, he teaches the Dharma “**with the meaning.**”

One whose teaching lacks the various range of phrases, or who confuses the pronunciation of the various words, is said to be teaching “without the phrasing.” But the Blessed One teaches the Dharma giving it the full phrasing, without any slurring of distinct sounds. Therefore, he teaches the Dharma “**with the phrasing.**” (DhA 1:176)

Essentially, the Commentary is saying that by the phrase “with the meaning” is meant that the Buddha speaks only Dharma, that is, on “only suffering and the ending of suffering,” as he states in **the (Khandha) Anurādha Sutta** (S 22.86) = **the (Avyākata) Anurādha Sutta** (S 44.2), **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22), and **the Yamaka Sutta** (S 22.85).⁸ And “with the phrasing” refers to the Buddha’s clear, resonant and articulate tone so that it is simply beautiful to hear.⁹

1.3.8.2 The Commentaries often give an idealist, even technical, descriptions of the Buddha. Hyperbole (including astronomical numbers) is often a characteristic of the oral tradition. While it is true that the Buddha, as a rule, speaks Dharma, he is often recorded as being “**the first to greet others**” and to initiate a conversation.¹⁰

When meeting monks, especially those on retreat in a remote dwelling, the Buddha would first ask after them in a mundane manner, thus: “I hope you (three) find it bearable, **Anuruddhā.**¹¹ I hope you’re able to keep going, I hope you have no trouble with almsfood,” as recorded in **the (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128).¹²

Often, when meeting others who are not monastics, the Buddha and his visitor “exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings ... when the friendly greetings were concluded (*sammodimsu sammodaniyam katham sārāṇiyam vītisāretvā*), the visitor would ask a question, or the Buddha went on to discuss Dharma.¹³

As a rule, the arhats, by their nature, live joyfully together, “all dwelling in concord, in mutual joy, without disputing, **blending like milk and water, looking at each other with kind eyes.**”¹⁴ They dwell with one another “keeping up acts of lovingkindness through deed, speech and ... mind, both openly and privately.” (M 128)¹⁵

⁸ S 22.86,21.2/3:119 = S 44.2 (SD 21.13); M 22,38/1:140 (SD 3.13); S 22.85,37/3:112 (SD 21.12); also SD 40a.1 (11.1.1); SD 58.1 (1.2.2.2).

⁹ The Buddha’s voice is said to have 8 qualities; it is frank, clear, melodious, pleasant, full, carrying, deep and resonant; it does not travel beyond his audience (DA 2:452 f; MA 2:771 f). See **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30,2.22.1) + SD 36.9 (4.1) mark no 28; (4.3) Table. See also SD 36.2 (4.3.3.3); SD 54.1 (1.1.2.4).

¹⁰ Buddha’s habit of first greeting others: **D 5,7** (18) (*pubba,bhāsī*) (SD 22.8); D 4,6 (SD 30.5); SD 45.16 (2.5.3(2)); initiating the conversation (*puretaram ālapitvā*) (DhA 16.6/3:384), SD 61.14 (2.1.5).

¹¹ *Anuruddhā*, 3 voc pl, lit “Anuruddhas” (as in M:H), ie, Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila. This is an example of a multiple vocative, unique to Pali, used in addressing a group by its leader. I have used the original Pali. Also in **Nalaka,pāna S** (M 68,4.1/1:463), SD 37.4. See **Aggañña S** (D 27,3), SD 2.9.

¹² M 128,10.2/3:155 f (SD 5.18).

¹³ See eg **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1.9), SD 21.3.

¹⁴ “Looking at each other with kind eyes” (*aññam-aññam piya,cakkhūhi sampassantā*). The Buddha’s remark (actually, a wish or question) here is fully understandable, because he has just left the quarrelsome monks of Kosambī [§§2-4]. Rajah Pasenadi makes a similar remark to the Buddha in **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,11/2:120 f). This is stock: M 1:206, 398, 3:156; A 1:70, 3:67, 104; S 4:225. **Parisā S** (A 3.93) uses the rain simile to show how spiritual friendship (defined in the words here) (§11) builds up positive qualities in one (A 3.93,5/1:243), SD 6.12 (3).

¹⁵ **M 128,12.4** (SD 5.18). This passage contains the first 3 of the 6 “conditions for conciliation” or “principles of cordiality” (*cha dhammā sārāṇiyā*) [**Kosambiya S** (M 48), SD 64.1]. The remaining 3 are: (4) sharing of gains with virtuous fellow brahmacharis; (5) keeping high moral virtues; (6) having compatible right view and practice (M

1.3.9 “Proclaim the holy life, utterly whole and pure” [§2.3]

1.3.9.1 The Buddha instructs the 60 arhats to “**proclaim the holy life**” (*brahmacariyaṃ pakāsetha*).

The word **holy life** (*brahma, cariya*) is used here (in the texts) with the following senses: *giving, service, moral discipline of the 5 precepts, the 4 immeasurables, abstinence from sexual intercourse, contentment with one’s own partner, effort, the limbs of the uposatha observance, the noble path, and the entire teaching.* [The Commentary refers to sutta passages illustrating each of these senses.]

Here, it is used in the sense of “teaching” (*sāsana*).

Thus in this context (of the great commission), it should be understood as follows:

“He teaches the Dharma that is good in the beginning, and so on ... utterly whole and pure. And, teaching it in this way, he reveals the holy life, the entire teaching by way of the 3 trainings (moral conduct, concentration and wisdom).” (DA 1:177,19-179,22)

1.3.9.2 The Dīgha Commentary explains the phrase, “**utterly whole and pure**” (*kevala, paripuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ*) as follows:

It is here “**utterly whole**” (*kevala, paripuṇṇaṃ*) in the sense of having everything, that there is nothing lacking from it and nothing excessive in it, nothing to add and nothing to remove.

It is “**pure**” (*parisuddhaṃ*) because it is without defilement. In the case of one who teaches the Dharma with the intention of obtaining gain or honour, the teaching is impure.

But the Blessed One teaches without regard for worldly ends, with a heart made gentle by the cultivation of lovingkindness, suffused with welfare for others, with a mind set in uplifting others (from suffering and the rounds of rebirth).

Therefore, he teaches the pure Dharma. (DA 1:177,8-18)

1.3.9.3 The Pali term for “**holy life**” is *brahma, cariya*, which is explained thus in the Khuddaka, pāṭha Commentary as follows: “Either the conduct is (morally) perfect or it is the life of the brahmas” (*brahmaṃ cariyaṃ brahmānaṃ vā cariyaṃ brahma, cariyaṃ*, KhpA 151,23.) Hence, it is called “the holy life.” A further meaning of the term is that such a morally perfect life will bring one rebirth in one of the formless brahma worlds, especially when one attains non-returning.¹⁶

Properly speaking, the holy life is keeping to the moral precepts with a life of celibacy, that is, total renunciation. This, of course, refers to the Buddhist monastic life based on the Vinaya for the practice of the Dharma, aspiring for the path in this life itself. The purpose of the **Vinaya** is to keep one’s body and speech restrained so that one has custody of one’s senses. With the senses restrained, one is better prepared to calm the mind and direct it to the mind-object to attain samadhi, and then dhyana (*jhāna*).

With dhyana, the mind is “**utterly whole and pure**” (*kevala, paripuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ*) in that it is totally and blissfully undistracted. One is then virtually a mental being. Emerging from this state, with the mind that is still calm and clear, one is able to see directly into the 3 characteristics (impermanence, suffering and nonself) of true reality. When this is properly done, one then gains awakening.

48,6/1:322 f, 2:250; D 3:245; A 3:288 f, 5:89; DhA 294; J 5:382). Cf *sārāṇīyaṃ dhamma, katham suṇāti*, DhA 4:168 & BHS *samrañjaṇīyaṃ dharmam samādāya*, Divy 404). For details, see (**Chakka**) **Sārāṇīya Dhamma S 1** (A 6.11), SD 55.15.

¹⁶ On the non-returners and the purer abodes, see SD 10.16 (13.1.6); SD 23.14 (Table 3).

1.3.10 “There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away through not hearing the Dharma” [§2.4]

1.3.10.1 It was Brahmā Sahampati who, beseeching the newly awakened Buddha to teach the Dharma, who said these words:

“There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away through not hearing the Dharma.”
(*santi sattā appa,raj’akkha,jātikā assavanatā dhammassa parihāyanti*)¹⁷

Beings “**with little dust in their eyes**” (*appa,raj’akkha,jātikā*) are “those rooted in wisdom, with eyes of such a nature having only a little dust of greed, hatred and delusion in their eyes.”¹⁸ When our eyes are filled with dust, we can neither open them nor see what is before us or around us. When there is only a little dust in our eyes, we only need to blink and clear the eye of the dust or grit that is greed, hatred or delusion. This means that we have enough mindfulness to pay attention to teachings regarding true reality and the wisdom to see it for ourselves and be free.

1.3.10.2 The fact that we are reading this study on the great commission and are interested in the Buddha Dharma evinces that we are among those with “little dust” in our eyes in this age of polluted environment. We are not today blinded by darkness but rather by the bright lights of false teachings and worldly knowledge, by privatized religions, by a class Buddhism for the rich and powerful.

The basic teachings of Buddha Dharma serve as a safe passage for us to find our way around in the bright lights of religion and worldliness so that we return to the physical safety of our homes, the warm joy of a secure mind, and a good idea of where we are, so that we can go back to the suttas and stillness of our minds.

1.3.11 “There will be those who will understand the Dharma” [§2.4]

1.3.11.1 The Buddha’s great commission closes on a positive note: “**There will be those who will understand the Dharma**” (*bhāvissanti dhammassa aññātāro*), that is, there will be those who will penetrate it.¹⁹ As soon as the Buddha started to teach the Dharma, that is, the 4 noble truths, to the 5 monks at the deer park in Isi,patana, outside Benares, they understood, and Koṇḍañña became a streamwinner.²⁰

Five days later, the Buddha taught them the 5 aggregates in some detail, explaining why they are nonself (*anattā*). At the end of the teaching, they all became arhats: the first 6 arhats in the world.²¹ And as we have noted, within the 1st year of the ministry, there were a total of **60 arhats**, as a result of the Buddha’s personal teaching. The Buddha then sent them out on the great commission to bring the Dharma to others with little dust in their eyes, as noted in this short **Māra Pāsa Sutta 2** (S 4.5).

1.3.11.2 Even on his deathbed—as recorded in **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16)—the Buddha teaches the Dharma to his last convert, **the wanderer Subhadda** of Kusinārā. The Buddha tells him that

¹⁷ This para and the foll are first spoken by Mahā Brahmā when beseeching the Buddha to teach the Dharma: **Mv 1.5.7-12** (V 1:5-7); **M 26,20/1:169**; **S 6.1/1:138 f**; also SD 12.1 (2.1.3).

¹⁸ *Appa,raj’akkha,jātikā ti paññā,maye akkhimhi appaṃ raga,dosa,moha,rajaṃ etesaṃ evaṃ,sabhāvā,ti appa,-raj’akkha,jātikā*. (VA 5:962)

¹⁹ *Bhāvissanti dhammassa aññātāro ti paṭivijjhātāro* (VA 5:962).

²⁰ **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11/5:420-424 = Mv 1,6.16-31 @ V 1:10-12), SD 1.1.

²¹ **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59/3:66-68), SD 1.2.

only in a Dharma-Vinaya with the noble eightfold path will there be found the recluses of the 4 kinds, that is, the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and the arhat.

“Empty of recluses are the other, outside doctrines,
but, Subhadda, if these monks are to live rightly here [in this teaching], **this world will not be empty of arhats.**”
(D 16,5/27/2:151), SD 9

This declaration is not a triumphalist or exclusivist statement, but a reality reflecting the religious conditions of the Buddha’s time. It should be read with the Buddha’s declaration in **the Puppha Sutta** (S 22.94):

“I do not quarrel with the world, bhikshus, but the world quarrels with me. One who speaks Dharma does not quarrel with anyone in the world. Of that to which the wise men of the world do not assent, I, too, say that it is not so. Of that to which the wise men of the world assent, I too say that it is so.”
(S 22.94/3:138), SD 72.5

The Buddha is saying that he neither rejects all worldly wisdom nor all other religious ideas, but only those propositions that are simply imaginative going beyond the limits of possible experience.²²

1.3.12 “I, too, bhikshus, will go to Senani,nigama in Uruvela to teach the Dhamma” [§2.5]

1.3.12.1 In closing the great commission, the Buddha will not sit back, as it were, to rest on his laurels. Even though his own spiritual work is done—he is fully awakened—his work out there still remains unfinished. There are countless beings out there still unawakened. He will now do his part in the continuing work of awakening the world:

“I, too, bhikshus, will go to Senani,nigama in Uruvela to teach the Dhamma”
(*aham pi bhikkhave yena uruvelā senānigamo ten’upasaṅkamissāmi dhamma,desanāyā*).

In just a two-letter enclitic indeclinable, *pi*, meaning “also, too”—that is, “I, too” (*aham pi*)—the Buddha shows that he, too, is part of the great commission. He continues to teach and preserve the Dharma-Vinaya so that it reaches us even to this day.

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²² See S:B 1085 n185 and R Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:261.

(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2

The Second (Māra) Discourse on the Snare
S 4.5

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Deer Park at Isipatana outside Benares.

There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Bhikshus!”

“Bhante!” the bhikkhus replied.

2 The Blessed One said this:

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

You too, bhikshus, are freed from all snares, both divine and human.

The great commission²³

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.

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 the holy life, utterly whole and pure.

2.4 There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away through not hearing the Dharma.²⁴ [106] There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.

2.5 I, too, bhikshus, will go to Senani,nigama²⁵ in Uruvela to teach the Dharma.”²⁶

3 Then Mara the evil one approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:²⁷

<p>3.2 <i>baddho'si sabba,pāsehi</i> <i>ye dibbā ye ca mānusā</i> <i>mahā,bandhana,baddho;si</i> <i>na me samaṇa mokkhasī ti</i></p>	<p>You are bound by all the snares, both divine and human; you are bound by the great bondage: You won't escape me, recluse!”</p>
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²³ This great commission (*cārikā anujānanam*) is also recorded in **the Vinaya** (Mv 1.11.1 @ V 1:21) and **Mahāpa-dāna S** (D 14/2:45-48), SD 49.8.

²⁴ This para is also spoken by Mahā Brahmā when beseeching the Buddha to teach the Dharma: Mv 1.5.-12 (Mv 1.5.7-12 @ V 1:5-7); M 26,20/1:169; S 6.1/1:138 f; also SD 12.1 (2.1.3).

²⁵ 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).

²⁶ This is the Buddha's famous “great commission” [§§2.2-2.5] to the first 60 arhat disciples to go forth and spread the Dharma. [1.2]

²⁷ 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)

[The Blessed One:]

4 *muttôham²⁸ sabba, pāsehi* I am freed from all the snares,
ye dibbā ye ca mānusā both divine and human;
mahā, bandhana, mutto'mhi, I am freed from the great bondage.
nihato tvam asi antakā ti **S 455** You're defeated, end-maker!

5 Then Mara the evil one, thinking,
 "The Blessed One knows me, the well gone knows me!"
 sad and disheartened, disappeared right there.²⁹

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²⁸ Ce Ee Se so; only Be *muttâham*.

²⁹ *Dukkhī dummano tath'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)].