

SD 61.2

Nivāpa Sutta

The Discourse on the Hunter's Bait | M 25

Theme: How to be free from Māra

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1 Introduction

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY AND SPIRIT

1.1.1 Sutta summary

The Nivāpa Sutta, the discourse on the hunter's bait (or feeding-ground), gives the parable of 3 herds of deer that are caught by the hunter (Māra), but the 4th herd escapes to full freedom. These 4 herds of deer are then contrasted with 4 kinds of recluses and brahmins. The first 3 kinds are those with wrong views or practices, while the 4th represents a monk (true practitioner) who fully escapes from Māra's powers. [1.2]

1.1.2 The sutta spirit

1.1.2.1 The Nivāpa Sutta is a good example of an early Pali text which is rich in the Pali idiom, meaning that it has to be translated, in the same spirit, into the modern English idiom. The Buddha's vital instruction on this is given in **the Neyy'attha Nīt'attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5 f), on the nature of indirect and direct meanings.

According to this Sutta's teaching, when explaining (or translating) a sutta or any Pali passage, we should determine whether its **"sense is drawn out"** (*ñīt'attha*), that is, with explicit or direct meaning, or the passage or word is one **"whose sense is to be drawn out"** (*neyy'attha*), that is, with implicit or indirect meaning.¹

1.1.2.2 Those terms whose senses have been **"drawn out"** include, for example, "buddha," "dharma," "sangha," "karma," and "nirvana." As a rule, these terms have a very clear Buddhist meaning or meanings. We must also be aware that many Pali terms are polysemic: a word may have more than one sense which may be operative at the same time, or we need to tease out its usage. In this latter case, its sense is to be **"drawn out."**

A term such as *kāma*, for example, may mean either "sensual pleasure," or "object of sense-pleasure." The compound, *kāma-c, chanda*, for example, often translated as "sensual desire," as the first of the 5 hindrances, properly refers to desire for *sense-objects*. Being free from the power of the senses is a key factor in the attaining of dhyana. Since it is not easy to find a "perfect" translation for such a term, we use "sensual desire" or technically, "sensual desire for sense-objects" (which is quite lengthy).

In the term *kāma, loka* ("sense-world"), *kāma* refers to our 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*). In *kāma, rāga* (sensual lust) refers to lust for the sense-pleasures. In *kāma, bhogī* (who enjoys sensual pleasures), *kāma* means "sensual pleasures." It is not always easy to agree on the exact sense of such terms (since we are unawakened). However, it is beneficial to be clear (as far as possible) of the sense of the term we are using.

1.1.2.3 The Nivāpa Sutta (M 25) uses many words that have idiomatic senses in connection with this Sutta's teaching, but which can be a confusion or nightmare for the pedant, for whom words are

¹ A 2.3.5 f/1:60 (SD 2.6b).

more important than their meanings. Such an attitude is sometimes called the “mantra” attitude, which is common in “religions of the book,” such as Brahmanism and the God-religions. Early Buddhism upholds what we call **the “truth” spirit**. This means that words are how we use them, that is, reflecting our understanding of true reality and our vision of spiritual freedom.

In translating the Pali suttas into English, we need to understand the Pali meaning’s and try to express them in *good, beautiful, idiomatic English*. We must always be mindful neither to paraphrase nor caricature the Pali translation, though we may, with care, simplify certain difficult expressions and passages. An impressive translation may not reflect the true sense or purpose of the Pali. We may be impressed by the modern style rather than learning anything from the sutta teaching. Sadly, the truth will be buried or displaced under the weight of our private views.

1.1.2.4 Here are some of the Pali terms and phrases in the Nivāpa Sutta that should be understood as used in the Sutta, and translated in modern idiomatic English to reflect them as faithfully as possible. The term “literal” often refers to the lexical or dictionary meaning; the “figurative” or “idiomatic” usage refers to how we use such words for a close reading of the sutta teachings.²

agati	—[§11.4] <i>a-gati</i> comes from √GAM, “to go,” from which we get <i>gati</i> , (1) “going (away), course”; (2) “passing away”; (3) “conduct, course of life, destiny.” Its opposite is <i>a-gati</i> , (1) “coming (and going),” cf <i>agati</i> below; (2) “(re)birth”; (3) “not going, non-admittance, non-entry”; (4) “wrong course,” esp the 4 biases (greed, hate, delusion and fear) (V 1:339,38). In M 25, <i>agati</i> has the sense (3), referring to “where Māra cannot go,” that is, the dhyanas (which “blinds” Māra [§12.3]. Also note that <i>āgati</i> (with the prefix <i>ā-</i>) is a different word, meaning “arrival, coming; return, rebirth.”
gāha	—[§5.9] <i>gāha</i> is here not derived from √GAH, “to seize,” but from √GĀH, “to plunge” in the sense of “to hide.” Hence, <i>gāha</i> refers to “a hiding place.” But there is a wordplay here, since <i>gāha</i> (from √GAH) also means “seizing, holding.”
parajana	—[§5.8] (<i>para</i> , “other” + <i>jana</i> , “person,” hence, a stranger, alien); cf <i>amanussa</i> , “non-human,” a generic term for beings “other than humans,” especially subhumans, but sometimes including divine beings. The Commentary glosses <i>parajana</i> as “yaksha” (MA 2:161,17), broadly, a “demon.” There is a yaksha named Parajana ³ (M 31,21/1:210).
miga,jāta	—[§2.1 <i>passim</i>] <i>miga</i> usually means “deer”; ⁴ it is used generically to connote “wild animals.” The Sutta context is clear that the animal here is the deer (although the sense “wild animal” in general also applies). The suffix <i>-jāta</i> functions like “-kind” in “man-kind”; here it gives a collective or generic sense.
nivāpa	—[§2.1] (<i>ni-vāpa</i> , lit, <i>ni-</i> “down” + <i>vāpa</i> , “cast”; hence, to sow, (v) <i>vapati</i> ; also (v) <i>nivapati</i> , to heap up, throw, sow (seeds, feed, food). Here (in this Sutta or our understanding of it), means:

² It’s a useful habit to look up new Pali words and how Pali words are formed. The most easily available (free) good ref is the PTS **Pali-English Dictionary** (PED). The most detailed and authoritative (up to the word *kām-*) is the **Critical Pali Dictionary** (CPD). The latest work is **Dictionary of Pali** (parts 1-3, up to *bho-*), 1-2 more vols forthcoming.

³ Full name, Dīgha Parajana (MA 2:244,14-26), cf Dīgha Karāyaṇa (identified as the Malla general, Bandhula, MA 3:349,16-19, cf DhA 1:355 = J 4:151). Comy says that the former is a deva king (*deva,rāja*) amongst the 28 commanders of the yakshas mentioned in **Āṭṭānāṭṭiya S** (D 32,10/3:205).

⁴ This is likely to be the sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*), native to the Indian subcontinent, S China and SE Asia. There is also the Indian hog deer (*Axis porcinus*) found in the Gangetic plain down to S Myanmar and parts of Thailand and Khmer.

- (1) “seed, grain; feed, fodder; the food or feed cast on the ground as bait for the prey (such as deer)”;
- (2) “feeding ground,” such as “the squirrels’ feeding-ground” (*kalandaka, nivāpa*, VA 595,26).

Nivāpa is here translated as “**bait**” because it best brings out the idea of Māra, who, like the deer hunter, casts or sets bait in the trap for deer.

nivāpika —[§2.1] the agent word for *nivāpa*, that is, “one sows or casts seeds for planting crops,” but here referring to one who scatters feed as bait to trap deer. *Nivāpika* is here translated as “deer-hunter.” The Commentary confirms it thus: “*nevāpika* is one who scatters grass and seeds in the forest for the purpose of trapping deer” (*nevāpiko ti yo migānaṃ gahaṇatthāya araṅṅe tiṇa, bijāni vapati*, MA 2:159,33). The food or feed used as bait is called ***nivāpa, bhojana***.

samacintesuṃ —[§5.3 *passim*] (An interesting verb not listed in the dictionaries but often used in the suttas.) Aorist (past tense) of *sama-*, “together, alike” + *cinteti*, “to think, consider”; hence, “considered together.” Amongst the deer, it is easy to understand how they tend to follow the “consensus” of the herd in going where to feed, etc. For the 4 kinds of recluses and brahmins, *samacintesuṃ* refers to their general tendency or habit following their teacher or leader, or according to their sectarian conduct. In **the Māra Dhītu Sutta** (S 4.25,4+6), *samacintesuṃ* is translated as “discussed amongst themselves” (SD 36.6).

vākarā —[§5.9] “net, snare” (also *vākurā* = (Skt) *vāgurā*; as *vākura*, Tha 774). It occurs as the dvandva *daṇḍa, vākarā*, “stakes and net” in the Sutta. Hence, translated as “wicker-fencing (of stakes and nets).”

1.2 SUTTA STRUCTURE

1.2.1 The Nivāpa Sutta is structured in 5 unequal parts, thus:

§§3-6	The parable of the 4 herds of deer
§7	The parable’s meaning (key words)
§§8-11	The 4 kinds of recluses and brahmins
§§12-19	The 8 attainments: blinding Māra
§20	Cessation and arhathood

The Sutta contrasts the 4 herds of deer with the 4 kinds of recluses and brahmins. Only the 4th deer herd is free of the hunter. Like this 4th herd, the 4th kind of recluses and brahmins are free of Māra.

1.2.2 The 4 herds of deer

The passages on the 4 deer herds in the Nivāpa Sutta build up by way of “concatenation” (each of the herd reflects on the folly and fate of the preceding herd/s). The fate or progress of the 4 herds of deer can be summarized as follows:

⟨Angle bracketed numbers⟩ refer to **the herds**, eg “⟨4.3⟩” means “the 4th herd reflecting on the 3rd herd.”

- ⟨1⟩ THE 1st DEER HERD → Trapped [§3.2].
- ⟨2⟩ The 2nd DEER HERD.
- ⟨2.1⟩ Reflects on 1st herd [§3.1] → The 1st herd is trapped. [§4.2]
- ⟨2.2⟩ The 2nd herd’s strategy → The 2nd herd is trapped.

- ⟨3⟩ THE 3rd DEER HERD.
 - ⟨3.1⟩ Reflects on 1st herd [§3.1].
 - ⟨3.2⟩ Reflects on 2nd herd reflecting on 1st herd [§3.1] and on 2nd herd [§§4.2-4.5].
 - ⟨3.3⟩ The 3rd herd's strategy → The 3rd herd is trapped.
- ⟨4⟩ THE 4th DEER HERD.
 - ⟨4.1⟩ Reflects on 1st herd [§3.1].
 - ⟨4.2⟩ Reflects on 2nd herd reflecting on 1st herd [§3.1] → The 1st herd is trapped.
 - ⟨4.3⟩ Reflects on 3rd herd reflecting on 1st herd [§3.1] and on 2nd herd [§§4.2-4.5] → Both herds trapped. The 3rd herd's strategy → The 3rd herd is trapped.
 - ⟨4.4⟩ The 4th herd's strategy → Hunter ignores 4th herd → fully free.

1.2.3 The 4 kinds of recluses

{Braced numbers} refer to **the kinds of recluses and brahmins**, eg “{4.3}” means “the 4th kind of recluses and brahmins reflecting on the 3rd kind.”

- {1} THE 1st KIND OF RECLUSES AND BRAHMINS → Trapped by Māra.
- {2} THE 2nd KIND OF RECLUSES AND BRAHMINS
 - {2.1} Reflects on 1st kind [§8] → Trapped by Māra.
 - {2.2} The 2nd kind's strategy → The 2nd kind is trapped by Māra.
- {3} THE 3rd KIND OF RECLUSES AND BRAHMINS
 - {3.1} Reflects on 1st kind [§8] → Trapped by Māra.
 - {3.2} Reflects on 2nd kind reflecting on 1st kind [§8] and on 2nd kind [§9] → Both kinds trapped by Māra.
 - {3.3} The 3rd kind's strategy → The 3rd kind is trapped by Māra.
- {4} THE 4th KIND OF RECLUSES AND BRAHMINS
 - {4.1} Reflects on the 1st kind [§8] → Trapped by Māra.
 - {4.2} Reflects on 2nd kind reflecting on 1st kind [§8] → The 1st kind is trapped by Māra.
 - {4.3} Reflects on 3rd kind reflecting on 1st kind [§8] and on 2nd kind [§9] → Both kinds trapped by Māra. The 3rd kind's strategy → The 3rd kind is trapped by Māra.
 - {4.4} The 4th kind's strategy → Hunter ignores the 4th kind → fully free (blinds Māra).

1.2.3.1 The 1st kind of recluses and brahmins [§8]

{1} The 1st kind of recluses and brahmins went right amongst (*anupakhajja*) “Māra's bait and worldliness” and indulged themselves in eating unwarily (*mucchita*, “deludedly”). Acting thus, they became intoxicated (*mada*; adj *matta*), as a result of which they became negligent (*pamāda*; *pamatta*). On account of their negligence, “Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.” **The 1st kind** of recluses and brahmins “failed to free themselves from Māra's power and control—(they were just like the deer of the 1st herd”: ⟨1⟩.

This metaphor refers specifically to monastics who do not keep to the Vinaya, and generally to all worldly teachers and followers of any religion or any way of life.

1.2.3.2 The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins

{2.1} The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins thought about the failure of *the 1st kind*. The 2nd kind decided *not* to feed on food the way that the 1st kind did, and ate only natural food, such as grain, roots, fruits and windfall [§9.3]. However, the lack of food during the hot season left the 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins emaciated and weak.

{2.2} On account of this, they desperately resorted to “Māra’s bait and worldliness”: they indulged themselves in **eating unwarily**; they backslided. Acting thus, they became intoxicated, as a result of which they became negligent. On account of their negligence, “Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness”. **The 2nd kind** of recluses and brahmins “failed to free themselves from Māra’s power and control—(they) were just like the deer of the 2nd herd”: <2.2>.

This group of religious are those who, adversely affected by the hot season and lack of food, resorted to eating unwarily, that is, eating whatever they received from the laity or were able to get themselves. They were trapped by Māra.

This metaphor refers especially to monastics who only ritually follow the Vinaya or shamelessly give up the Vinaya. They put up a respectable and favourable public face; they are concerned with their titles and status; and tend to be worldly.

1.2.3.3 The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins

{3.1} The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins reflected on the failures of the 1st kind,

{3.2} and they reflected on the 2nd kind, too.

{3.3} Unlike the 1st and 2nd kinds of recluses and brahmins, the 3rd kind did *not* eat food unwarily. However, **the 3rd kind** held various views, especially the 10 speculative views [§10.6]. As a result of that, they were trapped by Māra. They were just like the deer of the 3rd herd: <3.3>.

In this case, the religious practitioners appear to be well behaved or morally virtuous, but they hold wrong views, which do not reflect true reality. They tend to see the Dharma either in a very academic way or in a specific dogmatic manner, caring more for self-repute than the truth.

1.2.3.4 The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins

{4.1} The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins reflected on the failures of the 1st kind;

{4.2} they reflected on the failures of the 2nd kind, too;

{4.3} and they reflected on the failures of the 3rd kind, too.

{4.4} Unlike the first 3 kinds of recluses and brahmins, the 4th kind not only refrained from the 10 speculative views and wrong views in general (implied in the Sutta), but they dwelled “where Māra and his horde could not go” [§11.8 f]. In this way, the 4th kind of recluses and brahmins are like the deer of the 4th herd: <4.4>.

The Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta (M 26) closes with similar descriptions of the 4th kind of deer and of the “true seeker” of the path (who has attained cessation), that is, the 4th kind of recluse and brahmin, thus:

This monk, bhikshu, is said to have **blinded Māra**, to be unseen by Māra the evil one’s eye, and to have crossed beyond attachment to the world.

He walks, stands, sits, lies down confidently. (M 26,43/1:175), SD 1.11

This 4th category refers to the arhats of the Buddha’s teaching. They also include those who not only are seen keeping properly to the Vinaya and seriously do so, but also dedicate their lives to studying, practising and realizing the path.

1.2.3.5 “Where Māra and his horde cannot go”

The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins are safe when they dwell and live the holy life “where Māra and his horde cannot go” (*te yattha agati māraṣṣa ca māra, parisāya ca*). This expression means that Māra and his 10 armies—*sensual pleasure, discontent, hunger-and-thirst, craving, sloth-and-torpor, fear,*

doubt, hypocrisy-and-obstinacy, reputation and gains, and self-exaltation⁵ are unable to reach or see these arhats. These armies are a list of bad karma without any doctrinal organization, suggesting that they are remnants from a very early teaching set. In simple terms, it means that Māra has no access into their minds, even if Māra appears before them and tries to distract them.⁶

The Nivāpa Sutta (M 25) goes on to explain exactly the expression where Māra and his horde “cannot go” as referring to the proper gaining of any of **the 8 attainments** (*aṭṭha samāpatti*), that is, the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless dhyanas, which are as follows:

(a) the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhana*)

- (1) the 1st dhyana (*paṭhama jhāna*) — all the 5 mental hindrances⁷ are overcome;⁸
- (2) the 2nd dhyana (*dutiya jhāna*) — the mind is thought-free, experiencing the “noble silence”;⁹
- (3) the 3rd dhyana (*tatiya jhāna*) — the mind is happily one-pointed;¹⁰
- (4) the 4th dhyana (*catuttha jhāna*) — the mind is equanimously focused on itself.¹¹

(b) the 4 formless dhyanas (*arūpa jhana*)

- (5) the base of boundless space (*ākāsānañc’āyatana*)¹²
both matter and perception are transcended; there is only awareness of boundless space;
- (6) the base of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañc’āyatana*)¹³
there is only the expansive awareness of boundless consciousness;
- (7) the base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññ’āyatana*)¹⁴
the concentrated mind is aware of no mental object whatsoever;
- (8) the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n’eva,saññā,nāsaññāyatana*)¹⁵
there is no object of perception whatsoever except for perception itself.

1.2.3.6 Māra has no access whatsoever into the minds of meditators in dhyana because they have transcended all physical sense-objects, even in the 1st dhyana. Hence, Māra (and his horde) are said to be “blinded or made blind” (*andham akāsi*) [§12.3]. Māra is unable to see the minds or consciousness of those in dhyana and the spiritually liberated, **the arhats**.

However, when the Buddha, the arhats, or the beings in the formless heavens are not in dhyana, Māra may appear to them even if he is unable to distract or harm them in any real way. It seems that Māra embodies the limits of the sense-based mind. Only when these limits are transcended temporarily in dhyana or permanently in arhathood, is Māra cast out and blinded, as it were. However, when one is

⁵ On the roots “Māra’s armies” in the Bodhisattva’s early struggle with Māra, see **(Mahā) Padhāna S** (S 3.2), SD 51.11. See **Māra** (SD 61a (2.1.2.8)).

⁶ On Māra’s attempts to distract practitioners, especially arhats, see SD 61a (2.4.1 + 2.5.1).

⁷ The 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) are: (1) sensual desire (*kama-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*). See **Nīvaraṇa** (SD 32.1); **(Nīvaraṇa) Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55) SD 3.12.

⁸ On the 1st dhyana, see **Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.11), SD 24.1. Also see SD 8.4 (5.1); SD 54.2e (2.3.5).

⁹ On the 2nd dhyana and noble silence, see **Dutiya Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.2), SD 24.12a.

¹⁰ On the 3rd dhyana, see **Tatiya Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.3), SD 24.13.

¹¹ On the 4th dhyana, see **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.4.

¹² On the 1st formless dhyana, see **Ākāsānañc’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.5), SD 24.15.

¹³ On the 2nd formless dhyana, see **Viññāṇañc’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.6), SD 24.16.

¹⁴ On the 3rd formless dhyana, see **Ākiñcaññ’āyatana Pañha S** (S 40.7), SD 24.17.

¹⁵ On the 4th formless dhyana, see **N’eva,saññā,nāsaññāyatana Pañha S** (S 40.8), SD 24.18.

morally restrained and keeps to a contemplative life of spirituality, one is less likely to encounter Māra—while carefully living such a life.¹⁶

2 The 4 kinds of herds: deer and recluses

2.1 PARALLELS TO M 25

2.1.1 The Chinese parallel

2.1.1.1 This Sutta has a Chinese parallel preserved in the Madhyama Āgama, that is, MĀ 178 (T1.-718b-720a), entitled “**the discourse on the master hunter**,” 獵師經 *liè shī jīng*. While M 25 locates the Sutta in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvathī, MĀ 178 occurs in the squirrels’ feeding ground in the bamboo grove, outside Rājagaha.¹⁷

For “differences between the Pali and the Chinese,” see [2.2] below.

2.1.1.2 The Nivāpa Sutta and its Chinese version, in closely parallel terms, describe the conduct of 4 herds of deer towards a bait set by a deer-hunter.¹⁸ The first 3 herds fall prey to the hunter, whereas the 4th herd is able to live freely by dwelling in an area out of the hunter’s reach. The two versions agree that “**bait**” (*nivāpa*) refers to the 5 cords of sense-pleasure, the “**hunter**” to Māra, and the “**deer**” to practitioners, especially recluses and brahmins.

In both versions, the 1st deer herd in the parable represents recluses and brahmins who are heedless in terms of taking food, while the 2nd deer herd refers to recluses and brahmins who live in the forest wilds, subsisting on roots and fruits.

2.1.2 Sarvāstivāda view

2.1.2.1 According to M 25, the problem with these recluses and brahmins was that they lost their **freedom of mind** (*ceto, vimutti*) (they failed to properly gain dhyana). However, the Chinese version says that the recluses and brahmins lost *both* their freedom of mind and freedom through wisdom.¹⁹ In the suttas, however, only freedom of the mind (*ceto, vimutti*) refers to deep stages of concentration or dhyana (*jhāna*) that can be lost,²⁰ but **freedom through wisdom** (*paññā, vimutti*) refers to awakening itself,²¹ something that, according to the Pali tradition, will not be lost. In the suttas, *ceto, vimutti*, as a rule, refers to the successful gaining and mastering of any of the 8 attainments (*aṭṭha, samāpatti*), that is, the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments²² [1.2.3.5].

¹⁶ See further in **Māra** (SD 61a (3.3.7.5)) for further readings.

¹⁷ See Analayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya*, Taipei, vol 1 2011:167-169.

¹⁸ For a study of this parallel (German), see Oliver Freiberger, *Der Orden in der Lehre, Zur religiösen Deutung des Saṅgha im frühen Buddhismus*, Studies in Oriental Religions 47, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000a:64-69.

¹⁹ 便心解脫, 慧解脫衰退 *biànxīn jiětuō, huì jiětuō shuāituì* (MĀ 178 @ T1.719b2).

²⁰ This is clear from the expression “**freedom of mind that is temporary**” (*sāmāyika cetovimutti*) in **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122,4.2/3:110,30), SD 11.4, and the corresponding Chin parallel, 時... 心解脫 (MĀ 191 @ T1.738b7), and the corresponding Tib parallel, *re shig dus ... sems rnam par grol ba*, in Skilling, *Mahāsūtras, Great discourses of the Buddha* vol 2, 1994:198,7; also Anālayo, “Vimutti,” in *Ency Bsm* (Sri Lanka) 8,3 2000:615-622.

²¹ **Kīṭā, giri S** (M 70,16/1:477,33), SD 11.1, and its parallel MĀ 195 (T1.751b20), show that *paññā, vimutti*, 慧解脫 *huì jiětuō*, refers to full awakening, which, according to **Sāropama S** (M 29,17.7/1:197,27) cannot be lost, *aṭṭhānam etaṃ ... anavakāso yaṃ so bhikkhu tāya asamaya, vimuttiyā parihāyetha* (SD 53.8).

²² For a study of *ceto, vimutti* and *paññā, vimutti*, see Lily de Silva, “Cetovimutti, Paññāvimutti and Ubhatobhāga-vimutti,” *Pali Buddhist Review* 3,3 1978:118-145. See also SD 30.2 (3); **Jhānābhiññā S** (S 16.9,29+30), SD 50.7.

The Sarvāstivāda,²³ however, held a different view on this matter, claiming that it is possible for arhats to fall away from their awakening.²⁴ From these differing views, it is possible that the Madhyama Āgama view on the freedom by wisdom being lost probably reflects the Sarvāstivāda position.²⁵ It is also likely that such views on the difficulties of awakening and of keeping it, encouraged later Mahāyāna to philosophize on samadhi and meditative states defining and describing them in mystical Daoist terms. Since such ideas depend on how well they are theorized and taught, “enlightenment” was seen as a *status* that was conferred by a teacher or lineage (such as in Zen).

2.1.2.2 Analayo thinks, “Alternatively, the present instance could also be the result of a simple *transmission error*, where a reference to deliverance [freedom] of the mind has been accidentally ‘completed’ by adding deliverance through wisdom, as these two terms often occur together. Even to speak of these recluses and brahmins [as] losing their deliverance of mind, as done in both versions of the present discourse, is to some extent puzzling, because the fourth group of recluses and brahmins were able to go beyond the range of Māra’s power through attaining the jhānas.” (2011:168 f)

The comment “puzzling” by Analayo may be interpreted as that, among other things, the later sectarian Buddhists either were unable to attain dhyanas or deeper attainments, or they interpreted these experiences philosophically. The basic terms of meditation, such as *ceto, vimutti* and *paññā, vimutti*, were replaced by sectarian dogmas as sectarian bias and polemics that rejected early Buddhist teachings.

2.1.3 Dhyana and “freedom of mind”

2.1.3.1 It should be noted that, in the suttas, “**freedom of the mind**” (*ceto, vimutti*) is a broad term for the mind in dhyana. However, according to the Nivāpa Sutta and its Chinese parallel, while a dhyana is sufficient to bring one beyond Māra’s power, *freedom of mind* in itself is not sufficient to do so.²⁶

²³ Sarvāstivāda evolved from one of the 3 major subdivisions of the Sthavira, nikāya (“the elders gathering”)—ancestor of the modern Theravāda), possibly as early as the 1st cent CE following the 1st schism, but certainly no later than the 1st cent CE. It was one of the most enduring and widespread of the mainstream Buddhist schools before the rise of Mahāyāna. It held the view that all conditioned factors (*dharma*) continue to exist (*sarvam asti*) throughout all 3 time-periods, past, present and future,

²⁴ Abhidharmakośa, bhāṣyā calls this the *parihāṇadharmā* arhat (Abhk 6:56 in Pradhan 1967: 372,19; Abhk:Pr 3:1002-4, 1015, 1017). See also T1558 (T29,129a25) and T1559 (T29,280b15), or in the Abhidharmasamuccaya, Pradhan 1950:86,14 and T1606 (T31,753b5; also W Rahula, *Le compendium de la super-doctrine (philosophie) (Abhidharmasamuccaya) d’Asaṅga*, Paris, 1971: 145. On the same conception among the Pudgalavadins, see Thich Thiên Châu, (tr) S Boin-Webb, *The Literature of the Personalists of Early Buddhism*, 1996:217. For a brief mention, see Bateau, “Les controverses relatives à la nature de l’arhat dans le bouddhisme ancien,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 1 1957:244 f.

²⁵ The same view is found explicitly in Madhyama Āgama at MĀ 127 (T1.616a10+18), in a listing of different noble disciples, which distinguishes between an arhat liable to fall away, 退法 *tui fǎ*, and an arhat not liable to fall away, 不退法, *bù tui fǎ*; also SĀ 2.235c7. This discourse has no Pali counterpart. The term *parihāṇa, dhamma* however occurs in Pug 11,29 in relation to dhyana practice, while in **Peṭk 32,8**, it qualifies “a person who is guidable, [but] who does not engage in cultivation” (*neyyo puggalo bhāvanānuyogam anuyutto*). Even though the context here is an examination of different types of arhats, Ñāṇamoli says, “It is clear that the term as used here is not applied to an Arahant.” (See Peṭk:Ñ 39, n93.5).

²⁶ The theme of eluding Māra’s power through deep concentration recurs in **Devāsura Saṅgama S** (A 9.39/4:434,-16), SD 61.21, according to which with the formless attainments, a monk goes beyond Māra’s range (*antam akāsi māraṃ, apadaṃ vadhitvā* [vl *apadaṃ bhanditvā*, A:Ce 4:452,17] *māra, cakkhurū, adassanaṃ gato pāpimato*), a passage that uses the same expressions as found in **M 25,12/1:159,14** (for the 1st dhyana). **A 9.39** details all the 4 dhyanas, but, in this case, words it differently, according to which, with attainment of dhyana, a monk “has nothing to do with Māra” (*akaraṇīyo māraṃ*) (A 9.39/4:434,1).

Hence, one may wonder what the difference could be between attaining dhyana and the freedom of mind. [2.1.3.2]

According to the commentarial explanation, “freedom of mind,” in the present context, refers to the resolution of these recluses and brahmins to live in the forest.²⁷ Although this explanation differentiates between the 2nd and the 4th groups of recluses and brahmins, we cannot find the expression “freedom of mind” (*ceto, vimutti*) explained in this way anywhere in the suttas. Clearly, then, this must be a late and free interpretation in later times.

2.1.3.2 Is there a difference between *jhāna* and *ceto, vimutti*? From my understanding of the Dharma, I am inclined to say that there is no difference between the 2 early Buddhist terms. However, the same cannot be said of **dhyana** and ecstasy²⁸—the early Buddhist concepts and their extra-Buddhist parallels are just that—they may be *parallel* but they never meet. The reason for their key difference is not difficult to consider: the non-Buddhist conceptions of dhyana and “mental freedom” are perhaps better understood broadly as “ecstasy” or even “religious experience.”

2.2 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PALI AND THE CHINESE TEXTS

2.2.1 The Nivāpa Sutta and its Chinese parallel in the Madhyama Āgama [2.1.2] continue by similarly identifying the 3rd deer herd with *recluses and brahmins* who are under the influence of **views**. The two versions, however, differ in regard to the views held by the 3rd group of recluses and brahmins. M 25 lists the views as the stock set of 10 speculative views comprising “unanswered questions” (*avyākata pañha*), questions set aside by the Buddha. The Chinese version, on the other hand, lists the 2 extreme views of existence and non-existence.²⁹

Note the term “freedom of mind”—what is the mind free of? Doctrinally, the suttas tell us that the mind in *jhāna* is free of sensual pleasures. Perhaps at this “unawakened” stage of dhyana, there is some overlapping between the Buddhist experience and other contemplative experiences. However, when we speak of the “liberated” or awakened mind—that of the arhat—we must remember that it is fully free from any view of self (*attā, diṭṭhi*). The awakened mind is not only liberated from the senses, that is, defilements, but also from the self, or more correctly, from any *idea or view* of the abiding self. In a word, the liberated mind is free of “Māra.”

2.2.2 Both the Pali and its Chinese versions describe the 4th deer herd’s lair beyond the hunter’s reach as corresponding to the recluses and brahmins’ dwelling *out of Māra’s range*. The safe distance is gained by cultivating various levels of the 8 attainments (or properly, the “9 attainments”), that is, any of the 4 form dhyanas or the formless attainments, or attaining cessation, together with the destruction of the influxes.³⁰

The Madhyama Āgama version, however, also mentions **the 4 divine abodes** (*brahma, vihara*) as mental concentrations that are beyond the reach of Māra.³¹ Within the right contexts, this is correct. **The Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43), **the (Ceto, vimutti) Anuruddha Sutta** (M 127) and **the Go, datta Sutta** (S

²⁷ MA 2:162,19.

²⁸ On “ecstasy,” see SD 60.1f (4.2.3).

²⁹ MĀ 178 (T1,719b23): 有見及無見 *yǒu jiàn jí wú jiàn*.

³⁰ M 25/1:160,12 states that the attainment of cessation brings one “beyond attachment in the world,” *tiṇṇo loka visattikaṃ*, a detail not found in MĀ 178.

³¹ MĀ 178 (T1,720a12). THICH Minh Chau notes this as one of several instances where a Chin discourse “lays more stress on this practice than its counterpart in Pāli” (1964:30).

41.7), for example, call the divine abodes “the immeasurable freedom of mind” (*appamāṇā ceto, vimutti*).³² “Freedom of mind” here is dhyana.³³ [2.2.1]

The **Aṭṭhaka, nāgara Sutta** (M 52) and its Aṅguttara reprise, the **Dasama Gaha, pati Sutta** (A 11.17) say that if one stabilizes these states, reflecting on its impermanence, etc, one attains arhathood; if not, one attains non-returning.³⁴ The same twin attainments are said to arise from practising satipatthana.³⁵ Arhathood (*arahatta*) or awakening fully frees one from Māra and his horde, since the awakened one is free of sensual pleasures on account of his calm and clear mind.

3 The Buddha’s criticism of asceticism

3.1 THE 4 TYPES OF PRACTICES

3.1.1 Practices that result in suffering

3.1.1.1 A full list of various ascetic practices often appears in the suttas as a warning against engaging in them since they not only do *not* bring awakening, but distract one from any such progress, and in due course have very negative karmic effects. The **Cūḷa Dhamma, samādāna Sutta** (M 45), for example, lists 4 kinds of Dharma-undertakings (*dhamma, samādāna*) or religious or ritual practices, those that are:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|----------------|
| (1) pleasant now, | but ripening as | pain | in the future; |
| (2) painful now, | but ripening as | pain | in the future; |
| (3) painful now, | but ripening as | pleasure | in the future; |
| (4) pleasant now, | but ripening as | pleasure | in the future. |

In the case of (1), the practitioner indulges in sensual pleasures, holding the view that there is “no fault in sensuality.” The Sutta then states: “Having fallen into the indulgence in sense-pleasures, with the body’s breaking up, after death, they are reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell. There, they suffer sensations of sharp, piercing, racking pains.” While M 45 compares such people to a **fig tree strangled by the creepers of a single maluva-creeper**³⁶ *pod that sprouted at the end of the hot season*,³⁷ M 25 compares them to the 1st kind of deer [§3.2].

3.1.1.2 The Cūḷa Dhamma, samādāna Sutta (M 45) then describes the “way of undertaking the Dharma that is painful now, ripening as pain in the future.” The Sutta begins with a long list of extreme practices.³⁸ The ascetic who performs these practices “with the body’s breaking up, after death, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.”³⁹

Thirdly, adds the Sutta, there is the practice that is painful now but pleasant later. This is the practice of moral restraint that is the renunciation of all *lustful, hateful and delusive* bodily and mental acts.

³² M 43,31/1:297 (SD 35.1); M 127,4-7/3:146 f (SD 54.10); & S 41.7,5/4:296 (SD 60.4).

³³ On the divine abodes, see **Te, vijja S** (D 13,76-79), SD 1.8; also **Brahma, vihara**, SD 38.5.

³⁴ M 52,8-11/1:351 f = A 11.17/5:344 (SD 41.2).

³⁵ See esp **Satipatṭhāna S** (M 10,46.30/1:63), SD 13.3.

³⁶ *Bauhinia vahlii*: SD 32.4 (3). <https://pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Bauhinia+vahlii> 3 May 2024.

³⁷ M 45,4/1:306,1-307,20 (SD 32.4).

³⁸ M 45,5.2/1:307,21-308,16 (SD 32.4).

³⁹ M 45,5/1:308,17-308,19 (SD 32.4).

“Yet, despite his pain, despite his grief, weeping with tearful face, he lives the holy life fully and perfectly. With the body’s breaking up, after death, he is reborn in a happy state, in a heavenly world.”⁴⁰

The best way of religious practice, states **the Cūḷa Dhamma,samādāna Sutta** (M 45), is to avoid both the extreme practices of sensual indulgence and of self-mortification. While self-indulgence feeds the body with every pleasure and comfort, the other extreme of self-mortification is to deprive the body of even simple pleasures and comfort. Contrary to these two types of conduct, there is the meditative practice of attaining **the 4 dhyanas** and being born in a heaven-world is described as the “undertaking of practices that is both happiness in the present as well as resulting in happiness in the future.”⁴¹

3.1.2 The middle way

3.1.2.1 Although the term is not mentioned, the practice of dhyana appears as the “middle way” between the extremes of self-mortification and indulgence in sensual pleasures. This is clearly explained in **the (Tika) Paṭipadā Sutta 1** (A 3.151) which lists the “3 ways of practice” (*paṭipadā*), that is:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| (1) “the coarse way,” | <i>āgāḷha paṭipadā</i> |
| (2) “the burning [consuming] way,” and | <i>nijjhāma paṭipadā</i> |
| (3) “the middle way.” | <i>majjhima paṭipadā</i> |

(A 3.15 ≈ Nett 77,17, 95,7)

The “**coarse way**” is the one that sees no fault in sensual pleasures and indulges in them. This is like the way of the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins [1.2.3.1]. Diametrically opposed to the 1st way is **the “burning or consuming” way**, that is, depriving the body of its pleasures, comfort, even health.⁴² There are Jains who believe, for example, that if such a practitioner were to die, he would attain liberation.⁴³

3.1.2.2 The third way is, according to **A 3.15**, that of avoiding *both* the extremes, that is, the “middle way” (*majjhima paṭipadā*), consisting of **the “4 focuses of mindfulness or satipatthanas”** (*satipatthāna*), that is, *contemplating the body, feelings, the mind and dharmas*.⁴⁴ The directly following parallel sutta declares further meditation activities and the eightfold path to be the “middle way.”⁴⁵

The position of the “middle way” as that of avoiding both the extremes of self-mortification and of indulgence in sensual pleasures is already well established by the Buddha in the “first discourse,” **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11). That middle way is of course the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭh’āṅgika magga*).⁴⁶ And this middle way, in practice, is that of satipatthana.

⁴⁰ M 45,6/1:308,20-31 (SD 32.4).

⁴¹ M 45,7/1:308,32-309,16 (SD 32.4).

⁴² A 3.151 [Be 156] /1:295,1-296,18.

⁴³ The term *sallekhana* is a Jain term for a religious suicide by starvation: SD 27.1 (2.1.2).

⁴⁴ See also **Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198/2:205,24-211,29), SD 56.7, a list of 4 kinds of “tormentors” (*tapa*) are given as the self-tormentor (*attan,tapa*), the tormentor of another (*paran,tapa*), the tormentor both of self and another (**attan,tapa paran,tapa*) and the tormentor neither of self nor of another (**n’ev’attan,tapa na para,tapa*). The last one is the one who follows the Buddha’s teachings and gains liberation. It may be noted that the descriptive statements about other ascetics are contrasted with the normative statements about the Buddhist way to liberation. This gives the impression of the latter’s effectiveness. See also **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.11(47)/3:232,22-233,2). Further see O Freiberger, *Der Orden in der Lehre: Zur religiösen Deutung des Saṅgha im frühen Buddhismus*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000:131 f.

⁴⁵ A 3.15/1:296,17-297,17.

⁴⁶ S 56.11,4/5:420 (SD 1.1) = Mv 1.6.18 (V 1:10).

3.2 THE BUDDHA'S MASTERY OF ASCETICISM

3.2.1 Nigrodha and the wanderers

3.2.1.1 The Udumbarikā Sihanāda Sutta (D 25), a canonical classic in interfaith dialogue, contains the list of ascetic practices mentioned in **the Nivāpa Sutta** (M 25), and states that the recluses and brahmins were:

eaters of greens or millet or of wild rice or of hide-parings or of moss [water-lettuce] or of rice-bran or of rice-remnants or of the discarded scum of boiled rice or of sesamum flour or of grass or of cowdung; they lived on forest roots and fruits, they fed on fallen fruits. [§9.3 = M 25,8.4]

In fact, in **D 25**, the Buddha gives not only this brief list but mentions the full list of naked ascetic practices to the wanderer (*paribbājaka*) Nigrodha and his followers; that is, the practices they should be keeping to!⁴⁷

The Buddha's listing is in response to Nigrodha's question about what the Buddha teaches. Knowing that Nigrodha and his followers are not serious practitioners, he politely proposes that they instead discuss the wanderers' ascetic practices, to the delight of the wanderers assembled. In response to the Buddha's request, Nigrodha replies,

"Bhante, we live by the doctrine of **ascetic abstinence** (*tapo,jigucchā*, "asceticism and disgust"), by the essence of ascetic abstinence, by keeping to *ascetic abstinence*. Such being the case, what constitutes their fulfillment or non-fulfillment?"⁴⁸

The Buddha then goes on to show Nigrodha and the wanderers just how these ascetic abstinences should be properly kept and when they are not kept. This is all very familiar to the Buddha because he spent 6 years of self-mortification practising these very same ascetic abstinences (that Nigrodha and his followers only claim to do so).⁴⁹

3.2.1.2 The Buddha progressively lays down the sets of ascetic practices by way of **the tree-trunk metaphor** as follows:

			<u>D 25</u>
(1) <u>the loose outer bark</u>	<i>papaṭika</i>	that is, the crust or pieces of dry bark that flake off;	§15.2
(2) <u>the bark</u>	<i>taca</i>	literally, "skin";	§17.2
(3) <u>the sapwood</u>	<i>pheggu</i>	that is, the layer surrounding the pith, and	§18.3
(4) <u>the heartwood</u>	<i>sāra</i>	literally, "essence," that is, the core or pith. ⁵⁰	§19.6

⁴⁷ D 25,8/3:40-42 (SD 1.4).

⁴⁸ **D 25**/3:40,23-26 + SD 1.4 (1.3). On the term *tapo,jigucchā*, see W Bollée, "[Anmerkungen zum buddhistischen Häretikerbild](#)," Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 121, 1971:71, and Freiburger, *Der Orden in der Lehre*, 2000:121.

⁴⁹ **D 25** opens with the layman Sandhana dropping in in the wanderers' park at dawn to find them chattering away loudly in various kinds of **low talk** (D 25,2+4). Nigrodha also boasts that the Buddha is reticent and socially awkward, "keeping to the fringes of things like a one-eyed cow" (D 25,5). He is prob hinting that he is close with royal and wealthy patrons, such as Queen Udumbarikā, who donated the wanderers' park outside Rājagaha where he and his following live in. (D 25,1.2 n), SD 1.4.

⁵⁰ "Heartwood," *sāra*, ie, the core or essence of anything; the pith or the best of wood—a simile for spiritual power and attainment. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,12/1:111), SD 6.14, and **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,8/3:80) for other applications of the heartwood (*sāra*) simile. Here, the Buddha's humour is evident in such a parable given in **Udumbarikā Sihanāda S** (D 25,15-19/3:47-53), SD 1.4. In **(Saṅgha) Uposatha S** (A 4.190,1.2/2:182), SD 15.10b, *sāra* means "core, essence," in the sense of being accomplished in moral virtue, etc. (AA 3:168).

3.2.1.3 In the 1st tree cycle, the Buddha speaks of 22 kinds of ascetics who are “purified” in terms of *tapo,jigucchā* by avoiding the wrong attitude or practice, such as:

- (1) “on account of that austerity, he is not pleased with himself, thinking that he has won the goal”;
- (2) “on account of that austerity, he neither extols himself nor disparages others”;
- (3) “on account of that austerity, he is neither elated nor infatuated nor falls into heedlessness”;
- (4) “on account of that austerity, he delights not in gains, honours and fame knowing that he has not won his goal”; and so on. (D 25,13-15), SD 1.4

The Buddha then asks:

“What do you think, Nigrodha: is the practice of ascetic abstinence purified by these things or not?”

“Certainly it is, bhante, it reaches its peak here, penetrating **the heartwood!**”

“**No,**⁵¹ Nigrodha, it does not reach its peak there, penetrating the heartwood. It has only reached **the loose outer bark!**”

3.2.1.4 The Buddha, in the 2nd tree cycle—centred on the parable of **the bark**—speaks of how an ascetic observes the 4 restraints (*catu,yāma,samvara*)—abstinence from killing, from stealing, from lying, and from desiring for sense-pleasures—in preparation to overcoming the mental hindrances [D 25,16.2]. Properly prepared, the ascetic goes on to cultivate the 4 divine abodes.

When Nigrodha concludes that *this* must be the heartwood of the spiritual life, the Buddha replies that it is only “**the bark!**”

3.2.1.5 The 3rd tree-trunk cycle centres on the parable of **the sapwood**. Here, the ascetic, having meditated properly, gains the power of recollection of past lives, that is, the knowledge of one’s own previous existences (affirming the truth of *rebirth*).

Nigrodha at once concludes that *this* then must be the heartwood of the spiritual life. The Buddha points out that even this is *not* yet the heartwood of spiritual life. This is merely its **sapwood!**

3.2.1.6 Finally, the Buddha comes to **the 4th tree-trunk cycle** (the last)—this is the parable of **the heartwood**. This is the attainment of the divine, that is, the knowledge of how beings progress in accordance with their karma (affirming the truth of karma). This is actually only the 2nd of **the 3 knowledges** (*te,vijjā*)⁵² of the arhats, such as famously demonstrated in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36)⁵³ [3.3.2.1] and **the Te,vijja Sutta** (D 13).⁵⁴

⁵¹ This is the 1st of 3 negations (§§15.3, 17.2, 18.6) by the Buddha to Nigrodha’s confident responses, which effectively shows that he does not really know his own training! The Buddha answers “Yes” at §19.6, saying that the “heartwood” (attainment of the divine abodes and the divine eye), but the Buddha trains his disciples in “something higher and finer”! [§19.7]

⁵² The 2 superknowledges are mentioned in **S 12.70/2:122 f** (SD 16.8); 2 of the 4 knowledges (excluding that of arhathood) attainable through the “bases of spiritual power” (*iddhi,pāda*), **S 51.11/5:164 f**. On the 3 superknowledges (*te,vijjā*): **D 33,1.10(58)/3:220,15, 34,1.4(10)/3:275,25; M 36,34-44/1:247-249** (SD 49.4), **71,6-9/1:482 f** (SD 53.3), ***86,34/2:105 = Tha 886** (SD 5.11), **145,7/3:269** (SD 20.15); **S 6.5/1:146 = v580** (SD 54.18), **7.8/1:166 + v635** (SD 22.9), **8.1/1:196 = v757, 8.7/1:191 f** (SD 49.11), **8.9/1:194 f = v748, 35.88/4:63; A 8.30/4:235** (SD 19.5), **10.102/5:211**. On the 6 superknowledges (*cha-l-abhiññā*): **D 2,1:77-84** (SD 8.10), **34,2.7(10)/3:281; M 6,14-19/1:34 f** (SD 59.1); **S 16.9/2:213 f** (SD 50.7); **A 3.100a,5-10/1:254-256** (SD 19.11), **5.23/3:16-19** (SD 74.3), **6.2/3:280 f, 9.35/4:421 f** (SD 24.3). The 6 superknowledges are amongst the 14 powers developed by Anuruddha from his mastering of the 4 satipatthanas: **S 51.11-24/5:303-306**. For other refs, see DEB: te,vijjā.

⁵³ M 36,34-44/1:247-249 (SD 49.4).

⁵⁴ D 13 + SD 1.8 (2.2).

The Buddha, however, stops right here for Nigrodha (and the wanderers). This is **the heartwood** of the spiritual life—and Nigrodha agrees. In other words, the wanderers are able only to reach this 2nd knowledge, but not the 3rd, that is arhathood itself.⁵⁵

3.2.1.7 The Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta dialogue between the Buddha and Nigrodha presents the Buddha as stating with authority and experience what Nigrodha knows only in theory. Nigrodha confirms that those practices listed by the Buddha are indeed the *tapo,jigucchā* of his sect. The Buddha thus is shown to be well aware of the ascetic lifestyle that Nigrodha is supposed to practise, and also that either he does not himself keep to them or he has not attained any spiritual state from them. At the end of the Sutta, Nigrodha is shown to be *stuck to his own views* and so paralyzed by them that he could not accept the Buddha's invitation to progress on the path of awakening. Nigrodha and his followers are thus caught in the trap of their own views and worldliness.⁵⁶

3.2.2 True asceticism

3.2.2.1 The Buddha closes his teaching to Nigrodha with the knowledge of rebirth [3.2.1.5] and of karma (how beings evolve or devolve through rebirth) [3.2.1.6], that is, only the first 2 of the 3 true knowledges; the 3rd knowledge, that of arhathood, is omitted. The highest that the wanderer's asceticism *and* meditation can bring them—if they actually keep to those practices—is the knowledge of karma and rebirth. For this reason, the Buddha declares that he instructs his own followers to attain “something higher and finer.” These words cause a great commotion amongst the wanderers: “We and our teaching are ruined! We know of nothing higher or more far-reaching!”⁵⁷

3.2.2.2 The Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta is “particularly seminal for examining the critical stance toward asceticism,” notes Oliver Freiberger.⁵⁸ The Sutta records the Buddha as stating that the wanderers' ascetic practices, known as *tapo,jigucchā*, can easily lead the ascetics to bad attitudes such as arrogance, pride and worldliness. These faults apparently lie not with the methods but rather with those who use them: the wanderers have not practised them with diligence and faith.

The Buddha knows very well when he declares to Nigrodha that these ascetic practices should be properly practised so that they are purified (*parisuddha*).⁵⁹ Speaking from experience, the Buddha explains that the true tapo,jigucchā—the asceticism that liberates—must include other practices, that is, moral conduct (*sīla*) for regulating the body and meditation (*samādhi*; specifically dhyana) to regulate and free the mind. In fact, only moral virtue, mental concentration and insight wisdom, working together as the “3 trainings,” will bring one spiritual liberation.

As Freiberger puts it:

In his argument, the Buddha silently deprives the severe ascetic practices of any value. Although not rejecting them in principle, he discusses their alleged disadvantages in great length and sub-

⁵⁵ On the 3 knowledges, see SD 1.4 (1.1.3.4 f).

⁵⁶ **Nivāpa S** (M 25,9/1:156,17-32) first gives a simile of a deer herd that is trapped by the deer-hunter (Māra); then, in its parallel lists a brief number of ascetic practices [§9.3] that are similarly portrayed as leading not to liberation but only to backsliding into craving. The same comment made in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36/1:238,12-35), SD 49.4, where the Jain Saccaka states that 3 (Ājīvaka) ascetics performed a number of extreme practices (a short version of the list) but who occasionally took much food.

⁵⁷ D 25,19/3:51 f (SD 1.4).

⁵⁸ O Freiberger, “Early Buddhism, asceticism, and the politics of the middle way,” in (ed) O Freiberger, *Asceticism and Its Critics*, Oxford, 2006:239 f.

⁵⁹ D 25,13-15 *passim* (SD 1.4).

ordinates them under a self-defined “true” asceticism, which consists of Buddhist ethics and meditation and which is still subordinate to teachings of a “higher degree.” At the end of the Buddha’s argument, little is left of those practices. (Freiberger 2006:240)

3.3 RESPECTING THE BODY, FREEING THE MIND

3.3.1 Kassapa Sīhanāda Sutta (D 8)

3.3.1.1 The Kassapa Sīhanāda Sutta (D 8)⁶⁰ is a dialogue between the Buddha and the naked ascetic (*acela*) Kassapa; hence, Acela Kassapa. The Sutta records a criticism of extreme asceticism similar to the one in **the Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta (D 25)** [3.2]. In D 8, the Buddha rejects the view that these ascetic practices constituted true asceticism (*sāmañña* or *brāhmañña*).⁶¹ Instead, the Buddha declares that only a person who has destroyed the influxes (*āsava*)⁶² is considered a true recluse (*samaṇa*) or brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*),⁶³ that is, one who will awaken or is awakened as an arhat. [3.2.2.3]

D 25 and D 8 each presents a contrasting study in *interfaith dialogue*. **D 25** is a lengthy teaching given by the Buddha to the worldly wanderer Nigrodha and his followers, who despite understanding the limitations of their own practice and the opportunity for spiritual freedom ignored the Buddha’s invitation to cultivate the path. In **D 8** the Buddha gives a similarly lengthy teaching to the naked ascetic (*acela*) Kassapa, engaging in deep discussion on asceticism at every stage of the dialogue.

Unlike Nigrodha, the lone ascetic **Kassapa** understood and accepted the Buddha’s rejection of asceticism—which focuses on mortifying the body and external ritual behaviour—and promotion of an “internal asceticism,” that of morally disciplining the body and speech, and of cultivating the mind to free itself through calm and clarity, that is, freedom of the mind and freedom by wisdom. At the end of the dialogue, Kassapa is convinced to work for the path and renounces under the Buddha. He goes into solitary meditation and, in due course, becomes an arhat.

3.3.1.2 In D 8, the Buddha explains to the naked ascetic Kassapa that the moral virtue, mental cultivation, wisdom and self-liberation of **the arhat** are more difficult to attain than the merely physical acts of the ascetic, which only seems evident to the vulgar and appealing only to the ingenuous observer. The Buddha knows well from his own experience that self-mortification weakens one’s body and distracts the mind from what is spiritually essential and efficacious.⁶⁴

The early Buddhist texts often highlight the fact that moral restraint and mental cultivation lead to the insight wisdom that brings about “**the destruction of the influxes**” (*āsava-k,khaya*) [3.2.2.1], that is, awakening and nirvana. These are harder to practise since they actually transform us into selfless beings who are free of ignorance and craving. Asceticism, on the other hand, is mostly a matter of accomplishment and often seen as attaining some kind of religious or social status.

Moreover, the practice of **inner ascetism** of the eightfold path is a personal quest that demands devotion and diligence in solitary meditation. Asceticism, on the other hand, is an external act often done in public to attract followers and supporters.

⁶⁰ Also known as **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (D 8/1:161-177), SD 73.12.

⁶¹ Here *brahmañña* is used by the Buddha to refer to “true brahminhood,” a synonym for *sāmañña*.

⁶² The influxes (*āsava*)—an ancient triad of influxes of (1) sensual lust (*kām’āsava*), (2) existence (*bhav’āsava*), and (3) ignorance (*avijjāsava*)—are defilements that hold us back in samsara. With their destruction one becomes an arhat: **D 2,99.1** n (SD 8.10); **M 11,9** n (SD 7.13). The later suttas and Comys insert “the influx of views” (*ditthi-āsava*) as no 3, giving a tetrad of influxes, also called “the floods” (*ogha*) [**Ogha Pañha S** (S 38.11), SD 30.3(1.4) + (1.4.2)] or the yokes (*yoga*) [SD 30.3 (1.4.2 n)].

⁶³ **D 8,15/1:167,14-168,12** (SD 73.12).

⁶⁴ See SD 61a (2.1.2.4 + 16).

Indeed, the hardness of asceticism does not lie in its *rituality* or *severity*. The Buddha insightfully points out that if the hardness of asceticism depended on its practices, “then it would not be fitting to say that the life of the recluse, of the brahmin, was hard to lead. It would be quite possible for a householder, or for the householder’s offspring, or for anyone, even a slave woman with a water-jar, to say: “Let me now go naked, let me become of low habits, ...” and so on. Rather, the hardness of the ascetic life is that it is truly a difficult task to destroy the influxes.⁶⁵ The Buddha thus devalues, even rejects, ascetic practices, and promotes the accomplishment of moral ethics and meditation as *a harder but more efficient way* to attain liberation.

3.3.2 The mind over the body

3.3.2.1 The Nivāpa Sutta (M 25,9.3/1:156,21-27) lists a brief set of ascetic practices that proves not to lead one towards liberation but only to backslide into craving (in a parable of the herd of deer that is captured by the deer-hunter, that is, Māra the evil one). We find the same view in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 1:238,12-35) [3.2.1.6], where the Jain Saccaka states that 3 Ajīvaka recluses practised a number of severe self-mortifying rituals (a short version of the list) but has to admit that they had a copious meal from time to time.

Extreme asceticism is a Catch-22 situation. Those sincere and diligent ascetics who take up extreme practices do not live long on account of wrecking their physical body. Only those who make a successful *performance* of their ascetic act live well to market to their religious believers who are Guru-dependent. Religious tenets, stories and faith set the ascetic stage with bright lights, blinding smoke and glaring mirrors.

3.3.2.2 This significant point is often missed by both teachers and scholars of religion, that is, **the ascetic act** is an exclusivist practice. The impression one is supposed to get is that an ascetic act is difficult for the ordinary person to do; it is only for the religious elite, the Guru, to *perform* (and “perform” is the right word here). The Guru claims to have some kind of religious abilities which are exclusive to him; this “ascetic” performance is hidden away in the hazy past, out of the follower’s reach or ken.

Since the follower is unable to attain that the level of the Guru, it is the Guru who is thus empowered to dispense blessings or “empowerment” to give the follower some kind of benefit, worldly and temporary. The follower depends on the Guru and has to keep returning to him for that “empowerment.” In this sense, asceticism (as defined by the Guru) must always exclude the followers, or at least place them only at the receiving end of the glory of the Guru’s performance and pontifications.

3.3.2.3 The noble eightfold path, the middle way, is first and foremost **a way** (*magga*)—this way is neither a physical path nor an external act, but an internal journey we must make by and for ourself. We must first cultivate the body so that it is *morally cultivated*; then we are said to be “**bodily cultivated**” (*bhāvita,kāya*). Alongside this, we need to cultivate the mind to be calm and clear; then we are said to be “**mentally cultivated**” (*bhāvita,citta*). Cultivated in body and mind, we go on to gain the wisdom that liberates us from ignorance and craving.

The suttas we have examined here reveal **a skillful means** often used by the Buddha. That skillful means not only presents the advantage of the middle way but that it is really the “one and only way” (*ekāyaṇa maggo*) (Dh 274). If religious asceticism is mostly *rhetoric* (especially with sectarian gurus), then the middle way is **the truth** we need to cultivate for ourself to gain self-knowledge and personal freedom.

— — —

⁶⁵ D 8,16/1:168,13-169,38 (SD 73.12).

Nivāpa Sutta

The Discourse on the Hunter's Bait

M 25

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 [*bhadante*]," the monks replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

THE 4 KINDS OF DEER HERDS

⟨Angle bracketed numbers refer to **the deer herds**, eg "⟨4.3⟩" means "the 4th herd reflecting on the 3rd herd"⟩

2 ⁶⁶"Bhikshus, a **deer-hunter**⁶⁷ does not set a bait⁶⁸ for a deer herd intending thus, 'May the deer herd enjoy this bait set by me, so be long-lived and beautiful, and remain so for a long time.'

2.2 A deer-hunter, bhikshus, sets the bait for a deer herd intending thus, 'The deer herd, going right amongst the bait-food set by me, will eat this food unwarily. By unwarily eating that bait-food, right where I, the deer-hunter, had set it, they will become intoxicated.

When they are intoxicated, they will become negligent.

When they are negligent, I can do with them as I like on account of this bait!

⟨1⟩ The 1st deer herd

3 Now, bhikshus, the deer of **the 1st herd**, going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set, unwarily (*mucchita*) ate the food.⁶⁹

3.2 There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.⁷⁰
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.⁷¹

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

⁶⁶ This open quote closes at the end of §20.

⁶⁷ "Deer-hunter," *nevāpika*, lit, "one who scatters feed (as bait)" [1.1.2.4]. *Vāpika* is the agent n of verb *vapati*, "to sow," but here it has the sense of "scatter (feed), strew (bait)."

⁶⁸ "Bait," *nivāpa* [1.1.2.4]. Here, *nivāpa* refers to "This feeding-ground is Māra's range; this is Māra's pasture" (*mārass'esa visayo mārass'esa nivāpo mārass'esa go,caro*, MA 2:262,2). The tr "bait" here is idiomatic, reflecting on the term's usage in M 25.

⁶⁹ *Tatra bhikkhave paṭhamā miga,jātā amuṃ nivāpaṃ nivuttaṃ nevāpikassa anupakhajja mucchitā bhojanāni bhuñjimsu*. "Going right amongst," **anupakhajja**, abs of *anu-pakkhandati*, "to follow, or to push oneself forward, to encroach on; to intrude, work one's way in; goes over to"; Comy: "having entered" (*anupavisitvā* (MA 2:160; SA 3:311; V 4:95, 43; all having entered to sit down," *sabbesaṃ nisinnaṭṭhānṃ pavisitvā*, NmA 2:337); *anto pavisitvā* (VA 6:1194). On the absolute, see Collins, *A Pali Grammar for Students*, 2006:114-118,

⁷⁰ *Te tatha anupakhajja mucchitā bhojanā bhuñjamānā madarā āpajjimsu*.

⁷¹ *Matta samānā pamādarā āpajjimsu*.

Bhikshus, that is how the deer of the 1st herd **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.⁷²

⟨2⟩ The 2nd deer herd

4 Now, bhikshus, the deer of a **2nd herd** considered together,⁷³ thus,

⟨2.1⟩ *The 2nd herd reflects on the 1st herd*

'Those deer of the **1st herd**, going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set, unwarily ate the food.

4.2 [§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.*

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter [152] did with them as he liked on account of that bait.'

That is how the deer of the **1st herd** **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

⟨2.2⟩ *The 2nd herd's strategy*

4.3 Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food.
Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, let us plunge into **the forest wilds** and live there.'
And they altogether avoided that bait.

Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.

The hot season

4.4 But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

When they had lost their strength and energy,
they returned to that same bait that the deer-hunter had set.

4.5 There they unwarily ate the food by going right amongst it.
[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.*

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

Bhikshus, that is how the deer of the 2nd herd also **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

⁷² "Power and control," *iddhānubhāva*. Comy: Here, *iddhi* and *anubhāva* are each simply "a state of control" (*vāsi, bhāva*) (MA 2:160).

⁷³ "Considered [reckoned] together," *samacintesum* (aor of *sama-*, "together, alike" + *cinteti*, "to think, consider"). [1.1.2.4]

⟨3⟩ The 3rd deer herd

5 Now, bhikshus, the deer of a **3rd herd** considered together, thus:

⟨3.1⟩ *The 3rd herd reflects on the 1st herd*

[§3.1] 'Those deer of **the 1st herd**, *going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set, unwarily ate the food.*

5.2 [§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.*

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 1st herd failed to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.'

⟨3.2⟩ *The 3rd herd reflects on the 2nd herd*

5.3 Then, the deer of **the 2nd herd**, considered together, thus:

[§3.1] 'Those deer of the 1st herd, *going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set, unwarily ate the food.*

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.*

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.'

That is how the deer of the 1st herd failed to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

The 2nd herd's strategy

5.4 [§4.3] 'Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food.
Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, let us plunge into **the forest wilds** and live there.'
And they altogether avoided that bait.

Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.'

[§4.4] *But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.*

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

*When they had lost their strength and energy,
they returned to that same bait that the deer-hunter had set.*

5.5 [§4.5] *There they unwarily ate the food.*
[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.*

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 2nd herd also failed to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

⟨3.3⟩ *The 3rd herd's strategy*

5.6 'Suppose we make our lair [dwelling place] within range of the deer-hunter's bait.⁷⁴ [153]

Then, without going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter has set it,
we shall eat food not unwarily.

By not unwarily eating that food, right where the deer-hunter has set it,
we shall not become intoxicated.

when we are not intoxicated, we shall not be negligent;

when we are not negligent,

the deer-hunter shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.'

5.7 They made a lair near the bait set by the hunter.

Having made the lair near the bait set by the hunter,

they ate the food not unwarily in the bait set by the hunter.

There, they, eating not unwarily the food in the bait set by the hunter, were not negligent.

When they were not negligent,

They did *not* become those that the deer-hunter did with as he liked on account of that bait.

The hunter's reaction to the 3rd herd

5.8 Then, bhikshus, it occurred to **the deer-hunter** and his hunting party:

'These deer of the 3rd herd are as cunning and crafty as magicians and demons.⁷⁵

They ate the bait we had set without our knowing how they came and went.

5.9 Suppose we have the bait set⁷⁶

completely surrounded over a wide area with wicker-fencing (of stakes and nets);⁷⁷

then perhaps we might see *the 3rd deer herd's* lair, where they would go to hide.⁷⁸

So the deer-hunter and his hunting party set the bait,

completely surrounded over a wide area with wicker fencing.

Bhikshus, the deer-hunter and his hunting party saw the 3rd deer herd's lair

where they went to hide.⁷⁹

Bhikshus, that is how the deer of the 3rd herd also **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

⁷⁴ Or, we should resort to a dwelling as a support (for our safety) (*upanissāya āsayam kappeyyāma*). Comy says that the deer think that the hunter will not be watching the whole time, and when he is away, they can go and eat among the bait-food (MA 2:161,3-7).

⁷⁵ *Saṭhassu nām'ime tatiyā miga,jātā keṭubhino, iddhimantssu nām'ime tatiyā miga,jātā parajanā.*

⁷⁶ (This and foll line:) *Yan nūna mayam nivāpam nivuttam mahatīhi daṇḍa,vakārāhi* [Se *daṇḍa,vāgurāhi*] *samantā sappadesam anuparivāreyyāma.*

⁷⁷ Most adult deer are known to be able to jump over 2.4 m (8 ft) high and over a distance of some 9 m (30 ft). However, there is no mention in the Sutta or Comy about the deer "jumping over the wicker-fence" and so be seen by the hunters. The wicker-fence would prob be too high for the deer to jump over.

⁷⁸ "Where they would go to hide," *yattha te gāham gaccheyyurū*. Comy: The hunter (Māra) had the idea the deer had not gone far away but lay down near the bait (MA 2:161). It is easier for the hunter and his hunting party to see the deer from the hunter's hiding place (prob up on some trees).

⁷⁹ *Yattha te gāham agamaṃsu.*

⟨4⟩ The 4th deer herd

6 Now, bhikshus, the deer of a **4th herd** considered together, thus:

⟨4.1⟩ *The 4th herd reflects on the 1st herd*

[§3.1] 'Those deer of **the 1st herd**, going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set, unwarily ate the food.

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.*

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 1st herd **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.'

⟨4.2⟩ *The 4th herd reflects on the 2nd herd*

6.2 [§4.1] Then, the deer of **the 2nd herd**, considered together, thus:

'Those deer of the 1st herd, going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set, unwarily ate the food.

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.*

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.'

That is how the deer of the 1st herd **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

Then, the 2nd herd considered together, thus:

'Those deer of the 1st herd unwarily ate the food by going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set.

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.*

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.'

That is how the deer of the 1st herd **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

[The 2nd herd's strategy:]

6.3 [§4.3] *'Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food.*

Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, let us plunge into the forest wilds and live there.'

And they altogether avoided that bait.

Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.

The hot season

6.4 [§4.4] *But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.*

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

When they had lost their strength and energy,

they returned to that same bait that the deer-hunter had set.

6.5 [§4.5] *There they unwarily ate the food by going right amongst it.*

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.*

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 2nd herd also **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.'

(4.3) *The 4th herd reflects on the 3rd herd*

6.6 Then, the deer of **the 3rd herd**, considered together, thus: **[154]**

[§3.1] 'Those deer of that **1st herd** *unwarily* ate the food by going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set.

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.*

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 1st herd **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

6.7 Then, the deer of the 2nd herd, considered together, thus:

[§3.1] 'Those deer of the 1st herd *unwarily* ate the food by going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter had set.

[§3.2] *There, unwarily eating that food, they became intoxicated.*

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 1st herd **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

[The 2nd herd's strategy:]

6.8 [§4.3] *Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food.*

Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, let us plunge into the forest wilds and live there.'

And they altogether avoided that bait.

Avoiding that fearsome enjoyment, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.

6.9 [§4.4] *But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.*

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

When they had lost their strength and energy,

they returned to that same bait that the deer-hunter had set.

6.10 [§4.5] There they unwarily ate the food by going right amongst it.

[§3.2] By unwarily eating the food, right where the deer-hunter had set it, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

That is how the deer of the 2nd herd also **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

[The 3rd herd's strategy:]

6.11 [§5.6] 'Suppose we make our lair [dwelling place] within range of the deer-hunter's bait. **[153]**

Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily

and without going right amongst the bait that the deer-hunter has set;

by doing so we shall not become intoxicated.

When we are not intoxicated, we shall not be negligent.

When we are not negligent,

the deer-hunter shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.'

6.12 [§5.7] They made a lair near the bait set by the hunter.

Having made the lair near the bait set by the hunter,

they ate the food not unwarily in the bait set by the hunter.

There, they, not unwarily eating the food in the bait set by the hunter, were not negligent.

When they were not negligent,

they did *not* become those that the deer-hunter did with them as he liked on account of that bait.

6.13 [§5.8] Then, bhikshus, it occurred to **the deer-hunter** and his hunting party:

'These deer of the 3rd herd are as cunning and crafty as magicians and demons.⁸⁰

They ate the bait that we had set without our knowing how they came and went.

6.14 [§5.9] 'Suppose we have the bait set⁸¹

completely surrounded over a wide area with wicker fencing;

then perhaps we might see *the 3rd deer herd's* lair, where they would go to hide.'

So the deer-hunter and his hunting party set the bait,

completely surrounded over a wide area with wicker fencing.

Bhikshus, the deer-hunter and his hunting party saw the 3rd deer herd's lair,

where they went to hide.

That is how the deer of the 3rd herd also **failed** to get free from the deer-hunter's power and control.

(4.4) The 4th herd's strategy

6.15 'Suppose we make our lair **where the deer-hunter and his hunting party cannot go.**

Then, having done so, **we shall eat food not unwarily**

and **without going amongst the bait** that the deer-hunter has set.

By doing so we shall not become intoxicated.

When we are not intoxicated, we shall not be negligent.

When we are not negligent,

the deer-hunter shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.' [155]

6.16 They made their lair where the deer-hunter and his hunting party cannot go.

Then, having done so, they ate food not unwarily

and without going amongst the bait that the deer-hunter has set.

By doing so they did not become intoxicated.

When they were not intoxicated, they were not negligent.

When they were not negligent,

the deer-hunter did not do with them as he liked on account of that bait.'

⁸⁰ Saṭṭhassu nām'ime tatiyā miga,jātā keṭubhino, iddhimantssu nām'ime tatiyā miga,jātā parajanā. On parajana, see [1.1.2.4].

⁸¹ (This and foll line:) Yan nūna mayarṇ nivāparṇ nivuttarṇ mahatīhi daṇḍa,vākarāhi [Se daṇḍa,vāgurāhi] samantā sappadesarṇ anuparivāreyyāma. On vākarā, see [1.1.2.4].

The hunter ignores the 4th herd

6.17 Then, bhikshus, it occurred to the deer-hunter and his hunting party: [§5.8]
‘These deer of this 4th herd are as cunning and crafty as magicians and demons.

They ate without going amongst the bait that we have set.

6.18 [cf §5.9] ‘Suppose we have the bait set

completely surrounded over a wide area with wicker fencing;

then perhaps we might see *the 4th deer herd’s* lair, where they would go to hide.’

So they set the bait, *completely surrounded* over a wide area with wicker fencing.

6.19 But, bhikshus, neither the deer-hunter nor his hunting party saw the lair of this 4th deer herd, or where they went to hide.

6.20 Then, it occurred to the deer-hunter and his hunting party:

‘If we alert [any deer of] *the 4th deer herd*, being alerted, they will alert the others, and these will alert more others,

and so all the deer herds will desert this bait that we have set.

6.21 Suppose we treat *the 4th deer herd* with indifference.⁸²

And so, bhikshus, the deer-hunter and his hunting party treated the deer of the 4th herd with indifference.

Bhikshus, that is how the deer of the 4th herd is well **free** from the deer-hunter’s power and control.

The parable’s meaning

7 Bhikshus, I have given this parable in order to convey a meaning. This is its meaning:

‘The hunter’s bait’	is a term for the 5 cords of sensual pleasure. ⁸³	<i>nivāpa</i>
‘Deer-hunter’	is a term for Māra the evil one.	<i>nevāpika</i>
‘The deer-hunter’s party’	is a term for Māra’s horde.	<i>nevāpika, parisa</i>
‘Deer herd’	is a term for recluses and brahmins.	<i>miga, jāta</i>

THE 4 KINDS OF RECLUSES AND BRAHMINS

{Braced numbers} refer to **the kinds of recluses and brahmins**,
eg “{4.3}” means “the 4th kind of recluses and brahmins reflecting on the 3rd kind.”

{1} The 1st kind of recluses and brahmins

8 Now, bhikshus, **the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins**,
going right amongst the bait and worldliness that Māra had set, ate food unwarily. [156]

By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked
on account of those bait and worldliness.

⁸² *Yan nūna mayam catutthe miga, jāte ajjupekkheyyāma.*

⁸³ *Pañca kāma, guṇa. The 5 cords of sensuality* are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. See M 13,7(1) n, SD 6.9; A 6.63,3.2 + SD 6.11 (2.2.2.6).

That is how, bhikshus, the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins **failed** to free themselves from Māra’s power and control.

Those recluses and brahmins, bhikshus, I say, are just like *the deer of the 1st herd*.

{2} The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins

9 (2) Now, bhikshus, **the 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins** considered thus:

{2.1} The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins reflects on the 1st kind

[§8] ‘Those 1st kind of recluses and brahmins, going right amongst the bait and worldliness that Māra had set, ate food unwarily.

By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.’

That is how, bhikshus, the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins **failed** to get free from Māra’s power and control.

{2.2} The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins’ strategy

9.2 ‘Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food and worldliness. Avoiding the fearful enjoyments, let us plunge into the forest wilds and live there.’

And they all avoided those bait-food and worldliness.

Avoiding those fearful enjoyments, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.

9.3 There they were eaters of greens or millet or of wild rice or of hide-parings or of moss [water-lettuce] or of rice-bran or of rice-remnants or of the discarded scum of boiled rice or of sesamum flour or of grass or of cowdung; they lived on forest roots and fruits, they fed on fallen fruits.⁸⁴

9.4 But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

When they had lost their strength and energy, they **lost their freedom of mind**.⁸⁵ [§10.4]

With the loss of their freedom of mind,

they returned to that same bait Māra had set and to worldliness.

9.5 [§8] Going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, they ate food unwarily.

By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

⁸⁴ For this list, see eg **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (D 8,14/1:168), SD 49.1; **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,45,3/1:78), SD 49.1. These are part of the “solitude” of outside sectarian wanderers: **Paviveka S** (A 3.92,1.3-4), SD 44.2. An extended list of these ascetic practices is given in **Udumbarikā Sīhanāda S** (D 25,8/3:40-42), SD 1.4; see SD 61.2 }3.1.2).

⁸⁵ “Freedom of mind” (*ceto,vimutti*): Comy explains that these recluses and brahmins simply abandoned their resolution to live in the forests (*ārañña*) (MA 2:162,19-21). This is one of the conditions that help in attaining dhyana, but it is more likely that these recluses and brahmins had attained—but lost—one or other of the 8 attainments referred to by the term *ceto,vimutti* [1.2.1.3].

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked
on account of those bait and worldliness.

That is how the 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.
[157] Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like *the deer of the 2nd herd*. [§4.5]

{3} The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins

10 Now, bhikshus, **the 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins** considered thus:

{3.1} *The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins reflects on the 1st kind*

[§8] 'Those recluses and brahmins of the 1st kind,
going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and and the worldliness, ate food unwarily.
By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.
*When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked
on account of those bait and worldliness.'*

That is how the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

{3.2} *The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins reflects on the 2nd kind*

10.2 [§9.1] The recluses and brahmins of the 2nd kind considered thus:

[§8] 'Those 1st kind of recluses and brahmins,
*going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and into the worldliness, ate food unwarily.
By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.
When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.
When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked
on account of those bait and worldliness.*

That is how the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

{3.3} *The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins' strategy*

10.3 [§9.2] '*Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food and worldliness.
Avoiding the fearful enjoyments, let us plunge into the forest wilds and live there.'*
*And they all avoided those bait-food and worldliness.
Avoiding those fearful enjoyments, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.*

[§9.3] There they were *eaters of greens or millet or of wild rice or of hide-parings or of moss [water-lettuce] or of rice-bran or of rice-remnants or of the discarded scum of boiled rice or of sesamum flour or of grass or of cowdung; they lived on forest roots and fruits, they fed on fallen fruits.'*

[§9.4] *But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone,
their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.
When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.
When they had lost their strength and energy, they **lost their freedom of mind**.* [§10.4]

*With the loss of their freedom of mind,
they returned to that same bait Māra had set and to worldliness.*

10.4 With the loss of their freedom of mind,
they returned right to that bait that Māra had set and into the worldliness, and *ate food unwarily*.

[§8] *By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.*

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

*When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked
on account of those bait and worldliness.*

That is how the 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

[The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins' strategy:]

10.5 [cf §5.6] 'Suppose we make our dwelling within range of *the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness*.

Then, having made our dwelling within range of the bait set by Māra and the worldliness,
we shall eat food not unwarily,

by eating food not unwarily, we shall not become intoxicated.

When we are not intoxicated, we shall not be negligent.

When we are not negligent, Māra shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait and worldliness.'

[cf §5.7] They made their dwelling near the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness.
Having made their dwelling near the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness,
they ate the food *not* unwarily.

There, *not* unwarily eating the food amongst the bait Māra had set and the worldliness,
they were *not* negligent.

When they were *not* negligent,

they did *not* become those that Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.

10.6 But then they [the 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins] came to hold **views** such as:⁸⁶

THE WORLD

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| (1) The world is eternal; | <i>sassato loko</i> |
| (2) The world is not eternal; | <i>asassato loko</i> |
| (3) The world is finite; | <i>antavā loko</i> |
| (4) The world is infinite; | <i>anantavā loko</i> |

THE SELF (OR SOUL)

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (5) The self is the same as the body; | <i>taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ</i> |
| (6) The self and the body are separate; | <i>aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ</i> |

⁸⁶ These are the 10 speculative views debated by the recluses of the Buddha's age. The Buddha rejects all these views, leaving them aside (*thapanīya*) and undetermined (*avyākata*), since not only are they not connected with the fundamentals of the holy life, they are also distracting (they have no right answers) and uncondusive to liberation from suffering. See **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 63) + SD 5.8 (2); **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72), SD 6.15; and **Silence of the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (5).

A TATHĀGATA⁸⁷

- (7) A tathāgata [“thus come”] exists after death; *hoti tathāgato param, marañā*
 (8) A tathāgata does not exist after death; *na hoti tathāgato param, marañā*
 (9) A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; *hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param, marañā*
 (10) A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death. *n’eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param, marañā*

[158]

That is how the 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins **failed** to get free from Māra’s power and control. Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like *the deer of the 3rd herd*.

{4} The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins

11 Now, bhikshus, **the 4th kind of recluses and brahmins** considered thus:

{4.1} *The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins reflects on the 1st kind*

[§8] ‘Those 1st kind of recluses and brahmins, going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, ate food unwarily. By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated. When they were intoxicated, they became negligent. When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.’

That is how the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra’s power and control.

{4.2} *The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins reflects on the 2nd kind*

11.2 [§9] Those 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins considered thus:

[§8] ‘Those 1st kind of recluses and brahmins, going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, ate food unwarily. By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated. When they were intoxicated, they became negligent. When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.’

That is how the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra’s power and control.

[§9.2] ‘*Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food and worldliness. Avoiding the fearful enjoyments, let us plunge into the forest wilds and live there.’ And they all avoided those bait-food and worldliness. Avoiding those fearful enjoyments, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.*

[§9.3] *There they were eaters of greens or millet or of wild rice or of hide-parings or of moss [water-lettuce] or of rice-bran or of rice-remnants or of the discarded scum of boiled rice or of sesamum flour or of grass or of cowdung; they lived on forest roots and fruits, they fed on fallen fruits.*

⁸⁷ This tetralemma is found in many places in the Canon: see SD 49.1 (2) n.

[§9.4] *But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.*

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

*When they had lost their strength and energy, they **lost their freedom of mind**.*⁸⁸ [§10.4]

With the loss of their freedom of mind,

they returned to that same bait Māra had set and to worldliness.

[§9.5] Going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, they ate food unwarily. By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.

That is how the 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.'

{4.3} *The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins reflects on the 3rd kind*

11.3 And the 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins, considered thus:

[§8] 'Those 1st kind of recluses and brahmins, going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, ate food unwarily. **[156]**

By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.'

That is how, bhikshus, the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

11.4 [§9.1] The 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins considered thus:

'Those 1st kind of recluses and brahmins,

by going right amongst the bait that Māra had set, and the worldliness, ate food unwarily.

By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.'

That is how, bhikshus, the 1st kind of recluses and brahmins **failed** to get free from Māra's power and control.

11.5 [§9.2] 'Suppose we altogether were to avoid that bait-food and worldliness.

Avoiding the fearful enjoyments, let us plunge into the forest wilds and live there.'

And they all avoided those bait-food and worldliness.

Avoiding those fearful enjoyments, they plunged into the forest wilds and lived there.

⁸⁸ "Freedom of mind" (*ceto, vimutti*): Comy explains that these recluses and brahmins simply abandoned their resolution to live in the forests (*ārañña*) (MA 2:162,19-21). This is one of the conditions that help in attaining dhyana, but it is more likely that these recluses and brahmins had attained—but lost—one or other of the 8 attainments referred to by the term *ceto, vimutti* [2.1.3].

[§9.3] *There they were eaters of greens or millet or of wild rice or of hide-parings or of moss [water-lettuce] or of rice-bran or of rice-remnants or of the discarded scum of boiled rice or of sesamum flour or of grass or of cowdung; they lived on forest roots and fruits, they fed on fallen fruits.*

[§9.4] *But in **the last month of the hot season** when the grass and the water were gone, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation.*

When their bodies were extremely emaciated, their strength and energy were greatly lost.

*When they had lost their strength and energy, they **lost their freedom of mind.*** [§10.4]

With the loss of their freedom of mind,

they returned to that same bait Māra had set and the worldliness.

[§9.5] Going right amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, they ate food unwarily.

By unwarily eating food, they became intoxicated.

When they were intoxicated, they became negligent.

When they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked

on account of those bait and worldliness.

That is how the 2nd kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

[The 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins consider thus:]

11.6 [cf §5.6] 'Suppose we make our dwelling within range of *the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness.*

Then, having made our dwelling within range of the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness, we shall eat food not unwarily,

by eating food not unwarily, we shall not become intoxicated.

When we are not intoxicated, we shall not be negligent.

When we are not negligent, Māra shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait and worldliness.'

[cf §5.7] They made their dwelling near the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness.

Having made their dwelling near the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness,

they ate the food not unwarily.

There, eating not unwarily the food amongst the bait that Māra had set, they were not negligent.

When they were not negligent,

they did *not* become those that Māra did with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.

11.7 [§10.3] Then they [the 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins] came to hold views such as:

- (1) The world is eternal;
- (2) The world is not eternal;
- (3) The world is finite;
- (4) The world is infinite;
- (5) The self is the same as the body;
- (6) The self and the body are separate;
- (7) A tathāgata ["thus come"] exists after death;
- (8) A tathāgata does not exist after death;
- (9) A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death;
- (10) A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.

That is how the 3rd kind of recluses and brahmins failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

{4.4} *The 4th kind of recluses and brahmins' strategy*

11.8 'Suppose we were to make our dwelling **where Māra and his horde cannot go**.⁸⁹

Then, having made our dwelling where Māra and his horde cannot go, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going [159] amongst the bait that Māra had set and the worldliness.

By doing so we shall not become intoxicated.

When we are not intoxicated, we shall not be negligent.

When we are not negligent,

Māra shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait and worldliness.'

11.9 Then they made their dwelling **where Māra and his horde could not go**.

Having made their dwelling where Māra and his horde could not go, they ate their food not unwarily.

Eating their food not unwarily, they did not become intoxicated.

When they were not intoxicated, they did not become negligent.

When they were not negligent, Māra did not do with them as he liked on account of those bait and worldliness.

And that is how those 4th kind of recluses and brahmins got free from Māra's power and control.

Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like the deer of the 4th herd.

WHERE MĀRA AND HIS HORDE CANNOT GO: the 8 attainments⁹⁰ and cessation

The 4 form dhyanas (rūpa jhāna)

12 And where, bhikshus, is it that **Māra and his horde cannot go**? [§11.8]

(1) The 1st dhyana

12.2 Here, bhikshus, quite secluded [detached] from sense-objects,⁹¹ secluded from unwholesome mental states,

a monk attains and dwells in **the 1st dhyana**,

accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and

with zest and joy born of solitude.⁹²

⁸⁹ *Te yattha agati māraṣṣa ca māra,parisāya ca*. With *yattha* ("where"), *agati* (M 1:158,29 ≈ S 1:133,21) is tr as "cannot or does not go." Cf J 5:255,16*: "where a bird goes not" (*agati yattha pakkhinam*).

⁹⁰ The 8 attainments (*aṭṭha samāpatti*)—the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless dhyanas—are meant here, MA explains that they act as the bases for insight (*vipassanā*). When a monk (meditator) has entered such a dhyana, Māra can neither see him nor control his mind. This freedom from Māra's influence, however, is only temporary. Total freedom from Māra comes only with awakening (attaining nirvana).

⁹¹ On the tr of *kāmehi* (pl), see SD 8.4 (5.1.1.1).

⁹² "Born of solitude," *viveka,ja*; ie, it is the result of the removal of 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 "concentration" (*samādhi*) here, see **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5.

12.3 This monk,⁹³ bhikshus, is said **to have blinded Māra**,⁹⁴ put out Māra's eyes without a trace,⁹⁵ the evil one is made sightless.⁹⁶

(2) The 2nd dhyana

13 Further, bhikshus, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity [serene faith] and singleness of mind,⁹⁷ a monk attains and dwells in **the 2nd dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, with zest and joy born of concentration [samadhi].⁹⁸

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said **to have blinded Māra**, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

(3) The 3rd dhyana

14 Further, bhikshus, with the fading away of zest, A monk remains equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, and feels joy with the body.⁹⁹

He attains and dwells in **the 3rd dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.'
[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said **to have blinded Māra**, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

⁹³ A simile of a free forest deer safe from hunters, and dhyana blinding Māra is given in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,34/1:174), SD 1.11; dhyana blinds Māra, but in a different connection: **Devāsura Saṅgama S** (A 9.39/4:434 f), SD 61.21.

⁹⁴ (This and foll line:) *Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu andham akāsi māraṃ, apadaṃ vadhitvā māra, cakkhum adassanaṃ gato pāpimato.* (M 1:159,14) = M 1:160,6n = 174,16 = 175,5' = A 4:434,16 f; qu Nc 149,1 f. See foll n.

⁹⁵ *Apadaṃ vadhitvā māra, cakkhum*, lit, "having (all) destroyed for Māra's eye." MA: "Where Māra's eye has no footing, that is, without a footing, without a basis for any sense-object" (*yathā māraṃ cakkhum apadaṃ hoti nippadaṃ appatitthaṃ nirārammanam*) MA 2:163,8-14). AA explains "having destroyed it, leaving no trace (of a footing)," **apadaṃ vadhitvā** (A 9.39/4:434,16) as "having destroyed without any remnant of a footing (for consciousness)," *nippadaṃ niravasesaṃ vadhitvā*, AA 4:202,18), SD 61.21 (qv). MA notes however that this is all "metaphorical" (*pariyāyena*): "Māra's eyes are not destroyed ... when a monk has attained dhyana as a basis for insight, Māra is unable to see" (*na māraṃ akkhīni bhīdi ... vipassana, padaka-j, jhānaṃ samāpannaṃ ... māraṃ passitum na sakkot*, MA 2:163,5+7).

⁹⁶ *Adassanaṃ gato pāpimato.* See SD 61.21 (3.2.6).

⁹⁷ *Ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodi, bhāvaṃ*: SD 56.4 (3.2.1.2).

⁹⁸ The 2nd dhyana is known as "the noble silence" (*ariya, tuṅhī, 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), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to "either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence" (ie either talk Dharma or meditate). See **Dutiya Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.-2/4:263 f), SD 24.12.

⁹⁹ On this point, see **The Buddha discovers dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.4.1): On coming out of dhyana.

(4) The 4th dhyana

15 Further, bhikshus, with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain,¹⁰⁰ and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,

a monk attains and dwells in **the 4th dhyana**

that is neither painful nor pleasant, and

with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.¹⁰¹

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said to have blinded Māra, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

The 4 formless attainments (arūpa samāpatti)

(5) The base of infinite space

16 Further, bhikshus, by completely transcending the perceptions of form (rūpa,saññā), with the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction [sense-impingement] (*patigha,saññā*), with non-attention to perceptions of diversity (*ñānatta,saññā*), aware that ‘Space is infinite,’ a monk attains and dwells in **the base of infinite space.**

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said to have blinded Māra, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

(6) The base of infinite consciousness

17 Further, bhikshus, by completely transcending the base of infinite space, aware that ‘Consciousness is infinite,’

a monk attains and dwells in **the base of infinite consciousness.**¹⁰²

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said to have blinded Māra, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

(7) The base of nothingness

18 Further, bhikshus, by completely transcending the base of infinite consciousness, [160] aware that ‘There is nothing,’ a monk attains and dwells in **the base of nothingness.**¹⁰³

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said to have blinded Māra, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

(8) The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception

19 Further, bhikshus, by completely transcending the base of nothingness, A monk attains and dwells in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.**¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ “Joy and pain,” *sukha,dukkha*: this refers to the physical feelings. The next phrase—“pleasure and displeasure,” *somanassa-domanassa*—refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome first so that the mind is not distracted by itself, as it were. Then, all the other feelings (arising from the physical sense-contacts) are transcended: on its significance, see **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.

¹⁰¹ Here, **Vibhaṅga** states that the Sutta analysis gives 3 factors: equanimity (upekhā), mindfulness (sati) and one-pointedness of mind (cittassa ek’aggatā (Vbh 261); and the Abhidhamma analysis gives 2 factors of the 4th dhyana —equanimity (upekhā) and one-pointedness of mind (cittassa ek’aggatā (Vbh 264, 245; Vism 4.183/165). See **Dhyana @ SD 8.4 (5.4).**

¹⁰² *Idha bhikkhu sabbaso ākāsaṇaṅc’āyatanam samatikkamma anantaṃ viññāṇan ti viññāṇaṅc’āyatanam upa-sampajja viharati.*

¹⁰³ *Idha bhikkhu sabbaso viññāṇaṅc’āyatanam samatikkamma n’atthi kiñcī ti ākiñcaññ’āyatanam upasampajja viharati.*

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said **to have blinded Māra**, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

(9) The cessation of perception and feeling (and arhathood)

20 Further, bhikshus, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a monk attains and dwells in **the cessation of perception and feeling**.

And his influxes are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom.

[§12.3] *This monk, bhikshus, is said **to have blinded Māra**, put out Māra's eyes without a trace; the evil one is made sightless.*

He has crossed beyond attachment to the world."¹⁰⁵

21 That is what the Blessed One said.

The monks were delighted and approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

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¹⁰⁴ *Idha bhikkhu sabbaso ākiñcaññ'āyatanam samatikkamma n'eva,saññā,nāsaññāyatanam upasampajja vihara-ti.*

¹⁰⁵ *Tiṇṇo loke visattikam.* This last monk, who has awakened as an arhat, having destroyed the influxes (*āsava*; those of sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance, SD 30.3 (1.3.2)), becomes not only temporarily invisible to Mara but permanently out of his reach [1.3.3.6]. On the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*), see SD 30.2 (4).