

SD 61.20**(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1****The First (Māra) Discourse on the Snare****S 4.4**

The First (Māra's) Snare Discourse
 Theme: The 2nd rains: the growing sangha
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2011, 2024

1 Introduction**1.1 THE SUTTA'S VINAYA CONTEXT****1.1.1 The Sutta audience**

1.1.1.1 According to the Vinaya, the events of **the Pāsa Sutta 1** (S 4.4) occurred at the start of the 2nd rains (year) of the Buddha's ministry, that is, "When the rains retreat was over" (Mv 1.13.2 @ V 1:22). The Buddha is addressing the monks who have spent the 1st rains with him. The new monks were not ordained by the Buddha but by the other arhats using the "admission by refuge-going" (*ti,saraṇa,-gamana upasampadā*).¹

1.1.1.2 The fact that the Buddha tells the monks before him that he himself "has realized unsurpassed freedom (that is, awakening)," and that now they, too, "must realize unsurpassed freedom" [S2] means that they have yet to attain arhathood. In these early days, since they have been converted by arhats, it is likely that these new monks are at least "learners" (*sekha*), that is, already on the path as streamwinners, once-returners or non-returners, but not yet arhats.

1.1.1.3 The (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1 (S 4.4) describes the Buddha's admonition to the new unawakened monks who renounced in response to the great commission, related in **the (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2** (S 4.5). We see here the beginnings of early Buddhism as the world's first missionary religion.²

1.2 THE SUTTA'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As evident from the Vinaya account [SD 61.18], despite the numbering of the Sutta titles, the events of the (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1 (S 4.4) *follow* those of the (Māra) Pāsa Sutta 2 (S 4.5), thus:

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

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

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¹ The earliest method for admission into the sangha was that of *ehi bhikkhu* (for monks) and *ehi bhikkhunī* (for nuns), which was carried out by the Buddha himself. The admission by the 3 refuges was the 2nd method, by which the Buddha allowed the monks themselves to admit suitable candidates into the sangha: SD 61.18 (2.2.2).

² See SD 61.18 (0.2 (4)).

(Māra) Pāsa Sutta 1

The First (Māra) Discourse on the Snare
S 4.4

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the deer park at Isipatana outside Benares.

There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Bhikshus!”³

“Bhante!” the monks replied.

2 The Blessed One said this:

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

You too, bhikshus, by proper attention, by proper right striving, must attain unsurpassed freedom, must realize unsurpassed freedom.”⁴

3 Then Mara the evil one approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:⁵

<p>3.2 <i>baddho'si māra,pāsenā, ye dibbā ye ca mānusā māra,bandhana,baddho'si na me samaṇa mokkhasī ti</i></p>	<p>S 452</p>	<p>You are bound by Mara's snare, both divine and human. You are bound by Mara's bondage: You won't escape me, recluse!”⁶</p>
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[The Blessed One:]

<p>4 <i>muttôhaṃ⁷ māra,pāsenā, ye dibbā ye ca mānusā māra,bandhana,mutto'mhi nihato tvam asi antakā ti</i></p>	<p>S 453</p>	<p>I am freed from Mara's snare, both divine and human; I am freed from Mara's bondage: You're defeated, end-maker!</p>
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5 Then Mara the evil one, thinking,

“The Blessed One knows me, the well gone knows me!”

sad and disheartened, disappeared right there.⁸

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³ This sutta is also at **Mv 1.11** (V 1:22,24-36) Māra Kathā, set soon after the Buddha's first rains retreat in the deer park at Isipatana. The Buddha had already sent out his first 60 arhat disciples to spread the Dharma. The present admonition is addressed to the monks newly ordained by the arhats who had gone out on the Buddha's great commission to declare the Dharma to the world.

⁴ Comy: Proper attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is attention that is the right means (*upāya,manasikāra*). Proper right striving (*yoniso samma-p, padhāna*) is effort that is the right means, effort that is the causal basis (*upāya, viriya karaṇa, viriya*). Unsurpassed freedom (*anuttara, vimutti*) is freedom of the fruit of arhathood (SA 1:171,13-15): [1.1.1]. On the role of proper attention, see **Āhāra S** (S 46.51/5:105 f), SD 7.15. Right striving is the fourfold right effort: (**Magga**) **Vibhaṅga S** [S 45.8/5:9], SD 14.5; (**Catu**) **Padhāna S** (A 4.14/2:16 f), SD 10.2; SD 10.16 (6.2).

⁵ Comy: Mara approached and spoke, thinking: “He won't be satisfied that he himself put forth effort and attained arhathood. Now he is eager to get others to attain it. Let me stop him!” (SA 1:171,15-18)

⁶ Comy: **Mara's snare** (*māra,pāsa*) is the snare of the defilements, ie, the divine and human cords of sensual pleasure. (SA 1:171,19-23)

⁷ So Ce Ee Ke; only Be Se *muttâhaṃ*.

⁸ *Dukkhi dummāno tatth'ev'antaradhāyi*. This stock occurs 32 times in Saṃyutta in connection with Māra [SD 61.9 (3.1.2)].