

SD 61.4 (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta

The (Deities) Discourse on the Stone Splinter
Or, Sakalika Sutta 1, the 1st Discourse on the Stone Splinter

S 1.38

Theme: The Buddha easily withstands physical pain

Translated by Piya Tan ©2008, 2024

1 Sutta introduction

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

1.1.1 Sutta summary

1.1.1.1 Seven hundred devatas of the Satullapa,kāyikā heaven visit the Buddha at Madda,kucchi¹, as he lay with his foot painfully hurt by a stone splinter.² They express their admiration, in various ways, of the Buddha’s mindfulness, self-possession and great endurance, and blame his antagonist, Devadatta, for trying to injure a noble being.

1.1.1.2 If you are not familiar with the Sutta’s background, you may like to pause here, and go to SD 61.7 (1.1.2) on **the (Māra) Sakalika Sutta** (S 4.13) [1.2.2]. The 2 suttas share the same location and background story.

1.1.2 Sutta theme

The Phassa,mūlaka Sutta (S 36.10) teaches that all feelings are rooted in “contact” (*phassa*), that is, sense-stimuli. All feelings have the “same root” (*eka,mūla*), that is, *contact*. When there is a sense-contact—whether it occurs through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind—a correspondent feeling, whether pleasant, painful or neutral, arises. When there is no sense-contact, the feeling also ceases, that is, does not arise.³

The arhat has crossed over all such feelings, represented by the “3 stains” [2.1.1.2] of greed, hatred and delusion, which work together to bring suffering upon us.⁴ **The Sakalika Sutta 1** (S 1.38), for example, relates how the Buddha withstands the excruciating pains arising as a result of his foot being cut by a rock splinter—to the admiration of even the gods.⁵

1.2 THE 2 SAKALIKA SUTTAS

1.2.1 (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta (S 1.38)

There are 2 texts named **Sakalika Sutta** preserved in the Pali canon, both found in the Sagāthā,vagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. They relate to the same event at Maddakucchi, where the Buddha is resting after his toe was cut by a flying splinter from a falling rock that Deva,datta pushed down Vulture Peak (*gijjhakūṭa*).

¹ A deer park (*miga,dāya*), a sanctuary for deer and other animals, outside Rājagaha, at the foot of [Gijjhakūṭa](#).

² For the background to how the Buddha was hurt by the stone splinter, see **(Māra) Sakalika S** (S 4.13) @ SD 61.7 (1.2.2.1).

³ SD 2.25 (1.2.1.2); S 36.10/4:215 (SD 91.8).

⁴ SD 2.25 (1.2.6).

⁵ S 1.38/1:27-29 (SD 61.4).

In the 1st Sakalika Sutta—the **(Devatā) Sakalika Sutta** (S 1.38, SD 61.4)—700 Satullapa devas visit the ailing Buddha and praise him [1.1.1].

1.2.2 (Māra) Sakalika Sutta (S 4.13)

The 2nd Sakalika Sutta—the **(Māra) Sakalika Sutta** (S 4.13)—records Māra appearing to the Buddha and mocking him for taking it easy (SD 61.7). The Sutta records Māra approaching the Buddha at Madda, -kucchi, as he lies down there in great pain and tries to grieve or annoy him by saying that he is idle and full of brooding thoughts. The Buddha denies the charge. (S 4.13/1:110), SD 61.7.

2 The devatas’ metaphors of the Buddha

2.1 “THE NAGA”

2.1.1 Meanings of *nāga*

2.1.1.0 As the Buddha lies recuperating from the wound on his foot caused by a flying splinter, 7 devatas approach him to sing their praises to the Buddha’s fortitude in the face of physical pain. The first 6 devatas, respectively, compare the Buddha to *a naga, a lion, a thoroughbred, the chief bull, a draught bull, and the tamed*. The 7th devata praises the Buddha’s samadhi, with which he naturally bears the pain equanimously. The devatas’ chorus following their personal praises is this:

“And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his leonine manner he endures them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed.” [§§5-11].

2.1.1.1 The 1st devata praises the Buddha as a naga (*nāga*) [§5]. The Pali-English Dictionary gives the following meanings for *nāga*:

- (1) a snake, dragon, serpent-spirit; [SD 27.5a (6.2.0) n].
- (2) an elephant, usually a bull elephant;
- (3) the best or foremost of a kind; a mighty being; an arhat;
- (4) the ironwood tree, the rose chestnut.

In literal usage, ***nāga*** refers to various types of beings powerful or dangerous in their own way, especially cobras and bull elephants, and refers to a class of semi-divine serpent-spirits that live deep underground or under rivers. The *nāga* is also the name of the ironwood tree or the rose chestnut, which is probably the *Mesua ferrea*, a medium-sized tree (growing to about 18-30 m high), with a straight trunk, grayish or reddish-brown smooth (glabrous) bark, acute and leathery leaves, large, white and fragrant flowers, ovoid fruits, with angular, smooth, and chestnut brown seeds (2.5-5 cm long).

The Commentary on **Tha 692** explains that the word *nāga* is used for snakes, elephants and humans; they are names for trainees (on the path) and adepts, and pratyeka buddhas (*sabbesaṃ nāga, nāmānan ti ahi.nāga, hatthi.nāga, purisa.nāgānaṃ sekkhāsekkha, pacceka.buddha, nāgānaṃ vā*).⁶

Metaphorically, it is used to refer to the arhat (eg, M 1:145,5-7). In relation to the arhat, the key sense is that of the bull elephant [Dh ch 23 *nāga vagga*]. This metaphor evokes the early Buddhist sense of nobility and power of the bull elephant. To highlight this Indian metaphor, the anglicized **naga** is used in reference to the Buddha or the arhats, as will be shown below.

⁶ ThaA 3:10,5 f; on *hatthi, nāga* and *purisa, nāga*, cf Tha 693-697.

2.1.1.2 Both the **Anaṅgana Sutta** (M 5) and the **Ratha,vinīta Sutta** (M 24) close with stating the 2 chief elders, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, as “the great nagas” (*mahā,nāga*).⁷ In the Thera,gāthā Commentary on **Tha 703**, the same epithet, *mahā,nāga*, refers to the *tathāgata* (thus come), that is, the Buddha, as an arhat, “the one with influxes destroyed” (*khīṇ’āsava*) (ThaA 3:11,22; see also Tha 289).

The Commentaries on both **M 5** (just quoted) and the **Samaya Sutta** (S 1.37/1:26)⁸ in explaining *nāga* quote from the **Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 3.6), thus:

<p><i>āguṃ na karoti kiñci loke sabba,sam̐yoga visajja bandhanāni sabbattha na sajjatī vimutto nāgo tādi pavuccate tathattā ti</i></p>	<p>Sn 522</p>	<p>He commits no wrong at all in the world, having left behind all the fetters and bonds. He is not attached to anything; fully free, such a one is truly called naga.</p>
--	----------------------	--

What the Sutta hints as the etymology for *nāga*—*āguṃ na karoti*—is used in the Commentaries as part of its folk etymology for the derivation of *nāga*, thus:

*Chand’ādihi na gacchantī ti nāgā; tena tena maggena pahīne kilese na āgacchantī ti nāgā;
nāna-p,pakāraṃ āguṃ na karontī ti nāgā.*

(MA 1:153 on M 5/1:32; SA 1:77 on S 1.37/1:26)

They are nagas because they do not go along with desire and so forth. They are nagas because they do not return to the defilements abandoned by the successive paths. They are nagas because they do not commit various kinds of wrong-doing.

The Commentaries helpfully tell us that this is a brief account and refer us to **Nm 1:201 f** for a fuller explanation.⁹

2.2 “THE LION”

2.2.1 The lion of a man

2.2.1.1 The Indian lion is the Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo leo*) found in the jungles of India in the Buddha’s time. Today their population is restricted to Saurashtra’s Gir Forest (in a peninsular region of Gujarat on the Arabian Sea coast), declared a sanctuary since 1965.¹⁰

In the suttas, the lion is admired for its energy, courage and nobility. The lion is used as a **metaphor** for the Buddha’s energy [2.2.1.2], courage [2.2.1.3], nobility [2.2.2] and intelligence [2.2.3]. Since the lion is often seen to enjoy solitude and yet is also the leader of its pride, it is, as a rule, used to symbolize the Buddha. [2.2.2]

2.2.1.2 The (Sāriputta) Cunda Sutta (S 47.13) describes Sāriputta—the Buddha’s right-hand monk—as “a dedicated advisor, counsellor, instructor, inspirer, rouser, gladdener, who teaches Dharma untiringly, for the good of fellow celibates” (S 5:162,26-28). The Commentary to the Sutta explains “who teaches Dharma untiringly” (*akilāsu dhamma,desanāya*) as follows:

⁷ **M 5**,33/1:31 (SD 37.7); **M 24**,17/1:151 (SD 28.3).

⁸ **Samaya S** (S 1.37) also records the 3rd pure abode devata as mentioning “young nagas” (*susunāgā*)—young arhats—who “wander about pure and stainless” (*te caranti suddhā vimalā*) (S 1:27,5).

⁹ See also Sn:N 200 n166; Tha:N 177 ad Tha 289.

¹⁰ [Wiki] 13 May 2024.

“He springs up with the speed of a lion, once or twice, thinking, ‘I’m neither sickened in the head, nor heart, nor belly, nor back,’ without any hint or sign of falling back, without fatigue, but confident in taking up teaching Dharma.” (SA 3:224)¹¹

2.2.1.3 The imagery here presents the early arhats as compassionately proactive teachers inspired by the Buddha Dharma and inspiring others with it. We often look up to the Dharma teacher as speaking on behalf of the Buddha, **the man-lion** (*nara,sīha*), a lion amongst humans.¹² The Buddha’s teaching is often said to be a “**lion’s roar**” (*siha,nāda*)—when the lion roars, all the other animals cower or flee to hide—the truth of the teaching speaks louder and clearer than any other doctrine, dogma or lesson.

A **lion-roar** (*siha,nāda*) is a universally true, irrefutable statement of faith and truth by the Buddha himself,¹³ or by a disciple, of his faith in experiencing the teaching itself.¹⁴ It is also called “a (**great**) **thunder-roar**” (*gajjita*),¹⁵ but this term is more commonly used for a follower (not yet on the path), especially a layman, who makes such a public declaration of faith.¹⁶

A **Dharma teacher** should thus love and respect the Dharma by studying and understanding it better, like someone we deeply love. As Dharma teachers, we should bring faith and joy in others to see their own goodness. The teacher who is loved for his *looks, voice, smell, taste or touch* is Māra embodied. When we see goodness in us, we love it; this is the beginning of self-love. With that self-love, we are able to fully love the Dharma and deeply respect the teacher who has helped us see ourself for the good that we can be and have become.

2.2.2 The lone lordly lion

The (Pañcaka) Nāgita Sutta (A 5.30), the (Fives) Discourse to Nāgita, records an inspiring narrative about the Buddha and his personal attendant **Nāgita** in a thick wood outside Icchā,naṅgala, in Kosala, where they are staying with a large community of monks. When the brahmin housemasters of the village hear that the Buddha is staying in the forest nearby, they come in a great crowd with food-offerings.

As they excitedly wait at the forest entrance with their offerings, the Buddha, hearing their din, refuses to see them. He gives this lion-roar: “**May I never meet with fame, Nāgita, nor fame ever meet with me.**” He adds that only those who are unable to meditate or lack spiritual joy would be drawn to such offerings—“Let him enjoy for himself that dung of pleasure,¹⁷ that sloth of pleasure, those pleasures of gain, honour and praise!”

Nāgita then suggests that the Buddha should meet them. After all, he declares, the Buddha is so famous that they would throng to meet him wherever he goes [S9, SD 55.12a], just like heavy mountain

¹¹ *Akilāsu dhamma,desanāyā ti dhamma,desanaṃ ārabhitvā “sisaṃ va me rujati, hadayaṃ vā kucchi vā piṭṭhi vā ti evaṃ osakkanākāra,virahito, nikkilāsu visārado ekassa pi dvinnam pi sīha,vegen’eva pakkhandati* (SA 3:224,8-11).

¹² On *nara,sīha*, see SD 49.2 (0.1.1.2).

¹³ On the lion-roar by the Buddha himself, see **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,22-28), SD 49.1; D 25,24.3 (SD 1.4); SD 1.4 (2.2).

¹⁴ On the lion-roar by the Buddha’s disciples, see **Cūḷa Sīha,nāda S** (M 11) + SD 49.2 (0.1.1); M 140,33 f (SD 4.17) Pukkusāti; M 124 (SD 3.15) Bakkula; A 4.197,7-18 (SD 39.10) Mallikā; A 6.16,2 (SD 5.1) Nakula,mātā. The foremost of lion-roarers is the arhat Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja: SD 27.6a (2.1).

¹⁵ On the *mahā,gajjita*, see Ap 45,1, 304,10; DA 395,26.

¹⁶ On *gajjita*, see M 85,61 header n (SD 55.2); A 4.102 (SD 73.16). One who “walks his talk” is said to both “thunder and then rain” (A 4.101), SD 73.15.

¹⁷ On *mīḷha,sukha*, see also **Laṭukikôpama S** (M 66,19/1:454,14), SD 28.11; **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9.2/3:233,22, 13(3)/3:236,13), SD 7.8; **(Pañcaka) Nāgita S** (A 5.30,8.4/3:31,13, 11/3:29), SD 55.12a; **(Chakka) Nāgita S** (A 6.42,8.4-/3:342,11, 11/3:27), SD 55.12b; **(Aṭṭhaka) Yasa S** (A 8.86,8.4/4:341,21, 11/4:42,11), SD 55.13.

showers flowing from the heights down the slopes. The Buddha only repeats his lion-roar, this time for Nāgita's benefit.¹⁸

The Buddha then gives a set of 5 meditations on revulsion, which closes the Sutta.¹⁹

2.2.3 The lion-like sage

2.2.3.1 The Muni Sutta (Sn 1.12, SD 49.20) has a verse, **Sn 213**, that describes the Buddha as an early Buddhist sage (*muni*), living alone as a forest-dwelling wanderer, like a lonely lion that fears no sounds:

*Ekam carantaṃ munim appamattaṃ
nindā, pasamsāsu avedhamānaṃ
sīhaṃ va saddesu asanta, santaṃ
vātaṃ va jālamhi asajjamānaṃ
padumaṃ va toyena alippamānaṃ
netāraṃ aññesam anañña, neyyaṃ
taṃ vāpi dhīrā muni vedayanti*

Sn 213

The sage wandering alone, heedful;
unshaken by blame and praise,²⁰
like a lion untrembling before sounds,²¹
like the wind not caught in a net,
like a lotus unsoiled by the waters:²²
a leader of others, not to be led by others—
him, indeed, the wise know as a sage.

The lion simile has been printed in **bold** above. The next line says that he is “like the wind not caught in a net” (Sn 213d), which evokes his feeling of total freedom. The metaphor also suggests that the Buddha's mind is free from any kind of unwholesome thoughts that hold him down with greed, hatred or delusion. His mind is “like a lotus unsoiled by the waters” (Sn 213e).

2.2.3.2 Sn 213 is spoken by the Buddha to his own father, Suddhodana, reminding him of the life of a renunciant, a lone silent sage, that the Buddha now leads. The tone of **the Muni Sutta** (Sn 1.12) is very much like that of **the Khagga,visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3), “the rhinoceros discourse”: both suttas describe the solitary wandering *muni*.

In fact, the 3 lines in bold (Sn 213cde) are also found in **the Khagga,visāṇa Sutta**, thus:

<i>Sīho va saddesu asantasanto vāto va jālamhi asajjamāno padumaṃ va toyena alippamāno eko care khagga,visāṇa,kappo</i>	like a lion untrembling before sounds, like the wind not caught in a net, like a lotus unsoiled by the waters— one should wander alone like a rhinoceros. (Sn 71)
---	---

We can see that the three lines are identical in sense (line c is the same line as Sn 213e)—they translate here in the same way as Sn 213cde in the Muni Sutta—differing only grammatically in the Pali.²³

2.3 “THE THOROUGHbred”

2.3.1 The (Devatā) Khattiya Sutta (S 1.14)

2.3.1.1 The (Devatā) Khattiya Sutta (S 1.14) records a devata (deity) uttering a verse enumerating 4 societal ideals with the Buddha counter-verse listing 4 higher ideals, thus:

¹⁸ Up to this point, the narrative of **A 5.30** is the same as those of **A 6.42** (SD 55.12b) and of **A 8.86** (SD 55.13). The teaching (the set of 5 insights into revulsion) of A 5.30, however, differs completely from that of the other 2 suttas.

¹⁹ A 5.30,5-11/3:31 (SD 55.12a).

²⁰ Dh 81.

²¹ On Sn 212b, cf S 1:53; It 40; Tha 12; J 5:150. On Sn 212cde, see Sn 71 Khagga,visāṇa S.

²² Ap 547.12.

²³ On the significance of this similarity between the 2 suttas, see SD 49.20 (3.2 ad loc).

The devata's verse

The kshatriya is the best of the two-legged,
of the four-legged, it is the ox;
a maiden is the best of wives,
of sons, it is the first-born. **S 26**

The Buddha's verse

The self-awakened is the best of the two-legged,
of the four-legged, it is the thoroughbred;
an attentive woman is the best of wives,
of sons, one who is amenable. **S 27**
(S 1.14/*26 f/1:6), SD 54.3d

The devata lists the ideal social class as that of the kshatriya, or warrior/noble, who is usually the king, that is, the “wheel of power” (*āṇā, cakka*). The Buddha stands for the “**wheel of Dharma**,” that is, the teaching and truth that liberate us from suffering.

To the devata, the ox draws the plough and transports people and merchandise. **The thoroughbred**, the best of horses, is both the symbol of secular power as well as the army that protects and increases that power. When it comes to wives, the devata is thinking of a woman who excels in giving pleasure and children; the Buddha proposes a woman who **listens and raises a good family**. The firstborn inherits the family heirloom, but the morally obedient son is the basis of a good family.

2.3.1.2 There are quite a number of Pali words or variants for “**thoroughbred**” (*ājānīya*), the best known of which is *ājānīya*; there is also *ājāniya* (variant *ājāniyya*), *ājāneya* (variant *ājāneyya*), and *ājaññā*. All these variants function as either a noun or an adjective (mfn). It is usually used to refer to a noble pure-bred horse (*ass'ājānīya*) and less frequently for an elephant or a bull.

The form **ājānīya** is sometimes used in the suttas to refer to a person who is the son of a noble family, a nobleman. The Buddha, coming from the kshatriya class, would naturally favour the thoroughbred horse, as it is not only the best of race-horses but also a peerless war-horse. This is because of its speed, intelligence, discipline, endurance, and beauty, which makes it fitting to be the steed of a noble or warrior.

The Buddha often uses **ājānīya** for “noble” (*ariya*) disciples, especially the arhats.²⁴ The meaning of this allusion is that upon entering the path of awakening, we become “noble” through **uprooting** greed, hatred and delusion. We then become a spiritual “thoroughbred” of the noble sangha, not through biological pedigree but through our own spiritual effort and awakening. Hence, **the thoroughbred** is favoured as a metaphor for the Buddha and the arhats because of its discipline, intelligence, strength and beauty, reflecting the moral virtue, wisdom, spiritual powers and awakening of the Buddha and the arhats.

2.3.1.3 There are a number of suttas based on the theme of **the thoroughbred**. Here are 3 related suttas entitled **the Ājānīya Sutta 1** (A 3.94/1:244), **the Ājānīya Sutta 2** (A 3.95/1:245), and **the Ājānīya Sutta 3** (A 3.96/1:245 f).²⁵ They all have the same main theme, that is, the 3 qualities of a king's excellent thoroughbred (*bhadda assājānīya*): beauty, strength and speed (A 3.96/1:244 f).

The Ājānīya Sutta 1 (A 3.94) explains that the beauty of a renunciant is moral virtue, diligently keeping to the Vinaya. His strength is being diligent in avoiding the unwholesome and cultivating the wholesome. And his speed is in the mastery of the 4 noble truths: this is suffering, this is its arising, this is its ending, and this is the path leading to the ending of suffering.

²⁴ For refs, see CPD, DP, sv ājānīya.

²⁵ The sutta numbering is confusing here: Be is A 3.97, A 3.98, A 3.99

In the **Ājāniya Sutta 2** (A 3.95), the Buddha speaks of the same 3 qualities, explaining the first 2 in the same way as in Sutta 1. As for the quality of speed, it is described as the overcoming of the 5 lower fetters²⁶ and the attainment of non-returning.

In the **Ājāniya Sutta 3** (A 3.96), the Buddha again speaks of the same 3 qualities, explaining the first 2 in the same way as in Suttas 1 and 2. As for the quality of speed, it is described as the destruction of the influxes²⁷ and the attainment of arhathood.

2.3.1.4 The Java Sutta (A 4.112), “the discourse on speed,” lists the following 4 qualities of a horse that is a thoroughbred, worthy of a king, that is: uprightness (*ajjava*), speed (*java*), patience (*khanti*) and kind restraint (*soracca*). These are also the qualities of a **renunciant** who is worthy of the offerings he receives and is a field of merit to the world.²⁸

Uprightness (*ajjava*) is here used figuratively to mean “being honest, right, in order, proper,” that is, being morally upright, living in accordance with the Vinaya and precepts. **Speed** (*java*), as we have noted [2.3.1.3], refers to the realization of the 4 noble truths in terms of theory, practice and realization; broadly, this is the study and mastery of the teachings. **Patience** (*khanti*) refers to diligence and forbearance in mental cultivation. **Gentleness** (*soracca*) or kind restraint arises from habitually keeping the precepts, being mindful through regular mental cultivation, and the dignity of wholesome spiritual learning.

“Patience and gentleness” (*khanti,soracca*) work as a pair of graceful virtues to beautify us morally and socially.²⁹ **The Vepa,citti Sutta** (S 11.4) is an instructive account of how Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, “bound fivefold, hand, foot and neck,”³⁰ is brought before Sakra, lord of the devas. Vepacitti reviles Sakra roundly, but Sakra remains “patient and gentle.” When asked by Mātali the charioteer, Sakra explains that the wise fear not the anger and rudeness of the foolish; such patience is true strength.³¹

The thoroughbred shows such patience and gentleness even in the midst of battle. The Buddha is patient and gentle before the world, brightening it up with his awakening.

2.4 “THE CHIEF BULL”

2.4.1 Isi,nisabha

2.4.1.1 The wise old sage **Asita** visits the child Siddhattha and knows at once that this is the future Buddha. His advanced age prevents him from meeting the Buddha; so he instructs his nephew, **Nālaka**, to live as a renunciant to be with the Buddha when he awakens in the world. **The Nālaka Sutta** describes Nālaka meeting the Buddha as prophesied.

²⁶ The 5 lower fetters (*orambhāgiya saṃyojana*) are those of (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,ditṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), and (5) aversion (*paṭigha*). See **Oram,bhāgiya S** (S 45.179) + SD 50.11 (2); SD 10.16 (1.6.7).

²⁷ The influxes (*āsava*) are those of (1) sensual lust (*kām’āsava*), (2) existence (*bhav’āsava*), and (3) ignorance (*avijjāsava*). In the later suttas, the influx of views (*ditṭh’āsava*) is listed as (3), giving a tetrad of influxes, making ignorance no (4). See SD 30.3 (1.3.3): 3 influxes; SD 50.12 (2.5.2.2) + Table.

²⁸ A 4.112/2:113 f. See also **Patoda S** (the goad, A 4.113/2:116). **Bhaddāli S** (M 65) records the Buddha’s parable of the thoroughbred colt (M 65,32-34), a metaphor for the gradual training [SD 56.1, esp (2.2)] in 10 stages: SD 56.2 (3.7).

²⁹ V 1:349; A 2.164/1:94.

³⁰ On the fivefold bonds and Vepa,citti’s reaction, see **Yavakalāpi S** (S 35.248) + SD 40a.3 (1.2.2).

³¹ S 11.4/1:220-222 esp §§20 f (SD 54.6).

*Sutvāna ghoṣaṃ jina, vara, cakka, vattane
gantvāna disvā isi, nisabhaṃ pasanno
moneyya, seṭṭhaṃ muni, pavaraṃ apucchi
samāgate asitā, vhayassa sāsane'ti*

Hearing word of the Conqueror's noble wheel-turning,³²
he went and saw **the mighty bull of seers**, with faith,
he asked the noble sage about the highest sagehood;³³
the prophecy of the one called Asita is fulfilled.

(Sn 698/136), SD 49.18

2.4.1.2 The Vimāna, vatthu (the stories of heavenly mansions) and its Commentary give a more elaborate description of the term *nisabha*, in connection with the mansion-story Sirimā, the courtesan of Rājagaha.³⁴ This verse describing the Buddha as *isi.nisabha* specifies him as “the mighty bull of seers” or “the chief bull of seers,” that is, the foremost of those liberated in wisdom. Sirimā, in this verse, beautifully rewords the 4 noble truths that she learns from the Buddha, thus:

*buddho ca me isi, nisabho vinayako
adesayi samudaya, dukkh'aniccataṃ
asaṅkhataṃ dukkha, nirodha. sassataṃ
maggañ c'imaṃ akuṭilaṃ añjasam sivaṃ*

And the Buddha, **mighty bull of seers**, who guides,
taught me suffering, the impermanent, its arising;
the unconditioned ending of suffering that is eternal;
and this path, not crooked, direct, auspicious.

(Vv 16.7/*143/17)

2.4.2 Usabha, vasabha, nisabha

2.4.2.1 In the Buddha's time, while cattle represent wealth, horses, especially the thoroughbred, represent power (or power and wealth). We have noticed that there were different spellings for *ājānīya* [2.3.1.2]. In time, the Commentaries use **the bull or ox** (sg + pl *go*; *gava-* in cpds) to highlight the Buddha's spiritual powers. The word *go* is a generic singular “cow, bull, ox, etc” and also plural “cattle.” We do see *go* in compounds, such as *go, cara* (“pasture”; figuratively, “proper resort (physical and mental), a monastic almsround, alms route”) and *go, rasa* (a dairy product);³⁵ *goṇa* is “ox, bullock, wild bull (*goṇaka*).”

2.4.2.2 The Vimāna, vatthu Commentary of the above verse (Vv 16.7) [2.4.2.2] gives this interesting explanation of the term *nisabha*:

Regarding **the chief bull of seers** (*isi, nisabha*): the eldest of a hundred oxen is an *usabha* (Skt *rṣabha*),³⁶ the eldest of a thousand oxen is a *vasabha* (Skt *vṛṣabha*);³⁷ alternatively, the eldest of a hundred herds is an *usabha*, or the eldest of a thousand herds is a *vasabha*. But the best of all oxen is **the nisabha**,³⁸ who is white, charming,³⁹ a bearer of great burdens, who endures all dangers and remains unshaken even at the sound of a hundred thunderclaps.

And just as one who is himself possessed of the strength of a *nisabha* first stomps on⁴⁰ the earth with his 4 feet and then stands in an immovable position, untroubled by any danger, so

³² Comy says that Nālaka meets the Buddha on the 7th day after the Buddha's 1st discourse (SnA 2:490).

³³ Comy glosses “the highest sagehood” (*moneyya, seṭṭhaṃ*) as “supreme knowledge, path-knowledge” (*ñāṇ'uttamaṃ magga, ñāṇam*), ie, sainthood of the path (SnA 2:490,23).

³⁴ On the story of the courtesan Sirimā, see SD 3.8 (4, 5.2).

³⁵ Traditionally, there are the 5 cow products (*pañca go, rasa*): milk (*khīra*), cream (*dadhi*), buttermilk [curds] (*takka*), butter (*navanīta*), ghee (*sappi*). See **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,52 +n) SD 7.14; SD 50.20 comy 9-10 (2) n. See V 1:244; DhA 1:158, 323, 397; SnA 322; VvA 147.

³⁶ Cf SnA 40,16-21 comy on *usabha* in **Sn 29a** in **Dhaniya S** (Sn 1,2), SD 50.20.

³⁷ Comys explain *usabha, vasabha* and *nisabha* as 3 kinds of bull: SnA 40.

³⁸ There seems to be no Skt cognate for *nisabha*; possibly Skt **nṛ*, “mankind” + *rṣabha*, but this etym suggests a hyperpalism.

³⁹ Pāsādiko.

⁴⁰ Be Ce Se *uppīletvā* (pref); Ee *uppīlitvā*. **Uppīletvā** (Skt, *utpīdayati*), abs of *uppīleti* or *uppīlayati*, “presses or squeezes on or against, steps on.”

does the Lord who is possessed of the 10 powers (*dasa bala*)⁴¹ of the *tathāgata* (thus come)⁴² first steps on the earth that is his 8 assemblies (*aṭṭha parisa*)⁴³ with his 4 feet that are the intrepidities (*catu vesārajja*),⁴⁴ then stands in this world with its devas in an immovable position, untroubled by any adversary or enemy.

He is therefore a ***nisabha*** since he is like a *nisabha*. He is the chief bull of seers, since he is the bull amongst those learner seers and adept⁴⁵ seers who, in conventional terms, have acquired the name “**seer**” (*isi*) in the sense of their quest (*esanā*)⁴⁶ after the Dharma aggregates of moral conduct and so on.⁴⁷ Alternatively, he is *nisabha* since he is **the chief bull of seers**, or again since he is both a seer (spiritually) and “**a bull**” (socially).

He is **the guide** (*vinayaka*) since he guides (*vineti*) those beings capable of being guided (*veneyya*). Alternatively, he is without one who (mis)leads him (*vi-nayaka*) since he is without (*virahita*) a leader (*nāyaka*), meaning that he is the one “self-become” (*sayam, bū*).⁴⁸

(VvA 83,5-19)

2.5 “THE DRAUGHT BULL”

2.5.1 *Dhorayha*

2.5.1.1 The 5th devata praises the Buddha with a down-to-earth term, ***dhorayha***, “the draught bull” that is fit to be harnessed to the pole, or fit (strong enough) to bear a heavy burden. The Dhammapada Commentary explains: “the *dorayha*’s nature is that of a vehicle of burden” (*dhura, vahana, sīlatāya dhorayha, sīlam*, DhA 3:272). In the pastoral background of ancient India, this imagery praises the Buddha’s wisdom, energy and diligence.

This is an imagery of noble strength invoking not only the Buddha’s warrior (kshatriya) background but also his 6 years of self-mortification and defeat of Māra. This metaphor also evokes the Buddha’s “burden” of learning and meditation that benefits us to this day.⁴⁹

⁴¹ On the Buddha’s 10 powers, see **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12,9-20/1:69-71), SD 4q9.1; cf M:H 1:93-95).

⁴² For details on the 5 applications of *tathagata*, see SD 15.7 (2.3.1).

⁴³ The 8 assemblies are those of (1) kshatriyas, (2) brahmins, (3) householders, (4) recluses, (5) the gods of the 4 great kings heaven, (6) the gods of the heaven of the 33, (7) Māra and his horde, and (8) brahmas; see **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.21-23) SD 9; **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12,29-31/1:71 f), SD 49.1.

⁴⁴ The 4 intrepidities or confidences are that no one can find any grounds to deny: (1) the Buddha’s full awakening (*bodhi*), (2) that he has destroyed the 4 influxes (*āsava*), (3) the obstructions to spiritual progress he has declared, and (4) when the Buddha teaches Dharma, it does lead to the complete destruction of suffering. See **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12,22-28/1:69-71), SD 49.1.

⁴⁵ A “**learner**” (*sekha*) is any of the first 3 kinds of trainees on the path—the streamwinner, the once-returned and the non-returned—still in the 3 trainings [see foll]. An “**adept**” (*asekha*) is the arhat, one who has reached nirvana, the end of the path.

⁴⁶ A synonym for *isi* is *tāpasa*, “ascetic” (ThaA 3:82,3; Abh 433); Sadd 442,5-7. For similar etyms of *isi*, see PvA 98, 163 and 265.

⁴⁷ The 3 training (*sikkha-t, taya*) comprise the aggregates of moral conduct (*sīla-k, handha*), of concentration (*samādhi-k, khandha*) and of wisdom (*pañña-k, khandha*): D 16,4a.3 f/2:122; VvA 155. On the 3 trainings, see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6; SD 1.11 (5).

⁴⁸ *Sayam*, “self” + *bhū*, “become, born,” one independent of others, since he has no true teacher (V 1:8), and discovered the 4 truths himself (KhA 14,26). Also Bu 14.1*/59 *piyadassī Buddha* = J 1:39*; Ap *passim*; Miln 214,29, 227,22, 236,20; SnA 135,11; ThaA *passim*; VvA 82; Vism 8.22/234.

⁴⁹ Section 2.5.1.1-3 are a paraphrase of Comy (SnA 149,25-27).

2.5.1.2 The Buddha is familiar with the word *dhoraḥya*, which he has himself used in his rustic reply to the ploughman Kasī Bhāradvāja, who asks the Buddha what his work is that he deserves support by way of almsfood, as recorded in **the Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 1.4).

*viriyam me dhura,dhorayham
yoga-k,khemādhivāhanam
gacchati anivattantam
yattha gantvā na socati*

Sn 79

Effort [Energy] is my **beast of burden**,
bringing me to the security from the yoke,
it goes on without turning back
to where, having gone, one grieves not.

The effort the Buddha refers to is both physical and mental. **The beast of burden** or **the draught bull** is the bearer of the burden. Just as the brahmin’s plough, which is the burden pulled along by the beast of burden, breaks up the earth and the mesh of roots, so does the Buddha’s plough of wisdom, pulled along by energy, break up the “root continuity” (*mūla,santanaka*) [of sense-faculty, contact, object and consciousness],⁵⁰ destroying the net of defilements. Hence, the Buddha says: **“Effort is my beast of burden.”**

The Commentary gives this poetic interpretation of the 4 noble truths with cryptic wordplay:

*... purima,dhuraṃ vahantā dhurā,
mūla,dhuraṃ vahantā dhorayhā,
dhurā ca dhorayhā ca dhura,dhorayhā.*

Our burden is the former burden;
the root burden is the bearer’s bearing it.
Burden and bearer, thus the burden has been borne.

My interpretation of **the 4 noble truths** here is this:

- (1) Suffering arises from our actions, words and thoughts; even now as we act, *the past* holds us down.
- (2) The arising is our treating the past as *the present*: we are the ox that keeps dragging the plough.
- (3) The ending is to see the burden as the past and *the bearer* as the present.
- (4) Since the present stays but a moment, then passes away, where is the burden, where is the bearer?

2.5.1.3 Now the brahmin’s beasts of burden are the 4 oxen with the plough: they break up the soil and the mesh of roots, destroying the weeds to give a good harvest. The Buddha’s beasts of burden are **the 4 right efforts**: not doing the unwholesome, stopping any unwholesome deed, cultivating the wholesome not yet done, and then maintaining it.⁵¹ Hence, **“Effort is my beast of burden.”** (Sn 79a)

Nirvana is called **“the security from the yoke,”** since it is free from the yokes (of sensuality, existence, views and ignorance).⁵² “Bringing me to (adhivāhana)” refers to my purpose pushing me on to the goal (*taṃ adhikatvā vāhiyati*) or because, by my effort, I am carried straight ahead (*abhimukhe vāhiyati*). While the brahmin’s beasts of burden are directed to the east, the west, and so on, my beast of burden goes straight towards nirvana; **it goes on without turning back.”**

Unlike the brahmin’s beasts of burden that **turn back again** when they reach the end of the field, says the Buddha, my “burden” goes only forward from the time of Dīpaṅkara. The defilements abandoned by the various stages of the path (streamwinning etc) do not have to be abandoned again and again, like the weeds cut by your plough, which will grow again and later on will have to be cut down again.

⁵⁰ On this perceptual process, see SD 17.4 (8.1.2).

⁵¹ **D 33**,1.11(2)/3:221,11-22; **S 49.1**/5:244; A 4.13/2:15,13-30.

⁵² A 4.10/2:12; Dhs 255 §1157. See SD 51.11 (2.2.2); SD 55.9 (1.3.2.3).

Hence, the defilements rooted in views are abandoned by the 1st path, the grosser defilements by the 2nd path, the residual defilements by the 3rd path, and all the (remaining) defilements by the 4th path—this one goes on without turning back.⁵³

Alternatively, **it goes on without turning back** means that the non-reversing going signifies the beast of burden (the practice itself). Hence, unlike your beast of burden, which does not go to where a ploughman becomes sorrowless and dust-free, this goes to that place **where one sorrows not**. “By repeatedly goading on the beast of burden—which symbolizes effort—with the goad of mindfulness, this goes to nirvana the death-free, the utter destruction of all sorrow’s darts, where a ploughman like me becomes sorrowless and dust-free.”

2.5.2 Dh 208

2.5.2.1 The term *dhorayha* also appears in a Dhammapada verse (**Dh 206**) spoken by the Buddha in praise of Sakra’s devotion to him. It is said that while the Buddha was residing at Beḷuva village on his final journey, he was stricken with dysentery. Knowing that the Buddha was reaching the end of his days, Sakra took the form of a human and served as the Buddha’s personal attendant. Sakra even joyfully bore the Buddha’s chamber-pot on his head, as if “it was filled with perfumes.”

Sakra has very good reason to love the Buddha warmly. Sakra, when he was an old Vedic god deeply fearing death, came to see the Buddha.⁵⁴ With the Buddha’s teaching and comforting, the old Sakra dies and is immediately reborn as the new Sakra, and right there attains streamwinning (DhA 3:270). The Buddha explains that Sakra feels joy to look upon a “noble” (*ariya*) person, that is, one who has traversed the noble path. It is pleasant to live or be with them, just as it is unpleasant (suffering) to associate with the foolish.

The Buddha utters 3 Dhammapada verses in this connection:⁵⁵

*sāhu dassanam ariyānaṃ
sannivāso sadā sukho
adassanena bālānaṃ
niccam eva sukhī siyā*

Dh 206

Good is the sight of the noble ones.
Ever pleasant it is to live with them.
Not seeing the foolish
is always joyful indeed.

*bāla,saṅgata,cārī hi
dīgham addhāna socati
dukkho bālehi saṃvāso
amitten’eva sabbadā
dhīro ca sukha,samvāso
ñātīnaṃ va samāgamo*

Dh 207

For one who goes in the company of fools
suffers much for a long time.
Living with the foolish always brings suffering,
just as it is with an enemy.
Joyful it is to live with one steady in wisdom,
just as is a meeting with kinsfolk.

⁵³ This is a simpler way of referring to the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*): “**the defilements rooted in views** (*diṭṭhek-aṭṭhe kilese*) are fetters (1) self-identity view, (2) doubt and (3) attachment to rituals and vows (these are broken by the streamwinner, the 1st path). “**The grosser defilements**” (*oḷarīke kilese*) refer to weakening of sensual lust and aversion (by the once-returner, the 2nd path). **The residual defilements** (*anusahagata kilese*) are the 5 lower fetters, ie, (1-3), (4) sensual lust and (5) aversion (these are broken by the non-returner, the 3rd path) [2.3.1.3]. “**All the (remaining) defilements**” (*sabba,kilese*) are the 5 higher fetters, ie (6) lust for form existence, (7) lust for formless existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance (broken by the arhat, the 4th path) (Pm 1:33,46; DA 1:62, 3:1017; MA 1:47; SA 1:256; AA 1:106, 3:58; SnA 1:150; PmA 1:133). See SD 10.16 (1.6.6-8).

⁵⁴ Sense-world devas may know of their impending death from any of 5 signs: (1) their garlands wither; (2) their garments become soiled; (3) their armpits sweat; (4) their bodies give off a foul smell; (5) they delight not in their own celestial seat: **Pañca Pubba,nimitta S** (It 83), SD 23.8a(1.2).

⁵⁵ For Pali notes, see Dh:N 113 nn206-208. For other Dhammapada versions, see Anandajoti, *A Comparative Edition of the Dhammapada*, Peradeniya, 2007:110 f.

*tasmā hi—
dhīrañ ca paññañ ca bahussutañ ca
dhorayha, sīlam⁵⁶ vata, vantam ariyam
tam tādīsam sappurīsam sumedham
bhajetha nakkhatta, patham va candimā* Dh 208

Therefore,
the steady, the wise, the deeply learned,
the enduring by nature, the dutiful, the noble—
one should follow such a true person, truly wise,
as the moon keeps to the path of the stars.

2.5.3 Word-formation

2.5.3.1 Like *nisabha* [2.4.2.2 n], the word *dhorayha*, too, seems to have no Sanskrit cognate, but it's possible to imagine how it is formed.⁵⁷ *Dhorayha*, as an epithet of the Buddha, probably started as *dhor-vayha = Sanskrit **dhaurvahya*,⁵⁸ an abstract noun from *dhurvaha*, "carrying a yoke," that is, a beast of burden (S 1:28; A 1:162; D 3:113 (purisa°) Dh 208). The idea of bearing a yoke or a plough was strong in the Commentaries; eg, the phrase *dhorayha, sīlī* (J 2:97,16*) is glossed *dhura, vahanaka, ācārena sampanna*, "accomplished in the conduct of transporting a load" (J 2:97,19' f).

2.5.3.2 Philologists often tell us how such rare "new" Pali words are formed and can go into great technical details ("splitting hairs," as detractors say), which may make interesting reading if we love Pali. This exercise may also be helpful in our understanding of the word's meaning as used in the sutta or Commentary. Otherwise, we are caught in a philological heaven, which as we know, is still part of the academic samsara. Let us use these rafts wisely to cross the flood of words.

For example, the British Indologist John Brough⁵⁹ was of the opinion that in some cases it can be shown that the Pali text was already corrupt by the time its Commentary was made. On Dh 390 (= DhG 15), for example, he states (1962:180) that many of the errors—perhaps all—were already fossilized in the present form at the time when the Commentary was composed. But as he points out (237), the presence of the explanation of Dh 278 does not prove that this reading was in the text available to the Commentary, since the spelling we have perhaps represents an attempt by the scribal tradition to explain the sense of the words, which has led to eccentricities of spelling. It must, however, be noted that the eccentric spelling has replaced the correct spelling everywhere in the Pali canon.⁶⁰

2.5.3.3 Brough went on to say that although it was clear that the original reading must have been *dhoreyya, sīla* [instead of *dhorayha, sīlī*], an editor of the Pāli text would doubtless prefer to retain the corruption in the text. In saying this, comments Norman (1962:226), Brough was doubtless of the opinion that the correct reading was nowhere attested in the manuscripts of the texts (D, S, A, Dh, J, Ap) in which it occurs.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Comy: By "**the enduring by nature**" is meant by the habitual conduct of bearing the burden that is the regard for the attaining of arhathood (*arahatta, pāpāna, sañkhātāya dhura, vahanā, sīlatāya dhirayha, sīlam*, DhA 3:272,9-11).

⁵⁷ See eg K R Norman, "Pali lexicographical studies XII," JPTS 20 1994b:225-227 (= *Collected Papers* 6 1996:61-63).

⁵⁸ Notice that the Skt *-hy-* switches around to *-yh-* in the Pali word. This is known as metathesis; it is probably to give a smoother pronunciation in the Pali (with less tiresome plosives).

⁵⁹ Brough, *Gandhārī Dharmapada*, London, 1962:236 (*ad* DhG 177).

⁶⁰ For such a replacement, see, eg the discussion of the replacement of *bārasa* by *dvādasa*: Norman, JPTS 20 1994b: 227 f (= *Collected Papers* 6 1996:63 f).

⁶¹ For academic remarks on the term, see J Brough 1962:236 f; O van Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick*, 1986, §149. See DP *dhorayha*.

However, adds Norman, in the new PTS edition of Dh (ed Hinüber & Norman, Oxford, 1994), the editors have been able to include the reading that has long been recognized to be the correct one because it is now attested in manuscripts from Thailand.⁶²

We can thus see here that academic scholarship, over time, is able to find a happy and sane level of good sense. To appreciate this, of course, means that we must be scholars ourselves, or at least have the resources and patience to keep up with Buddhist studies and related fields (and of course the pedantry and idiosyncrasies of scholars) for the sake of a better understanding of textual Buddhism.⁶³

2.6 “THE TAMED”

2.6.1 *Danta*

2.6.1.1 The 6th devata praises the Buddha as being “**tamed**” (*danta*), that is, mentally stilled and self-disciplined. Despite his body suffering in a manner that is “painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, he endures it **in a tamed manner**, mindful and clearly knowing, without becoming distressed” [§10].

In simple terms, *danto* describes the Buddha as appearing to the world (that is, the wise) and the divine, who appreciates the good. It is here a shorthand for the visible qualities of an awakened being (*buddha*). **The (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta** (S 1.38) recounts an exemplary instance of the Buddha himself attesting to this wholesome state in the face of a challenging worldly situation caused by a physical accident (a splinter cutting into his foot), and that splinter flying off from a huge boulder pushed down from the top of Mount Vulture Peak by his ambitious and jealous cousin, Devadatta, in an attempt to kill the Buddha. The boulder was abruptly caught between two rocks, causing a splinter to fly off and hurt the Buddha.⁶⁴

2.6.1.2 The term *danta* is also applied to others who are tamable, that is, capable of understanding and benefitting from the Dhamma and of following the 3 trainings of the path. Such persons are called **purisa,damma**, “persons(s) capable of being trained” by the Buddha, that is, his teachings. Hence, the Buddha is poetically described as *anuttaro purisa,damma,sāraṭhī*, “peerless guide of persons to be tamed,” the 6th of the 9 virtues of the Buddha.⁶⁵

2.6.2 Usages of *danta*

2.6.2.1 *Danta*⁶⁶ [Sanskrit *dānta*], “tamed, controlled, restrained,” is the past participle of *dammati* (to tame) or *dameti* (to be tamed) [Skt *dāmyati*]. The *taming* is both that of the body, that is, physically (such as the taming of an elephant),⁶⁷ and more often *mentally*. It often occurs in the Vinaya and the suttas, for example:

(1) *daṇḍen’eke damayanti*
aṅkusehi kasāhi ca

Some are tamed by the rod,
by goads and by whips.

⁶² See Dh:H&N p59 (ad Dh 208).

⁶³ See O von Hinüber 1986 §149, “Pāli: How do we see it eighty years after Geiger’s grammar?” *Kleine Schriften* 1999:464-467.

⁶⁴ SD 54.7 (2.3) n.

⁶⁵ SD 15.5 (11), 15.7 (2.2) + n.

⁶⁶ As a noun, *danta* means “tooth,” which does not apply here. See PED: *danta* (3); DP *danta* (2).

⁶⁷ As in the case of Nāḷāgiri, the royal elephant used by Devadatta in his attempt to kill the Buddha: SD 52.1 (9.2.1.5).

adaṇḍena asatthena With neither rod nor sword was
nāgo danto mahesinā ti tamed the naga who is the great seer. (V 2:195)

This verse is also spoken by Aṅgulimāla on the occasion of his conversion by the Buddha and attainment of streamwinning in **the Aṅguli,māla Sutta** (M 86), except that the last line, which runs thus:

(2) *daṇḍen'eke damayanti* Some are tamed by the rod,
aṅkusehi kasāhi ca by goads and by whips;
adaṇḍena asatthena but I was tamed by that one *d*
aham danto'mhi tadinā with neither rod nor sword. *c*
(M 86,25/2:105), 5.11 = Tha 878

There is a pun in the last 2 lines: it reads both as that (1) Aṅgulimāla is tamed neither corporally nor violently, and (2) that he was tamed by the Buddha the non-violent, who has neither rod nor sword. This verse also occurs in **the Aṅguli,māla Thera,gāthā** (Tha 878).

(3) *viseni,bhūto upsanta,citto* Aloof from the crowd,⁶⁸ with peaceful mind,
nāgo'va danto carati anejo he fares like a tamed elephant, unperturbed.
bhikkhu susīlo suvimutta,citto A monk of pure virtue, well freed in mind—
so ty āhutim bhuñjatu agga,piṇḍam let him eat your offering, the foremost alms.
(S 56.3/*569ab/1:141), SD 12.4

In **the Brahma,deva Sutta** (S 56.3), Brahmā appears to a female devotee explaining to her not to give offerings since the gods find human food too gross and that the food should instead be given to her own son, Brahmadeva, an arhat monk, thus yielding great fruit. Brahmā praises such a monk living a life of spiritual peace and solitude.

(4) *cittam dantam*, “a tamed mind” (A 1:7; Dh 35d).

The tamed mind is often valued and praised. In the Aṅguttara, the Buddha declares that there is nothing better than our tamed mind. “The mind, when tamed, guarded, kept safe and restrained, brings about good” (*cittam bhikkhave dantam guttam rakkhitam samvuttam atthāya samvattanti*, A 1.40/1:7).

The Dhammapada explains:

(5) *dunnigghassa lahuṇo* Difficult to hold down, flighty,
yattha kāmanipātino alighting where it will—
cittassa damatho sādhu good is the taming of the mind.
cittam dantam sukhāvaham A **tamed** mind brings happiness. (Dh 35)

(6) *danto dama,yatam seṭṭho* **Tamed**, he is the best of tamers.
santo sama,yatam isi At peace, he is the seer amongst peace-bringers.
mutto moca,yatam aggo Freed, he is the foremost of liberators.
tiṇṇo tāra,yatam varo Crossed over, he is the best of guides across.
(A 4.23/2:24 = It 112/121-123)

This verse is found in **the Loka Sutta** (A 4.23 = It 112) on the Buddha as the supreme being in the world (*loka*) on account of his awakening. This verse is a reflective explanation of the 3rd of the Buddha's 9 virtues, that is, *vijjā,carāṇa,sampanno*, “accomplished in wisdom and conduct.” He is not only liberated in

⁶⁸ “Aloof from the crowd,” *viseni,bhūto*. See SD 12.4 (6.8).

body (this is his “last body”) and mind (no more new karma); he is also the most wholesome and liberated in terms of both what he knows and teaches (wisdom) and his actions (compassion). Moreover, as he speaks so he acts (*yathā,vādī tathā,kārī*), as he acts so he speaks (*yathā,kārī tathā,vādī*): his body and mind fully reflect his full awakening. (ItA 191 f)

2.6.2.2 *Danta* also occurs in compounds, such as:

sudanta “well tamed, restrained” (Sn 23; Dh 159, 323);
danta,bhūmi “a safe place (= nirvana), or the state of one who is tamed” (S 22.76/3:84; Nc §475 in continuation of Dh 323; DhA 4:6).

The term ***danta*** also occurs in the context of full awakening in the following references: Sn 370, 463, 513, 624; Dh 142 (= *catu,magga niyamena danto*, DhA 3:83), 321 f = Nc §475.

3 The samadhi with the fivefold knowledge

3.1 THE SUTTA’S KEY SENTENCE

3.1.1 The Sutta’s **key sentence**, found in the 7th devata’s utterance, needs closer examination. The Pali text, taken from the Sinhalese (Buddha Jayanti Tipiṭaka), reads:

Passa samādhim̐ subhāvitam̐ cittañ ca suvimuttam̐, na cābhinatar̐ na cāpanatar̐ na ca sa,-saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vatam̐. [§11]

“See the samadhi well cultivated and the mind well freed—neither leaning forward nor bending backward, neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort!”

This sentence also contains the difficult compound—*na ca sa,sāṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vatam̐*—which we will examine later [3.4.4]. We should first take note of the different readings for this key sentence:⁶⁹

Be *Passa samadhim̐ subhāvitam̐ cittañ ca suvimuttam̐ na cābhinatar̐ na cāpanatar̐ na ca sa,-saṅkhāra,niggayha,varita,gatam̐.* It is like Ce except that the final component reads *-gatam̐*.
 Ce *Passa samadhim̐ subhāvitam̐ cittañ ca suvimuttam̐ na cābhinatar̐ na cāpanatar̐ na ca sa,-saṅkhāra,niggayha,varita,vatam̐.* It is like Be except that the final component reads *-vatam̐*.
 Ee1 Ke Se ... *carita,vatam̐*, which is probably an error: PED under *vārita* takes it as *vārita,vata*.
 Ee2 It is like Ce but with *niggayha* taken as a free component, leaving *sa,sāṅkhāra* by itself. The same expression occurs elsewhere.

3.1.2 From the various variant readings available to us (as seen above), we will notice that all the textual traditions (Be Ce Ee Ke Se) agree except for the final component of the compound. We thus have 3 different readings of the compound, thus:

Ce Ee2 We will see below that the Ce/Ee2 reading ***-vatam̐*** is the most preferable, since it gives the best reading to reflect the samadhi teaching of “the samadhi with the fivefold knowledge” (*pañca,ñāṇika samādhi*) as found in the other suttas where this compound appears [3.5].

⁶⁹ **Key** to the Pali text MSS: **Be** Burmese ed, the 6th council ed; **Ce** Sinhalese ed, esp the Buddha Jayanti Tipiṭaka (BJT or SLTP); **Ee** European ed, the Pali Text Soc: Ee1 (S 1 PTS 1884 ed of S); Ee2 (S 1 1998 PTS rev ed); **Ke** Khmer or Cambodian ed; **Se** Siamese ed, esp the Syam Rath (King Rama 6 ed). For details, see SD Guide: i. Pali editions.

Be The Be text is unique in reading the final component as *-gata*, which we can render as “attained,” which seems to agree with the Chinese version in SĀ 1246 [3.5.1.2]. The Saṃyuk-ta Āgama belongs to the Sarvāstivāda school.

Ke Se Ee1 These MSS have the most difficult reading of all, that is, *carita,vata*. This is supported by neither the suttas nor the Commentaries. We may render it as “by personal character and by habit (or routine).” This may describe the “personality” of the meditator who attains the “samadhi with the fivefold knowledge,” but that’s almost all we know.

3.1.3 Although we are not certain of the final or last 2 components of this important compound, the sense of the compound *as a whole* is clear. The flexibility of Pali words in the service of promoting meditative and awakening experiences becomes clear when taken in the context of sutta teachings. With this spirit in mind, we can, at least provisionally, take the compound *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,varita,gataṃ* to mean “that which has been attained through self-effort by preventing defilements.”

In this spirit, we will examine the component phrases for a better understanding of the sutta teachings, thus:

2.7.2 *Passa samadhiṃ subhāvitāṃ cittañ ca suvimuttāṃ*

2.7.3 *Na cābhinatāṃ na cāpanatāṃ*

2.7.4 *Na ca sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vata*

3.2 PASSA SAMADHIṀ SUBHĀVITĀṀ CITTAÑ CA SUVIMUTTĀṀ

3.2.1 *Passa*, “see!” This is a “non-specific command” (*aniyāmit’āṇatti*),⁷⁰ that is, spoken by the 7th devata (probably the eldest of the devatas or their leader, one who has attained the path) to all the devatas present and to those listening to or studying this Sutta. It draws our attention to the important statement that follows immediately.

This following statement by the 7th devata is about the Buddha’s *samadhi* or mental concentration, that is, “the samadhi that is the fruition of arhathood” (*arahatta,phala, samādhim*) (SA 1:80,21 f). It is “**well-cultivated**” (*subhāvitāṃ*); another word for this is “mentally cultivated” (*bhāvita,citta*). This means that it is also supported by “a body that is well cultivated” (*bhāvita,kāya*). This is what allows the Buddha to withstand the excruciating pains of his nasty wound, which an ordinary person is incapable of doing.

3.2.2 Not only is the Buddha well-cultivated in body and mind, he is also “**well-freed**” (*suvimuttāṃ*), that is, liberated from suffering, from the world and from rebirth; he is fully awakened, that is, “well-freed by the freedom of fruition” (*phala,vimuttiyā suvimuttāṃ*, SA 1:80,22). The “fruition of freedom” (*phala,vimutti*) means that the Buddha has fully traversed the noble eightfold path. There is nothing more, nothing higher: he is the “fully self-awakened one” (*sammā,sambuddha*); there is no other Bodhisattva or Buddha above him. Awakening has no hierarchy.

3.3 NA CĀBHINATĀṀ NA CĀPANATĀṀ ... NA CA ... VĀRITA,VATA

3.3.1 The 7th devata goes on to describe the Buddha as one who is “**neither leaning forward nor bending backward**” (*na cābhinatāṃ na cāpanatāṃ*). In figurative language, a mind accompanied by lust is said to be “bent forward” (*abhinatāṃ*), that accompanied by hate to be “bent back” (*apanatāṃ*): the lustful is

⁷⁰ SA 1:80,21, 107,19.

drawn to a lustful object and repelled by what one hates. Rejecting both ideas, the 7th devata speaks thus.⁷¹

The Paṭisambhidā, magga explains the terms *abhinata* and *apanata* as follows:

“A mind **leaning forward** (enticed by a pleasurable object) is subjected to lust. It is an obstacle to samadhi.”

(*Abhinataṃ cittaṃ rāgānupatitaṃ, samādhissa paripantho*, Pm 1:165,14 f.)

Comy: “Leaning forward means greatly bent on or attached to the enjoying of an object.”

(*Abhinatan ti assāda, vatthūsu bhusaṃ nataṃ allīnaṃ*. PmA 2:472,11 f.)

“A mind **bending backward** (repelled by an unpleasurable object) is subjected to ill will. It is an obstacle to samadhi.”

(*Apanataṃ cittaṃ byāpādānupatitaṃ, samādhissa paripantho*, Pm 1:165,14-16.)

Comy: “Bending backward means corrupted by the unenjoyed objects because of that not-leaning or because of the lack of that not-leaning (towards the object).”

(*Apanatan ti nirassāda, vatthūsu patihataṃ, tato apagataṃ vā, apagata, nataṃ vā, na tato apagatan ti attho*, PmA 2:472,12 f.)

With such a mastery of deep meditation and his freed mind, the Buddha is *naturally* capable of **neither leaning forward** towards pleasurable states nor **bending back** from unpleasurable states. With ease, he remains equanimous towards the pleasurable and the unpleasurable (ugly, painful or impure). His mind is like *a mirror*, merely reflecting reality. On account of this ability of neither being fooled by the world nor deceived by Māra, the Buddha remains free and happy.

3.3.2 The Buddha’s mirror-like mind is described by the phrase “**neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort**” (*na ca sa, saṅkhāra, niggayha, vārita, vata*). The Commentary explains that (in the case of the Buddha), it means that he does not need to suppress defilements, curb or check them with any means or any effort since he has the samadhi of the fruition (of arhathood) so that the defilements have already been checked through cutting off.⁷²

3.4 SA, SAṅKHĀRA, NIGGAYHA, VĀRITA, VATĀ TI

3.4.1 The compound *sa, saṅkhāra, niggayha, vārita, vataṃ*, “curbed or checked by suppressing with effort” [§11] is resolved (broken down into its parts) as:

sa + *saṅkhāra* + *niggayha*, “restrained” (*ni* + √GRAH IX,⁷³ “to seize” + *ya* abs of *niggaṇhati*)⁷⁴ + *varita* (√VR, “to cover,” + *e* + *i* + *-ta*, caus past part) + *vata*.⁷⁵ [3.4.4 f]

⁷¹ *Rāgānugataṃ pana cittaṃ abhinataṃ nāma hoti, dosānugataṃ apanataṃ; tad-ubhaya, paṭikkhepena na cā-bhinataṃ na cāpanatan ti āha* (SA 1:80,22-25).

⁷² *Na sa, saṅkhārena sappayogena kilese niggahetvā, vārita, vataṃ: kilesānaṃ pana chinnattā, vataṃ, phala, samā-dhinā samāhitaṃ ti attho* (SA 1:80,25-28).

⁷³ On *gaṇhati/-āti* (Skt *grṇati*), see Oberlies, *Pāli Grammar*, vol 2, PTS, 2019:769-771. On Class IX roots, see K L Dhammajoti, *Reading Buddhist Pāli Texts*, Hong Kong, 2018:6.2.1. On the 5th conjugation (*gahA* + *ṇā* + *ti* = *gaṇhāti*), see A P Buddhadatta, *The New Pali Course* part III, Dehiwala, 1950, 1999:67 f.

⁷⁴ See D Andersen, *A Pāli Glossary*, 1901: *niggaṇhati*.

⁷⁵ K Anuruddha, *Dictionary of Pali Idioms*, 2004:918, where the final component is stated as *-vantu*, making it an adjective (as Geiger has done) [§5 n].

The full phrase as it appears in **the (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta** is *na ca sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,-vatam*, with the 2 particles, *na ca*, inserted before it. The indefinite enclitic⁷⁶ conjunctive particle *ca* here can be translated as “and” (either copulative or disjunctive),⁷⁷ “but,”⁷⁸ or “if,”⁷⁹ but has a number of other functions showing an indefinite state like “-ever” in *whatever, whoever*, etc. It also may be left untranslated when its sense is implied in the English sentence.⁸⁰

The negative particle *na* means “not,” here negating the whole compound. We have already seen that *na cābhinatam na cāpanatam* is translated as “neither leaning forward nor bending backward” [3.1.1]. Similarly, we need to render *na ca ... vārita,vatam* as “neither curbed nor checked (by suppressing with effort).” What does this last phrase mean? [3.4.5 f]

3.4.2 The phrase *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha* is translated as “(by) suppressing with effort.” **The (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta** reports the 7th devata as using this phrase to show that the Buddha—with his samadhi of fruition—restrains all defilements effortlessly and naturally (since the Buddha is fully awakened). This interesting phrase is used in other ways in a number of other suttas, which we will examine below [3.5].

In the phrase *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha*, the prefix *sa-* is identical with *sam-* and has the sense of “with, having, possessed of, same as,” such as *sa,devake*, “(the world) with its devas” (V 1:8), *sa,dhammika*, “having common faith” (D 2:273), *sa,jāti*, “having the same origin” (J 2:108), *sāttham sa,vyañjanam* (lit, “with meaning, with letter”), “in the word and the spirit” (D 1:62, very common).⁸¹

3.4.3 *Saṅkhāra* has 3 key meanings:⁸²

(1) The conditions or properties of any process or result;

(1a) the sum of the conditions or properties defining life or existence; the elements of anything, eg, *āyu,saṅkhāra*, “life-element” (D 2:106; S 2:266; PvA 210), *bhava,saṅkhāra* (A 4:313), *jīvita,saṅkhāra* (D 2:99, 107);

(1b) essential conditions for action, speech and thought, that is, *kāya,saṅkhāra, vacī,saṅkhāra*, and *citta,saṅkhāra* or *mano,saṅkhāra*, respectively described as “respiration,” “thinking and pondering,” “percepts and feelings,” “because these are (respectively) bound up with,” or “precede” those conditions (M 1:301, cf 56); S 4:293; Kvu 395, cf PmA 227)

(2) One of the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*), comprising all the mental concomitants (*citta,sam-payutta cetasikā dhammā*) that tend to arise along with a *citta* or unit of cognition (Dhs 1, cf M 3:25).

(3) In its broad popular sense, *saṅkhāra* encompasses both mental and physical states, that is, all the 5 aggregates.⁸³ It has almost the same sense as *dhamma*, except that while *dhamma* is psychological in its compass (“things”), *saṅkhāra* has an existential compass (“conditioned things”); if dhammas are seen as “units” of *realities or things*, sankharas are how they interact and manifest to us as *states*.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ “Enclitic” means that a word is so unemphatic as to be pronounced as if as a part of preceding word, ie, post-positively, eg *ca* in *buddhañ ca dhammañ ca saṅghañ ca*, also written as *buddhañca dhammañca saṅghañca*.

⁷⁷ See PED sv *ca*.

⁷⁸ *Ca = tu*, “but” (Thī 55; Dh 6). See Andersen, *Pali Glossary*, sv *ca* (3) & Norman Thī:N ad Thī 55 + Dh:N ad Dh 5. DP 2:90 *ca* (2).

⁷⁹ In the protasis of conditional sentences; “if”: *oḷāriko ca hi te ... attā abhavissa rūpī ... aññā va saññā bhavissati añño attā* (D 1:186,3). DP 2:90 *ca* (3).

⁸⁰ For details, see DP sv *ca* (2:89 f).

⁸¹ See PED sv *sa-* (3).

⁸² For details, see **Khandha 4 *Saṅkhāra*** (SD 17.6 esp 5).

⁸³ DhsA see only form as *saṅkhāra*, and the other 3 (feelings, perception and consciousness) as a single mental concomitant (*cetasika*).

⁸⁴ For a discussion, see **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8.

The terms *sa,saṅkhāra* (“with *saṅkhāra*”) and *asaṅkhara* (“without *saṅkhāra*”) are sometimes used in connection with the “attaining of nirvana” (*parinibbāyī*).⁸⁵ A *sa,saṅkhāra parinibbāyī* is one who attains nirvana “with effort,” who eradicates the mental fetters through striving (Pug 17); an *asaṅkhāra parinibbāyī* is one who attains nirvana “without effort,” such as Bāhiya Dārucīriya who understands the truth instantaneously.⁸⁶

Thus, the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī Commentary glosses *sa,saṅkhāra* with *ussāha payoga upāya paccaya, gahaṇa*, “by the application of endeavour, strategies, (skillful) means, supporting conditions” (DhsA 156,7 f). The Buddha, when he was struggling for awakening, applied various kinds of endeavour, strategies, skillful means and supporting conditions. With the attainment of awakening, free from defilements and ignorance, he would naturally and easily deal with the various vicissitudes of life and existence—he was able to attain the samadhi of fruition (the bliss of nirvana) whenever he wished, for as long as he wishes.

3.4.4 We have noted that *niggayha*, “restrained,” is the absolutive of *niggaṇhati*, “to hold back, restrain” (*ni + gaṇhāti*, from VGRAH, “to seize” + *ya*). Grammatically, we have an interesting variant reading for *niggayha*. It almost always occurs as an absolutive in the suttas, such as a famous example from **the Mahā Suññata Sutta** (M 122) where the Buddha tells Ānanda how, just as a potter skillfully treats raw damp clay (to make pots and so on), “restraining (you) again and again” (*niggayha niggayha*), the Buddha will admonish Ānanda.⁸⁷

The Commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*)⁸⁸ seem to take *niggayha* to be absolutive (*niggahetvā niggahetvā*, MA 4:166), but their Subcommentaries (*ṭīkā*) take *niggayha* as the gerundive *niggahetabbā*, “that which is to be restrained.”⁸⁹ In practical terms, the Subcommentary is simply reminding us what needs to be done or what should not be done.⁹⁰ The prime purpose of sutta study, then, is not about Pali grammar but rather about what the Buddha teaches through the Pali.

3.4.5 *Vārita* (“obstructed, hindered, restrained, curbed”) here is a past participle of the causative of VVR, “to cover” [3.4.1], from which we get the verb, *vāreti*, “to block, restrain, curb, prevent.” The PED (sv *vārita*) cites only J 4:264,⁹¹ which is the Jātaka Commentary. In fact, *vārita* by itself is not found in the canon but only in post-canonical works.⁹²

Understandably, early sutta translators, even modern translators, have difficulties with the word *vārita* and the related phrase. C A F Rhys Davids’ translation of Saṃyutta Nikāya vol 1 (S:RD 1) is one of the earliest English renditions of **the (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta** (done in 1917). In the pioneer work, she renders the Ee reading, *cārita,vataṃ*, as “having the habit of self-denial” (S:RD 1:39).⁹³ Apparently, Rhys Davids understands *vata* as equivalent to Skt *vrata*, that is, “sphere of action, function, mode or manner of life, conduct, manner, usage, custom” (SED 1042 sv *vratā*).

⁸⁵ S 5:70; A 1:233.

⁸⁶ A 1:24; U 1:10; DhA 2:209 ff. See SD 17.6 (5.3.2).

⁸⁷ *Niggayha niggayhāhaṃ ānanda vakkhāmi ...* (M 122,27/3:118,4), SD 11.4.

⁸⁸ DA 3:1060,11-13; SA 1:80,25-28; VbhA 421,13-15.

⁸⁹ Eg VbhMṬ:Be 205,16-18.

⁹⁰ *Niggahetabbā* also occurs at **Kim Dīṭṭhika S** (A 10.93/5:188); **Vajjiyamāhita S** (A 10.94/5:191); **Kvu 3. Niggahe-tabbam** occurs twice in **Sīti,bhava S** (A 6.85/3:435). A search of CSCD with *niggahetabb** will yield more cases of the gerundive forms in the suttas.

⁹¹ Interestingly, J 4:460,2 has *cāritam*, and gives the Be Ce vl *vāritam*.

⁹² For a list of occurrences of *varita*, search the CSCD with “*vārita****” (with the wildcard tag using 3 stars).

⁹³ Apparently, C A F Rhys Davids was aware of the reading *vārita,vataṃ*, since she quotes it as the lemma of Buddhaghosa’s commentary on the term (S:RD 1:320). Cf *bhāvanā, balena vāritattā dhammā*, “states curbed by the power of mental cultivation” (Tikap 14).

3.4.6 We have noted that the final component of the *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha* ... compound could be either *-vata* or *-gata* [3.4.1]. The Be reading *gata* (“gone to or faring in a certain state”) is clearly a past participle. The reading *vārita,gata* could then mean “gone to (attained) mastery, accomplishment,” with *vārita* taken as a noun of state (of control or mastery), that is, “mastered the blocking of defilements.” This interpretation harmonizes with the reading of the compound with the *-vata* ending as a whole (though they are not synonymous).

However, the Commentary, as we have seen, glosses *vata* as *kilesānaṃ pana chinnattā vataṃ phala,-samādhinā samāhitam*, “concentrated on the samadhi of fruition that (brings about) the curbing of the defilements by cutting (them) off” (SA 1:80,27 f) [cf 2.7.2.2], suggesting that *vata* is a past participle. Clearly, the context dictates that *vata* reflects the Skt *vṛtá*, “stopped, checked, held back” (SED 1007 sv *vṛitá*). In fact, *vata* (in the sense of “curbing”) occurs in the suttas [3.5] (such as here) apparently only as a past participle⁹⁴ of *vāreti*, “(has been, is) curbed.”

The word *vata* is very common in the suttas, but mostly in the sense of “a religious vow or practice, any pious observance, meritorious act of devotion or austerity, solemn vow, rule, holy practice (as fasting, continence etc)” (SED 1042 sv *vratá*), but this sense is not applicable here. It seems that *vata* in the sense of “curbed” (from *vVR*, “to cover”) is unique to S 1.38 and the few suttas quoted below [3.5]. Since *vata* is used in the description of an important state of samadhi [3.5], regarding the Buddha’s state of awakening, the word is clearly an authentic and important term.

3.5 THE SAMADHI WITH THE FIVEFOLD KNOWLEDGE

In the following texts, the compound characterizes a “right samadhi of the fivefold knowledge” (*pañca,ñāṇika sammā,samādhi*). Essentially, this is a practical definition of “right samadhi” (*sammā,samādhi*) of the eightfold path.

3.5.1 Paṃsu,dhovaka Sutta (A 3.101)

3.5.1.1 The Paṃsu,dhovaka Sutta (A 3.101), *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vato* describes a samadhi cultivated as the basis for the 6 superknowledges (*abhiññā*), and clearly refers to the attainment of the dhyanas.⁹⁵ The Sutta relates thus:

4 Having abandoned them [gross, middling and subtle defilements], making an end of them, thereafter, only **thoughts of the teaching** remain.

And that samadhi is neither peaceful nor sublime,

neither has it won full tranquillity nor come to mental unification.

It is curbed and checked by the effort of **suppressing** (mental defilements). (A 3.101,4.1)⁹⁶

Ce and Ee read the last line (“It is curbed ...”) as *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vato*; Be reads the final component as *-gato*. The phrase *sa,saṅkhāra* means “by effort”; *niggayha* means “suppressing”; *vārita* is “curbed or blocked”; and (following Ce) *-vato* means “checked.” Following the Be and Se ending *-gato*, the phrase might read: “but is reached when (the defilements) are suppressed by curbing (the defilements) with effort.” We get almost the same sense as the Ce/Ee reading.

⁹⁴ On past participles, see S Collins, *A Pali Grammar for Students*, Bangkok, 2006:174 f (and index).

⁹⁵ A 3.101/1:254,34 (SD 19.11). Comy: AA 2:363,4-6.

⁹⁶ *Sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vato* (Be *-gato*): [2].

3.5.1.2 The Paṃsu,dhovaka Sutta continues:

4.2 But, bhikshus, there comes a time when the mind stands steady inwardly, composed, unified, **concentrated**.⁹⁷

That concentration [samadhi] is then peaceful and sublime.

It has won full tranquillity and has come to mental unification.

It is *neither curbed nor checked*⁹⁸ by suppressing (the defilements) with effort. [3.4]

4.3 Then, when he directs his mind towards the attaining of any mental state attainable through **direct knowledge**,

he gains the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein,

whenever the conditions are right [whenever there is a basis for mindfulness].⁹⁹

The last line of §4.2 reads *na sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vato* following Ce and Ee; with Be and Se reading the final component as *-gato* (“attained”). The Chinese Saṃyukta Āgama (SĀ 1246) has: “The monk gains concentration that is *not* maintained by exertion; he gains the peaceful and sublime, the still happy state, the unified mind, in which all the influxes are destroyed” (SĀ 1246 @ T99.2.341c21-22: 比丘得諸三昧不爲有行所持。得寂靜勝妙。得息樂道。一心一意盡諸有漏。 *bīqiū dé zhū sānmèi bù wéi yǒu xíng, suǒ chí dé jìjìng, shèng miào dé xī lèdào, yīxīn yīyì jìn zhū yǒu lòu*). Clearly, the Chinese translation was based on a text that reads the final component as *-gato*.

3.5.2 (Pañcaka) Samādhi Sutta (A 5.27)

3.5.2.1 The (Pañcaka) Samādhi Sutta (A 5.27) records the Buddha as exhorting practitioners to “carefully and mindfully cultivate boundless samadhi.” This samadhi brings one these 5 knowledges (*pañca,ñāṇa*),¹⁰⁰ namely:

- (1) The knowledge arises for oneself¹⁰¹ that “this samadhi is both present joy and fruit as future joy.” (*ayaṃ samādhi paccuppanna,sukho c’eva āyatiñ ca sukha,vipāko ti*).

⁹⁷ *Hoti so bhikkhave samayo, yaṃ taṃ cittaṃ ajjhatañ-ñeva santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodihoti samādhīyati*. The last 3 verbs literally tr “it sits down together, it becomes one, it concentrates.”

⁹⁸ “Neither curbed nor checked” (*vārita,vata*) means that the samadhi arises not by forcefully suppressing (with effort) the defilements or hindrances, but because the defilements have been cut off or uprooted (in the arhat). In other words, the samadhi is that of the concentration of fruition (*phala,samādhi*) (ie, the attaining of arhatood) (SA 1:80,25-28). [2.3]

⁹⁹ *Yassa yassa ca abhiññā,sacchi,karaṇīyassa dhammassa cittaṃ abhininnāmeti abhiññā,sacchikiriyaṃ, tatra tatr’eva sakkhi,bhābataṃ pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane*. This is a locative absolute construction indicating time: the 1st sati is loc present participle from vb *atthi*, is, the 2nd is the n. The latter phrase—*tatra tatra ... sati sati āyatane*—is a common stock phrase that introduces the attainment of the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*): **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73,-19/1:494), SD 27.4; **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119,29 f/3:96 f), SD 12.21; **Paṃsu,dhovaka S** (A 3.100a,4/1:255), SD 19.11a; **Upakkilesa S** (A 5.23/3:16-19); **Iddhi,pāda S 2** (A 5.68/3:82 f); **Sakkhi,bhabba S** (A 6.71/3:426 f); **Gāvī Upamā S** (A 9.35/4:421 f). It refers to the preliminary conditions (*āyatana*) for the 6 direct knowledges which follow later. The preliminary condition for the first 5 knowledges (the mundane ones) is the 4th dhyana; for the 5th (the only supra-mundane one), it is insight. See SD 12.21 (6).

¹⁰⁰ Comy: AA 3:231 f.

¹⁰¹ *Paccattañ-ñeva ñāṇaṃ uppajjati*. **Paccattam** (adj) = *pati* (reflexive prefix, “by, in, to, for, before”) → *pacc-* (be-fore vowel a) + *attā* (oneself). **Paccattam** also means “separately, individually,” eg *suddhī asuddhī paccattam nāñño aññam visodhaye*, “Purity and impurity concern the individual, no one can purify another,” (Dh 165); **paccattam sa,sarīresu manussesv etaṃ na vijjati**, “This (difference) is not found among humans in their bodies” (Sn 611).

- (2) The knowledge arises for oneself that “this samadhi is noble and free from worldliness” (*ayaṃ samā-dhi ariya nirāmisā*).
- (3) The knowledge arises for oneself that “this samadhi is not found in a false person.”¹⁰² (*ayaṃ samā-dhi akāpurisa, sevito’ti*)
- (4) The knowledge arises for oneself that “this samadhi is peaceful and sublime, has gained a total tranquillization, attained unification, neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort.” (*santo paṇīto paṭippassaddha, laddho ekodi, bhāvādhigato na ca sa, saṅkhāra, niggayha, vārita, vato ti*).¹⁰³
- (5) The knowledge arises for oneself that “this samadhi, I have myself, being mindful, attained to, and, being mindful, emerged from.” (*sato kho panāhaṃ imaṃ samāpajjāmi sato vuṭṭhahāmi ti*).

(A 5.27/3:24,9), SD 33.13(3.3)

3.5.2.2 The Sutta Commentary tells us that these 5 knowledges are “**the 5 review knowledges**” (*pañca paccavekkhana, ñāṇāni*), that is, the knowledges that arise for an arhat. Upon attaining arhathood, one happily reviews the 5 knowledges. Simply explained, they are as follows:¹⁰⁴

- (1) The immediate benefits of “**dwelling happily here and now**.”¹⁰⁵ This is called the “divine dwelling” (*dibba, vihāra*) in the Commentaries and later works; that is, living like a deva.¹⁰⁶
- (2) This happiness is **noble and free from worldliness**; it is a blissful dhyanic experience. “Noble” (*ariya*) means “connected with the path of awakening.” “Free from worldliness” (*nirāmisā*) means not limited by or drawn to the physical senses.
- (3) **A false person will never experience it.** A “false person” (*kā, purisa*, opposite of “true individual,” *sappurisa*) is one who does not respect the Buddha, who trivializes the Dharma, and who does not live the moral life or work for the path of awakening. A true individual is one who diligently keeps to the 3 trainings and grows in understanding of the 5 knowledges, gaining them in due course.
- (4) This samadhi is **peaceful and subtle**, has gained a total tranquillization, attained unification, and **neither leans forward nor bends backward, neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort.** The mind is neither drawn to pleasure nor repelled by displeasure [3.4].
- (5) The knowledge arises for oneself that “This samadhi, I have myself, being mindful, attained, and, being mindful, emerged from.”

(A 5.27/3:24,9), SD 33.13(3.3)

In **the (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta**, the 7th devatā mentions the 4th quality in connection with the Buddha’s fortitude and calmness in the face of great physical pain.

¹⁰² *Sevita* (adj, “(not) associated with, pursued by, resorted to by” a false person (*kāpurisa*). On *kā, purisa* (opp, *sappurisa*), see SD 47.3a (1.3.1.3).

¹⁰³ Here **sa, saṅkhāra** means “with effort,” as in *sa, saṅkhāra parinibbāyī*, descriptive of a non-returner who “attains nirvana with some effort”; *niggayha*, “having suppressed”; *vārita*, “restrained, curbed”; *-vata*, “checking.” Also at **Sakalika S 1** (S 1.38, 11/1:28), SD 61.4: tr as “not blocked and checked by forceful suppression” (S: B 117 & 371 n88). For *sa, saṅkhāra*, ie the phrase without *na*, see [3.5.1] **Paṃsu, dhovaka S** (A 3.100a, 4.1/1:255), SD 19.11; see also **Saṅkhāra**, SD 17.6.5 (5). When **asaṅkhāra** is applied to a mental state, it can mean “automatic, unprompted” (Vism 452, 33 f; DhsA 71, 4; Abhs 24, 28* = 29*), as in *asaṅkhāra, parinibbāyī* (“non-returner without exertion,” D 33, 2.1(18)-/3:237; S 48.15/5:201; A 3.86/1:233, 7.52.6/4:72, 9.12.6/4:380, 10.64.3/5:120).

¹⁰⁴ For details, see SD 33.13(3.3) (3.4).

¹⁰⁵ *Diṭṭha, dhamma, sukha, vihārā*: see eg **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.41, 2/2:45), SD 24.1.

¹⁰⁶ AA 3:309; see also UA 26, 73, 108, 201; ThaA 1:28; ItA 1:143, 2:37; DhA 4:53; DhsA 129.

3.5.3 Das'uttara Sutta (D 34)

The **Das'uttara Sutta** (D 34)¹⁰⁷ asks, “What are the 5 things that should be made to arise?” (*katame pañca dhammā uppādetabbā*): **the right samadhi with the fivefold knowledge** (*pañca,ñāṇika sammā,-samādhi*) [3.5.2.1], that is, the knowledge arising in one, thus:

- (1) This samadhi is both present joy and fruits as future joy.
- (2) This samadhi arises for oneself as noble and free from worldliness.
- (3) This samadhi is not found in a false person.
- (4) This samadhi is peaceful and subtle, has gained a total tranquillization (stilling of body and mind), attained unification, so that the mind **neither leans forward nor bends backward, is neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort**.
- (5) This samadhi, I have myself, being mindful, attained to, and, being mindful, emerged from.

(D 34,1.6(8d)/3:279,4) [2.5.2.1]

3.5.4 Vibhaṅga

3.5.4.1 The Vibhaṅga in ch 16 (*ñāṇa,vibhaṅga*, the analysis of knowledge) in its “pentad” (*pañcaka*) section gives an interesting explanation of the 5-limbed right concentration (*pañc'aṅgika samādhi*) (Vbh §804/334,1-26) in terms of meditation and reflection, as comprising the following characteristics:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) zest-suffusing; | <i>pīti,pharaṇatā</i> |
| (2) joy-suffusing; | <i>sukha,pharaṇatā</i> |
| (3) mind-suffusing; | <i>ceto,pharaṇatā</i> |
| (4) light-suffusing; | <i>āloka,pharaṇatā</i> |
| (5) the characteristic of reviewing. | <i>paccavekkhaṇā.nimittam</i> |

The Vibhaṅga then defines **the right concentration that has 5 knowledges** (*pañca,ñāṇika samādhi*) in the same way as in **the (Pañcaka) Samādhi Sutta** (A 5.27) [3.5.2.1].

3.5.4.2 Here are brief notes summarized from **the Vibhaṅga Commentary** regarding each of these 5 knowledges:

Zest-suffusing. (In terms of dhyana-factors,)¹⁰⁸ this samadhi refers to 2 dhyanas, that is, the 1st and the 2nd dhyanas.

Joy-suffusing. This samadhi refers to 3 dhyanas (that is, the first 3 dhyanas).

Mind-suffusing. This samadhi refers to the ability to pervade the minds of others (that is, to read minds).

Light-suffusing. This samadhi suffuses light and brings about the divine eye (to see into one's past lives).¹⁰⁹

The characteristic of reviewing. This samadhi is the review knowledge (of an arhat).

“This samadhi is peaceful and subtle, has gained a total tranquillization, attained unification, and is **neither leaning forward nor bending backward, neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort.**” (Vbh 334,15) [3.5.2 nn(4)]

¹⁰⁷ The last sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, said to be taught by Sāriputta to 500 monks at the Gaggara lotus pond in Campā, in the presence of the Buddha (D 3:272).

¹⁰⁸ On the dhyana-factors (*jhān'aṅga*), see SD 8.4 (6.0.2).

¹⁰⁹ On the divine eye (*dubba,cakkhu*), see **Pacalā S** (A 7.58,1.2), SD 4.11.

3.5.4.3 SUMMARY. In the **Sakalika Sutta** (S 1.38)—the present context—the expression seems to qualify *cittaṃ*, “mind,” though the mind has these qualities by virtue of the samādhi in which it is absorbed. In the **(Navaka) Ānanda Sutta** (A 9.37) and elsewhere, the phrase clearly qualifies the samādhi. The full formula then describes a samadhi called *añña,phala*, “the fruit of final knowledge” or “having final knowledge as the fruit.” (SD 55.19)¹¹⁰

4 An academic analysis of the *sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vata* compound

4.1 WORDS AND THEIR INTENTIONS

4.1.1 Scholars and translators have been baffled by the phrase ***sa,saṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vata*** since the earliest days of modern sutta studies. This is complicated by the variant readings in the Pali canons of the major traditions, that is, the Burmese (Be), the Sinhalese (Ce), the Khmer or Cambodian (Ke), the Siamese (Se), and the PTS (Ee). Most scholars would accept the reading as stated above, but the Be reading of *-gata* instead of *-vata* can raise issues.

The meaning of this interesting phrase is clear enough: that it is concentrated by the samadhi of fruition (***na ca sasaṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,gataṃ ti na sa,saṅkhārena sappayogena kilese niggāhetvā varita,vataṃ; kilesānaṃ pana chinnattā vataṃ, phala,samadhina samahitaṃ ti attho***, SA:Be 1:76) [3.4.1]. Note that although this Burmese Commentary reads *-gataṃ* as the final component of the famous compound, in its explanation it twice uses the helpful word *vataṃ*, once as *vārita,vataṃ* and once as *vataṃ*.

This important observation shows that despite the difference in the reading of the compound’s final component, the consensus seems to accept the reading *-vataṃ*. Such learned nitpicking tends to be left in the texts and books, or when scholars mention the compound before a respectful audience. Besides this point of studying Pali texts, there is a keener point in Pali studies: What is the point of this nitpicking? It should be noted that the suttas delight in highlighting the fact that since the Buddha is already fully awakened, he is *naturally* equanimous towards all states, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

4.1.2 The Subcommentary (*ṭīkā*) (Burmese edition) of the Saṃyutta Commentary explains the meaning of the above compound, thus:

This (samadhi) is not realized, not fixed, with effort or by strategic means, by way of abandoning a particular aspect or by way of abandoning through suppression as in the mundane-dhyana mind or insight, but rather because the defilements have been completely cut off.

Lokiya-j,jhāna,cittaṃ viya vipassanā viya ca sasaṅkhārena sappayogena tad-aṅga-p,pahāna-vikkhambhana-p,pahāna,vasena ca vikkhambhetvā na adhigataṃ na ṭhapitaṃ, kiñcarahi kilesānaṃ sabbaso chinnattāya. (SAT:Be 1:115)

4.2 GRAMMAR AND EXPERIENCE

4.2.1 Commentaries and Subcommentaries

4.2.1.1 Grammar explains how words work in terms of time and action, and guides how we should understand the words and sentences. They are like the books we read and talk about. We do not just read a book to understand the words but more so to “enjoy” the book as a whole. This is about the same when we study suttas to begin with and on a basic level. Then, we examine the sutta contents closely for stilling

¹¹⁰ A 9.37/4:428,9-10 + (SD 55.19 (1.1.2.2)). Comy: AA 4:17-19.

our body and clearing up the mind. Like great literature, sutta teachings relate to our life and, more so, how we should live it and have the true purpose of living it, that is, to gain the path of awakening.

There is no way that we can see this on the basis of grammar and words alone. For example, each time we try to resolve the compound into its elements, it gives rise to its own special problems. Often the Commentaries and Subcommentaries offer conflicting explanations, eg, SA 1:80,25-28, DA 3:1060,11-13 and VbhA 421,13-15 take *niggayha* to be absolutive (*niggahetvā*) and turn *vārita* into the absolutive *varetvā*; their respective Subcommentaries, DAṬ 3:284,24-27 (Be) and VbhMṬ 205,16-18 (Be), take *niggayha* as the gerundive *niggahetabba* and *vārita* as the gerundive *vāretabba*. Since *niggayha* occurs elsewhere clearly as an absolutive (eg, at M 3:118,4, as here, without a direct object), while there seem to be no instances in canonical Pali of the word occurring as a gerundive, one may reason that the Commentaries are more likely to be right.

4.2.1.2 Then, a philologist may argue that this interpretation is questionable since there is no other known instance in Pali of an absolutive occurring as the second member of a compound. This is supposing that we have the *complete* Pali canon. The sad reality is that we have decades of missing teachings and suttas of the Buddha's 45-year ministry. Anyway, the point remains that we *do* now have the possibility of such a workable reconstruction here.

An idiomatic translation of the sentence would be “**See the samadhi well cultivated and the mind well freed—neither leaning forward nor bending back, neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort!**” As we have earlier noted, readings of the last part of the compound vary among the different traditions: generally, *vārita,vata* prevails in the Sinhalese tradition, and *vārita,gata* in the Burmese¹¹¹ [3.4.1]. Thus far the passages have spoken for themselves, it is now for us to make sense of them from our own experience and vision of the Dharma.

4.2.2 Comparison of textual sources

4.2.2.1 Scholars dealing with early Buddhist texts and their later versions admit that the Pali compound, *na ca sasāṅkhāra,niggayha,vārita,vata*, is extremely difficult and the exact reading uncertain. One of the difficulties is that the Pali compound (and its text) either do not fully agree or do not exist in the Sanskrit versions.

The “right samadhi with the fivefold knowledge” (*pañca,ñāṇika sammā,samādhi*), for example, is listed in the late canonical **Das'uttara Sutta** (D 34) [3.5.3], of which we have at least 3 other versions, that is, Dharmaguptaka (Chinese = Chin1), the Sarvāstivāda (Chinese = Chin2), and the Sarvāstivāda (Sanskrit = Skt).¹¹² They make interesting comparisons, but due to sectarian differences, they do not all agree with the Pali version or with one another.

4.2.2.2 The Pali phrase does not seem to have a Sanskrit form [2.9.2.1]. The Central Asian Sanskrit MS corresponding to **D 34,1.6(8d)**¹¹³ [3.5.3], that is, the Sanskrit Daśottara Sūtra, only reads: *punaḥ khalu*

¹¹¹ For an interesting scholarly discussion, see S:B 372 f.

¹¹² The Daśottara Sūtra versions are, respectively, **Chin1**: 十上經 *shí shàng jīng*, DĀ 10 (T1 @ T1.52c17-57b24); **Chin2**: 長阿含十報法經 *cháng āhán shí bào fǎ jīng* (T13.1.233b25-241c20), tr An Shigao [NTI] [cbc]; **Skt**: 1st Dīrgha Āgama sūtra of the Sarvāstivāda, found in the northern route of the Silk Road by the German Turfan expedition, ed K Mittal, *Dogmatische Begriffsreihen im älteren Buddhismus, I, Fragmente des Dasottarasūtra aus zentralasiatischen Sanskrit-Handschriften*, Berlin, 1957 [SuttaCentral]. For the list of sources, see S Karashima, *The Sarvastivadins' "Encroachment" into the Chinese Translation of the Daśottara-sutra in the Dirgha-agama of the Dharmaguptakas*, Tokyo, 2014:200 f.

¹¹³ Waldschmidt, *Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden IV*, p70, V.8 (3).

samādhiṃ smṛta eva samāpatsyāmi smṛta eva vyutthāsyāmīty evam asya pañcamam, “Moreover, mindfully I enter samadhi, mindfully I emerge from samadhi—thus is the 5th (knowledge).”

Despite the omission of the phrase from the Sanskrit Daśottara Sūtra, there is a hint that another Sanskrit work, **the Śrāvakabhūmi** (p444,19-21), is aware of the term, since it has a passage that reads *saṃskārābhiniḡrhitam me cittam vārivad¹¹⁴ dhṛtam*, “My (defiled) mind is overcome with the effort of restraint and held in check.”¹¹⁵ The Sanskrit *abhiniḡrhitam* (abhi + ni √GRAH, “to seize”) is the participle of (Skt) *abhigrṇhati*, “to overcome, overpower,” of which the Pali is *abhigaṇhāti*. These 3 words all have the same root, √GRAH, “to seize” [3.4.4].

The Śrāvakabhūmi and the D 34 terms are talking about the same thing in practically the same way. This is not surprising because the Śrāvakabhūmi (“the stages of the disciple”) is explaining the nature of those who attain the path.¹¹⁶ These works are still describing the mind of the arhat (like that of the Buddha), a mind that is already freed and so does not need to make any effort to push away lust, hatred and delusion since he has destroyed their roots.

Our task here is to examine the context of *niggayha* (or any Pali word) to bring out the idea or experience intended by the text. Although a careful grammatical analysis may seem to give us some technical accuracy of how words are used, it is our own Dharma practice and understanding that will ultimately make proper sense of the passage. Our task is thus not to stop with what the philologists and grammarians have concluded about a passage. They mark interesting beginnings for us to carefully examine and reflect on what that passage means to us as practitioners.

4.2.3 The 4 analytic skills plus 1

4.2.3.1 The (Catukka) Paṭisambhida Sutta (A 4.172) records the arhat Sāriputta as declaring how he has attained the 4 analytic skills (*paṭisambhidā*)—those in *meanings, teachings, language and ready wit*¹¹⁷— and in time, the Buddha declares him to be the foremost of his monk disciples with great wisdom.¹¹⁸ Apparently, most, if not all, of the early arhats (such as the 80 great elders)¹¹⁹ have the 4 analytic skills (*paṭisambhidā*).

However, it is **the Patisambhida, patta Sutta** (A 5.86) that describes Sāriputta’s special qualities as an elder monk. Although Sāriputta is not named in the Sutta, it is clear that he possesses these 5 qualities:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| (1) the analytic skill in meanings, | <i>attha paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (2) the analytic skill in teachings [truths], | <i>dhamma, paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (3) the analytic skill in language, | <i>nirutti, paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (4) the analytic skill in ready wit, and | <i>paṭibhāṇa, paṭisambhidā</i> |
| (5) being skillful and diligent in attending to
the various chores of his fellow monks,
and possessing sound judgement in order to | |

¹¹⁴ *Vārivad* may be read as a Skt abridged form of *vārivata* before the word *dhṛtam* by way of sandhi.

¹¹⁵ **Śrāvakabhūmi** of Asaṅga (ed L Sukla, Patna, 1973), digital ed A Shakya 2008:444,19-21. [Gretil] 18 May 24.

¹¹⁶ **Śrāvakabhūmi** is Bk 13 of the encyclopaedic *Yogācārabhūmi* attr Asaṅga (300-370), a Sarvāstivāda monk before he turned to Mahāyāna. His brother Vasubandhu also turned to Mahāyāna.

¹¹⁷ A 4.173/2:160 (SD 28.4(4.5)). For a detailed study on *paṭisambhidā*, see SD 28.4 (4).

¹¹⁸ A 1.189/1:24. Dhammapāla attr **Sāriputta** with these fivefold “disciple’s perfections” (*sāvaka, pāramī*): one accomplished in the perfections, one accomplished in the analytic insights, one with the 6 superknowledges, one with the 3 knowledges, the pure-insight meditator (*pārami-p, pattā paṭisambhidā-p, patta cha-/-abhiññā tevijjā, sukkha, vipassaka*) (ThaA 3:208,30-34, 209,9+21 f), On Sāriputta’s life, see Nyanaponika & Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 2003:ch 1.

¹¹⁹ *Asīti mahā,thera*: SD 15.10a (7).

carry them out and arrange them properly.¹²⁰

(A 5.86/3:113)

4.2.3.2 The implications of this teaching are twofold. The first is regarding the value of philological scholarship. **Philology** is the science and art of bringing dead symbols, words and sounds to life. Technically, it is the branch of knowledge that deals with the structure, history and relationships of a language or languages, both in oral and written historical sources. The second implication of the above teaching [4.2.3.1] is that such a learning can enrich our minds and culture for a better understanding of the early Buddhist texts for the happiness of the many here and now, and for future happiness.¹²¹

Pali Philology helps us appreciate the wealth of the language of the early Buddhist texts (EBT) so that we can better understand how Pali preserves and presents the Buddha’s teachings of awakening as he had intended and how they benefitted the early arhats. With a philological appreciation of the Pali texts, we can better master the Buddha’s teachings for the purpose of cultivating our body and mind for spiritual liberation. Thus, we should not merely master the texts and teaching, but we must personally and skillfully minister Dharma-wise to our fellow practitioners—just as the arhat Sāriputta had done.

5 The Vedas: 3, 4 and 5

5.0 PAÑCA, VEDĀ ... BRĀHMAṆĀ (S 125AB)

The (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta (S 1.38) mentions “brahmins learned in the 5 Vedas” (*pañca, vedā brahmaṇā*), a *hapax legomenon*, occurring only here in S 1.38. This is a broad outline of the Vedas. To only read the discussion of the “5 Vedas,” see [5.3].

5.1 THE 3 VEDAS¹²²

5.1.1 The Vedas of the brahmins

5.1.1.1 The Vedas (from VID, to know) are a large body of religious texts originating in ancient India. Composed in their own sacred language, known as Vedic Sanskrit, these texts form the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature, and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.¹²³ They are characterized by speculations about life, the universe and beyond, and a quest for religious understanding, rather than a system of doctrines and practices with any clear goal attainable by everyone. It is at best a miscellany of private and limited quests of self-born questions seeking answers in some idea of external agency or reality, which lead to more questions and speculations. The idea seems to be to celebrate faith, and that any answer or knowledge should further service faith.

The Vedas are characterized by the courage of speculation, as evident from these excerpts from the Nāsadiya Śūkta (Ṛgveda Maṇḍala 10, hymn 129):

6 ko addhā veda ka iha pra vocat kuta ājātā kuta iyaṃ viṣṛṣṭiḥ |
arvāg devā asya viśarjanenāthā ko veda yata ābabhūva ||

Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it born? Whence this creation?

¹²⁰ On Sāriputta’s active compassion, see SD 11.11 (3).

¹²¹ For an overview, see K R Norman, “Pāli philology and the study of Buddhism,” London, 1990. [[Download](#)]

¹²² Based on R N Dandekar, “Vedas” (1987), (ed Jones,) *Ency of Religion*, 2nd ed, Macmillan Ref, 2005:9543-9552.

¹²³ (edd) Radhakrishnan & Moore, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, Princeton, 1957:3; Witzel, “Vedas & Upanishads,” in (ed) G Flood, *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, 2003:68; A A Macdonell, *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, 2004:29-39; “Sanskrit literature,” *Philips’ Encyclopedia*, London: Octopus, 2003; Sanujit Ghose, “Religious developments in ancient India,” (ed A J Andrea,) *World History Encyclopedia*, [online](#), 2011.

The gods came after the world's birth. Who then knows whence it arose?

7 *iyam̐ viśṛṣṭir yata ābabhūva yadi vā dadhe yadi vā na |*
yo asyādhyakṣaḥ parame vyomant so aṅga veda yadi vā na veda ||

Whence has this creation arisen—perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not.

Who looks upon it from highest heaven, surely he knows—or perhaps he knows not.

5.1.1.2 The literary history of the Vedas is usually divided into four periods: the Saṁhitā (“compilation”) period (c 2000-1100 BCE), the Brāhmaṇā Āraṇyaka period (c 1100-800 BCE), the Upanisādic period (c 800-500 BCE), and the Sūtra-Vedāṅga period (c 500 BCE onward). These are four chronological periods unified by a thread of logical development running through them. Yet only the literature of the first three periods is traditionally regarded as “non-human” (*apauruṣeyā*), that is, divinely inspired. In particular, three collections of texts from the Saṁhitā period are commonly referred to as **the three Vedas** (*trayi*), that is, the Ṛgveda Saṁhitā, the Sāmaveda Saṁhitā and the Yajurveda Saṁhitā.

The Ṛgveda (RV) that has come down to the present is that of the Śākala branch (*śākhā*) recension. It consists of 1,028 hymns (*sūkta*) made up of varying numbers of metrical verses (mantra), more commonly called *ṛk*, “verses of praise,” from which we get the word *rg.veda*. The hymns are assembled in ten different books (*maṇḍala*) whose formation is determined mainly by the authorship.

Among the classes of the Vedic Aryans, a few families had already acquired some measure of socio-religious prestige. The mantras or hymns, which were traditionally believed to have been “seen” by the progenitor and other members of a particular family, were collected together to form the book of that family. The nucleus of the Ṛgveda is formed of six such family books, which are numbered from two to seven and which are ascribed respectively to the families of Gṛtsamada, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Atri, Bharadvāja, and Vasiṣṭha.

The bulk of the Ṛgveda consists of mythology and the panegyrics and prayers that may depend on that mythology. One may speak of three main phases of the evolution of the Rgvedic mythology: the phase represented by Ṛta-Varuṇa, Agni, and Soma; the phase represented by Indra and other heroic gods; and the phase represented by the admission into the Vedic pantheon of popular Aryan divinities (eg, Viṣṇu) and pre-Vedic non-Aryan divinities (eg, Rudra).

The exclusively naturalistic, or ritualistic, or mystic interpretation of Vedic mythology is now generally ignored or devalued, and an evolutionary approach is increasingly favored. Apart from mythology, the Ṛgveda also contains a few hymns of sociohistorical and philosophical purport. Hindu pietism today also tends to imagine the Vedas as presenting a “scientific” canon, even the “basis for science.”¹²⁴

5.1.1.3 Strictly speaking, there is only one Veda, the Ṛgveda, and the other Vedas are simply re-arrangements of the Ṛgveda verses used in their own way. The Sāmaveda and the Yajurveda are essentially liturgical collections and conceptually mark the transition from the Saṁhitā period to the Brāhmaṇa period. **The Sāmaveda Saṁhitā** (SV) is a collection of mantras to be chanted at the various **soma** sacrifices¹²⁵ by the *udgātṛ* priest and/or his assistants.

¹²⁴ See eg <https://vedicheritage.gov.in/science/>.

¹²⁵ *Soma* orig referred to the “pressed juice,” an essential libation in all early Vedic sacrifices. The entire 9th *maṇḍala* (book) of Ṛgveda is dedicated to *soma*. It is esp assoc with Indra; Ṛgveda 9.85.3 recognises it as Indra’s soul. Soma is prob made from ephedra or Amanita muscaria (fly agaric), taken by the brahmins, giving them hallucinogenic visions, interpreted as the divine. It was said to inspire the sacred hymns of their divine quality (RV 10.76.4). Soma, as a festival celebrated on the bright and dark fortnights, was the precedent of the Buddhist *uposatha*, see SD 4.18 (1.1.2). See M & J Stutley, *A Dictionary of Hinduism*, Routledge, 1977, 2019:282-285. J P Brereton, (ed L Jones,) *Ency of Religion*, 2nd ed “Soma,” 2005:8521 f.

The name Sāmaveda is, however, a misnomer; it is not a collection of *samans* or chants, but rather a collection of verses, mostly derived from the R̥gveda, for the purpose of forming the basis of proper *sāmans* (*sāmayoni* mantras). Out of the traditionally mentioned thirteen *sākhā* (branches) of the Sāmaveda, only three are known today: the Kauthuma, the Rāṇāyaniya, and the Jaiminiya or Talavakāra.

Whereas the Sāmaveda concerns itself exclusively with just one feature of the soma sacrifice, **the Yajurveda** (YV) treats the entire sacrificial system. Indeed, the Yajurveda may be regarded as the first regular textbook on the Vedic ritual as a whole. It deals mainly with the duties of the *adhvaryu*, the priest responsible for the actual performance of the various sacrificial rites.¹²⁶ There are two major recensions of the Yajurveda, the Kṛṣṇa (“black”) Yajurveda and the Śukla (“white”) Yajurveda.

The difference between them lies not so much in their contents as in their arrangement. In the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, the mantras and the *yajus* (sacrificial formulas in prose) and their ritualistic explanation and discussion (called *brāhmaṇa*) are mixed together. Thus, in its form and content the Saṃhitā of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda is not particularly distinguishable from the Brāhmaṇa or the Āraṇyaka of that Veda. In contrast, the Śukla Yajurveda contains only the mantras and the *yajus*, the corresponding ritualistic explanation and discussion being reserved for the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that belongs to that Veda.

5.1.2 *Te, vijjā* as the three Vedas (in the suttas)

5.1.2.1 The Chāndogya Upaniṣad¹²⁷ speaks of the threefold knowledge, interpreted as the three Vedas, with the term *trayi vidyā* (ChU 1.1.9), the parallel of the Pali *te, vijjā*, the Buddha’s rejection of the textualism, ritualism and superstition of the Vedas and the worldliness of the Vedic brahmins. The Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad mentions the three by name and also calls them *trayi vidyā* (KauU 2.6). The Muṇḍaka too only refers to a triad, *trayi vidyā* (MuU 1.2.1).¹²⁸ [5.2.1.2]

From the earliest times up to the Buddha’s time at least, only the “3 Vedas” were regarded as a sacred canon that was worth the study and practice of devotees. The Atharvaveda, because of its worldly concerns was never regarded as a Veda, until after the Buddha’s time. Hence, it should be understood that the Atharvaveda was in existence during the Buddha’s time but rarely mentioned in the suttas. Due to its magical and secular, even worldly, nature, it was never associated with the other Vedas, which were widely known as **the 3 Vedas** even in the Buddha’s time.

The Gahaṭṭha Vandanā Sutta (S 11.18) records Sakra, lord of the heaven of the 33, when asked by his charioteer, Mātali, whom Sakra worships, Sakra replies thus:

Those versed in <u>the three Vedas</u> (<i>te, vijjā</i>), and the Four Great Kings,	they all bow in worship to me, and kings, too, and the glorious Thirty.	S 921
But I worship those attained in virtue, those who are rightly gone forth	those who long delight in concentration, in the holy life for crossing over.	S 922
The merit-making householders, who support a wife in Dharma—	morally virtuous layfolk, I worship them, too, Mātali.	S 923

(S 11.18/1:235), SD 86.2

¹²⁶ For the 4 kinds of Vedic priests—*hotṛ*, *advaryu*, *udgātṛ* and *brahman*—see SD 22.7 (1).

¹²⁷ Composed 8th-6th cent BCE, it is one of the oldest Upaniṣads (forest commentaries), a Skt text embedded in the Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa of the Sāmaveda of Hinduism. Listed as No 9 in the Mukṭika canon of 108 Upaniṣads (P Deussen, *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda* [1897 German], tr Bedekar & Palsule, vol 2, Delhi, 1987 reprs).

¹²⁸ Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa 3.12.9.1 & Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 5.32 f mentions only 3 Vedas; L L Patton, *Authority, Anxiety, and Canon: Essays in Vedic interpretation*, SUNY Press, 1994:57 n24.

These verses are very interesting, especially the first, since it presents Indra—called Sakka (Skt *śakra*; anglicized as Sakra)¹²⁹ in the Buddhist texts—the most popular of the Vedic gods, the god of war and the weather, with 289 hymns in his honour. The Buddha converted Indra who became a streamwinner (*sotāpanna*),¹³⁰ and from being the Vedic god “who destroyed strongholds”¹³¹ (*purandara*) he becomes “one who gives to cities (*pura*), or who gives in full (generously) (*pura*)” (*purindada*).

The Buddha also converted Brahmā, the Vedic creator God, the first of the Hindu trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Brahmā progressed further spiritually than Sakra and became a non-returner (*anāgāmi*) as a disciple of the past buddha, Kassapa, was a close friend of Gotama Buddha during that time and who brought Jotika (Gotama in that birth) to see Kassapa Buddha under whom he became a monk.¹³² In due course, Brahmā understandably became one of the least popular of the Vedic gods.¹³³

5.1.2.2 The suttas contain this **three-Veda pericope**, describing a brahmin or his pupil or brahmin youth (*māṇava*), thus:

<i>ajjhāyako</i> ¹³⁴ <i>manta,dharo</i>	a mantra-reciter, ¹³⁵ a mantra-expert,
<i>tiṅṅaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū</i>	an expert in the Three Vedas,
<i>sa,nighaṇḍu,keṭubhānaṃ</i>	along with their vocabulary and rituals,
<i>sākkhara-p,pabhedānaṃ</i>	phonology and etymology,
<i>iti,hāsa,pañcamānaṃ</i>	and the Iti,hāsa Purāṇas ¹³⁶ as the fifth;
<i>padako veyyākaraṇo</i>	learned in the Vedic padas, ¹³⁷ grammarian, ¹³⁸
<i>lokāyata,-</i>	and well versed in nature-lore [Lokāyata] ¹³⁹
<i>mahā.purisa,lakkaṇesu anavayo</i>	and (well-versed) in the marks of the great man ¹⁴⁰

This three-Veda pericope is found in the following suttas (as some examples):

Ambaṭṭha Sutta	D 3,1.3/1:88	SD 21.3
Soṇa,daṇḍa Sutta	D 4,5(3)/1:114	SD 50.5
Kūṭa,danta Sutta	D 5,6(3)/1:130	SD 22.8
Ti,kaṇṇa Sutta	A 3.58,1/1:163	SD 94.5
(Tika) Jāṇussoṇī Sutta	A 3.59,1/1:166	SD 80.16

¹²⁹ On Sakra, see SD 15.13 (2). On Sakra as Indra, see SD 54.22 (4.1).

¹³⁰ SD 54.8 (1.2.4).

¹³¹ See S:B 496 n637.

¹³² See **Ghaṭikāra S** (M 81) + SD 49.3 (4.2.1).

¹³³ SD 49.8b (9.2.2.3).

¹³⁴ *Ajjhāyaka* (Skt *ādhyāyika*, *adhyāyin*), in the Buddha’s time, refers to a Vedic student or scholar, one skilled in reciting the Vedas, a brahminical teacher. **Aggañña S** (D 27) plays a humorous pun on its etym: *na ... jhāyanti*, “they do not meditate,” hence, they are called *ajjhāyaka*, ie non-meditators (D 27,23/3:94, SD 2.19).

¹³⁵ Here *mantra* refers to specific Vedic hymns or sacrificial formulae.

¹³⁶ Iti,hāsa Purāṇas are the oral tradition of brahminical legends of kings and sages.

¹³⁷ *Padako veyyākaraṇo*, ie, well versed in the *pada,pāṭha* of Sanskrit grammar. Technically, this refers to the *pada* (or literal, word for word) method of reciting (or writing) Veda sentences, ie, “a method of arranging each word of a Vedic text separately in its original form [cf *pada*] without regard to the rules of [sandhi]; cf *krama-* and *samhitā-pāṭha*.” (SED). By itself, *pada* can here be translated as “word or word structure.”

¹³⁸ On *veyyākaraṇa*, see BHSD: sv vyākaraṇa, = vaiyākaraṇa (p517).

¹³⁹ *Lokāyata*. This seems to be the early meaning of the term. Its reference of the materialistic philosophy of Cār-vāka is apparently later: see Rhys Davids, D:RD 1:166-172. See **Lokāyatikā Brāhmaṇā S** (A 9.38/4:428-432), 35.15. See also Jayatilleke 1963:48-58 (§§55-67).

¹⁴⁰ See Intro (2.2.1).

Doṇa Brāhmaṇa Sutta A 5.192,2.4+6/3:223 f SD 36.14

5.1.2.3 The Majjhima “three-Veda pericope” which omits the phrase, “a mantra-reciter, a mantra-expert” (*ajjhāyako manta,dharo*), occurs in the following suttas among others:

Brahm’āyu Sutta	M 91,2/2:133 f	SD 63.8	an aged brahmin.
Sela Sutta	M 92 = Sn 3.7/p105	SD 45.7a	[SD 61a (2.5.7)]
Assalāyana Sutta	M 93,3/2:147	SD 40a.2	a 16-year-old brahmin youth.
(Majjhima) Saṅgārava Sutta	M 100,3/2:210	SD 10.9.	

In the **(Mahā Kaccāna) Lohicca Sutta** (S 35.132), the brahmin Lohicca is said to be studying “the three Vedas” (*tayo veda*) and also “hymns, vows and rituals, austerities” (*manta sīla-b,batam tapo*).¹⁴¹

In the **Pārāyaṇa Vagga, Vatthu,gāthā** (Sn 5.1), the narrator speaks of the 120-year-old Bāvāri as a “brahmin master of the hymns” (*brahmana manta,pāragū*), where *mantra* refers to the Vedas, of which he is said to have mastered (*tiṇṇam vedāna pāragū*, Sn 1019). His 16 pupils (*māṇava*) are also said to “have mastered the hymns” (*sisse brāhmaṇe manta,pāragū*, Sn 997). Similar descriptions are found in the canonical commentary on the **Puṇṇaka Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.4) in the **Cūḷa Niddesa** (Nc:Be 56).

The phrase, “expert in the Three Vedas” (*tiṇṇam vedāna pāragu*), is found in the **Mahā Moggallāna Thera,gāthā** (Tha 1171, *ajjhāyako pi ce assa tiṇṇam vedāna pāragū*) and later works such as the **Milinda,-pañha** [5.2.1.4] and the Sanskrit work, **Divyāvadāna** (Miln 10; Divy 619.20, 620.19).

5.1.2.4 As evident from the **Sela Sutta** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), the Buddha is very familiar with the Vedas. At the end of the matted hair ascetic Keṇiya’s meal offering, the Buddha, in his thanksgiving, recited these beautiful verses. There is a rich wordplay on **mukha** which has the common sense (denotation) of “foremost, chief” but enriches the verse with its specific connotation (underscored) in each translated line, thus:

<i>aggi,hutta,mukhā yaññā sāvittī chandaso mukham rājā mukham manussānam nadīnam sāgaro mukham</i>	A burnt offering is <u>the glory</u> of sacrifices, Sāvitrī is <u>the mouth</u> of Vedic metres; ¹⁴² amongst humans the king is <u>the foremost</u> ; the sea is <u>the face</u> of rivers.	Sn 568
<i>nakkhattānam mukham cando ādicco tapataṃ mukham puññaṃ ākaṅkhamānānam saṅgho ve yajataṃ mukhan ti</i>	The moon is <u>the face</u> of the stars; the sun <u>the foremost</u> of those that shine. Merit is <u>the best</u> for those who aspire, ¹⁴³ the sangha truly <u>the glory</u> of those who give.	Sn 569

(M 92/2:146) = (Sn 569/3.7/p105), SD 45.7

The Buddha uses religious language familiar to Keṇiya as a cognitive bridge to show how his wise faith connects him with Buddhist Dharma. While the fire offering is the physical act unifying all brahmins in

¹⁴¹ S 35.132,4 (4) (SD 60.5).

¹⁴² *Chandas* is one of the 6 Vedaṅgas (Vedic limbs), the auxiliary branches of knowledge to facilitate the use of the Vedas. Chandas was concerned with the study of metrical forms and verse, which were central to the composition of the Vedas. One indication of the importance of metre is that in many sources (such as in Panini’s grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*) the word *chandas* designates the Vedas themselves. Aside from *chandas*, the other Vedaṅgas are *śikṣā* (correct pronunciation), *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *kalpa* (ritual instructions), *nirukta* (etymology), and *jyotiṣa* (auspicious times for sacrifices). Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Ency of Hinduism*, NY: Rosen, 2002 1:140.

¹⁴³ Sn 569cd, alt tr: “For those who give desiring merit, the sangha is best.”

terms of their birth, the recitation of the Sāvitrī links other twice-born (that is, excluding the “fifth” caste or the outcasts) to Vedic faith.

The Sāvitrī (RV 3.62.10) is personified as the goddess Gāyatrī, a manifestation of knowledge (Sarasvati) and the sun (*sāvitrī*).¹⁴⁴ While Sāvitrī is the name of the first of the 14 Vedic metres, **the Gāyatrī** is the prime Vedic mantra of 3 lines with 8 syllables each (totalling 24 syllables).¹⁴⁵

The above verses (Sn 568 f) are in *anuṣṭubh śloka* (the 3rd of the 14 Vedic metres), an ancient and popular verse form. The *anuṣṭubh* (P *anuṭṭhubha*) has 4 lines (a quatrain) of 8 syllables each, totalling 32 syllables. Another well known metre is the *triṣṭubh* (P *tuṭṭhubha*), which has 4 feet of 11 syllables each (totalling 44 syllables).¹⁴⁶

5.1.2.5 The most famous example of the Gāyatrī is the ***ti,saraṇa,gamana*** or 3-refuge formula:

buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi | dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi | saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
“I go to the Buddha (Gotama) ... the Dharma (teaching and truth) ... the (noble) sangha as refuge” —

which the Buddha calls “**the Sāvitrī of the noble ones**” (*ariya,sāvitṛī*) (Sn 457; SnA 403,29).¹⁴⁷ Notice the 3 lines of 8 syllables each.

Note that in Sn 569c, the Buddha mentions “merits” (*puñña*), another familiar belief of the brahmins and their followers. For others who have wiser faith in the Dhamma, the Buddha would exhort them to take up the cultivation of the “wholesome or skillful” (*kusala*). While the *puñña* approach is based on moral conduct and giving, the *kusala* approach goes further, with more stress on mental cultivation.

In the last line (Sn 569d), the Buddha speaks of giving to the sangha, that is, the Vinaya-based renunciants who are worthy of such giving, and by their moral virtue bring great karmic fruit for the giver. On a higher level, this 3rd refuge means that we will aspire to reach the path of awakening in this life itself. With this beautiful verse, the Buddha celebrates with Keṇiya and the assembly the consummate beauty of the Buddha Dhamma that will lead them to the path of awakening.

5.1.3 Te,vijja as the arhat’s threefold knowledge

5.1.3.1 The important adjective, ***te,vijjā*** (*ti,vijjā*;¹⁴⁸ Skt *tri,vidyā*¹⁴⁹), is used by the Buddha, naturally adapted, to refer to “one with the 3 true knowledges (of the arhat).” The best known locus of this term in **the Te,vijja Sutta** (D 13), where the Buddha skillfully uses the term *te,vijja* to displace and debunk the brahminical three Vedas. **The 3 knowledges** of the arhat are as follows:¹⁵⁰

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| (1) the superknowledge of one’s own past lives | <i>pubbe.nivāsānussati,ñāṇa</i> |
| (2) the superknowledge of the karmic past of others (the divine eye) | <i>cutūpapāta,ñāṇa (dibba,cakkhu)</i> |
| (3) the direct knowledge of one’s destruction of the influxes [2.2.5.4] | <i>āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa</i> |
- (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)

¹⁴⁴ C A Jones & J D Ryan, *Ency of Hinduism*, Infobase, 2005:167. R Dalal, *Religions of India: A concise guide to nine major faiths*, Penguin India, 2010:328.

¹⁴⁵ For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gayatri_Mantra.

¹⁴⁶ See A K Warder, *Pali Metre*, PTS, 1967:172-201 (ch 7 the Vatta), 202-212 (ch 8 the Tuṭṭhubha); Peter M Scharf, “Linguistics in India,” in (edd) P Scharf & K Allen, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics*, OUP, 2013:227-235.

¹⁴⁷ See Sn 457 & n in **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 3.4), SD 22.2.

¹⁴⁸ See **Te,vijja S** (SD 1.8 (2.2)); **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27,23-25), SD 40.5.

¹⁴⁹ Cf *trayi,vidya* or *trayī,vidyā* (Pāṇini 4.1.8, Pat).

¹⁵⁰ On the 3 knowledges and the 4 influxes, see SD 5.11 (3.2.2.3).

The Te,vijja Sutta does not mention any of the 3 knowledges in the sense of the arhat's superknowledges (*abhiññā*) since the Sutta focuses on debunking the false views of the brahmins based on the three Vedas. An interesting way to read the Sutta is how the Buddha knocks down the whole Vedic house of cards, the class/caste (*varṇa*, "colour") theology fabricated by the brahmins with which to control the bodies and minds of the masses.¹⁵¹

5.1.3.2 The Buddha rejects Vedic ideology by declaring that the various brahminical families—the Ādhvarika, the Taittirīya, the Chāndogya and the Bahvṛcā—claim to "lead" (*niyyanti*) others down the true path, but they are themselves caught in false views, worldliness and defilements. He unequivocally debunks brahminical theology and ideology with this set of instructive and memorable metaphors:

- (1) **A file of blind men.** Neither the brahmins of the day nor those going back seven generations to the Vedic founding fathers—Aṣṭaka, Vāmaka, Vāma,deva, Viśvā,mitra, Jamad,agni, Aṅgi,rasa, Bhāra,-dvāja, Vāsiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, and Bhagu—**has ever seen Brahmā** [God] at all. They are like the blind leading the blind. (D 13,12-15)
- (2) **The country's belle.** It's as if, merely seeing the sun and the moon traversing the skies, these brahmins of the three Vedas claim they can show the way to companionship but **know nothing about them**. They neither know nor have seen Brahmā. It's like a man claims to love the country's belle but when asked whether he knows her name, her build, her looks or her class, he pleads ignorance of them! (D 13,16-20).
- (3) **The staircase.** Their 3 Vedas and preaching of the way to Brahma is **meaningless and purposeless**. It's like someone had built a staircase to nowhere at a crossroads. When people ask about the mansion the staircase leads to, which direction the mansion will face, or its dimensions, the Vedic brahmins have no answers. (D 13,21-23)
- (4) **The river**
 - (4a) The Vedic brahmins call upon (**their gods**) Soma, or Varuṇa, or Isāna, or Prajāpatī, or Brahmā, or Mahiddhi, or Yama (who do not answer them), and yet these brahmins hope to have companionship with Brahmā after death! They are neglecting their real tasks and duties as brahmins and behave as non-brahmins.
 - (4b) They are like a man, who wishing to cross over the flooded river Aciravatī, sits on its bank and cries out to the far bank, "Come over here, O farther bank, come over here!" So too, the Vedic brahmins cry out to their gods who respond not.
 - (4c) In fact, they are stuck on this bank of the flooded river like a man with his arms tightly bound behind him with a strong chain. (D 13,24-26).
- (5) **Mental hindrances.** The Vedic brahmins are still overwhelmed with **sense-pleasures**. Like a man, who wishing to cross over the flooded river, merely lies down to sleep on this bank, his head covered with a shawl. These brahmins have the 5 mental hindrances—sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt—and are thus unable to meditate, much less attain dhyana. (D 13,27-30)
- (6) **Worldliness.** These Vedic brahmins have **wives** but Brahmā does not. The brahmins have **hate** but Brahmā does not. These brahmins have **ill will** but Brahmā does not. The brahmins have a defiled heart but Brahmā does not. Brahmā has **self-mastery** but the brahmins do not. (D 13,31-33)

¹⁵¹ See M Leppens & J De Roover, "The Brahmin, the Aryan, and the powers of the priestly class: Puzzles in the study of Indian religion," *Religions* 11 181 2020: (19pp). [[mdpi](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050181)] 26 May 2024.

(7) **A spiritual desert.** The Vedic brahmins lack **self-mastery**. Sitting down helplessly on the river-bank, they would sink down into the mire, despairing how to cross the river without getting wet. (D 13,34 f)

“Therefore, these **Three Vedas** are called the three knowledges that are a desert, the three knowledges that are a jungle, the three knowledges that are a disaster!”¹⁵² (D 31,36)

5.1.3.3 The term **te,vijja** (adj), “those with the 3 knowledges”—the knowledges of *rebirth*, of *karma* and *the destruction of the influxes*—refers to the arhat (including the Buddha). **The Puggala Paññatti** defines the 3-knowledge arhat as “an individual accomplished in the 3 knowledges” (*tīhi vijjāhi samannāgato puggalo te,vijjo*, Pug 1.26/14).

Its Commentary adds that there are 2 kinds of such arhats:

- (1) those who gain their knowledge of rebirth and karma first, then attain arhathood, and
- (2) those who attain arhathood first, and then gain their knowledge of rebirth and karma. (PugA 188 f)

The suttas define the 3-knowledge arhat (*te,vijja arahata*) as one who, with calm (*samatha*) as a basis, has attained at least the 4 form dhyanas or more.¹⁵³

The 3 knowledges are those of:¹⁵⁴

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| (1) the recollection of past lives (retrocognition, ie, of rebirth); | <i>pubbe,nivāsānussati ñāṇa</i> |
| (2) the divine eye (clairvoyance, ie, of karma); and | <i>dibba,cakkhu</i> |
| (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes that ends rebirth. | <i>āsava-k,khaya ñāṇa</i> |
- Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33,1.10(58))

5.1.3.4 The term *te,vijja*, “one of the 3 knowledges” [5.1.3.3] referring to the arhat (including the Buddha) occurs in the following suttas:

	Sutta section	possessor (* = of himself)
(Te,vijja) Vaccha,gotta Sutta	M 71 §§6.2-10	the Buddha* SD 53.3.
Vāseṭṭha Sutta	M 98 §13.4	the arhat SD 37.1
Aggika Bhāra,dvāja Sutta	S 7.8 §5.3	the Buddha* SD 22.9 (2.2)
Pavāraṇā Sutta	S 8.7 §8+15	arhats SD 49.11.
Koṇḍañña Sutta	S 8.9 S 748/1:194	Koṇḍañña
(Vaṅgīsa) Moggallāna Sutta	S 8.10 S 749/1:195	Moggallāna
(Arahatta) Vaṅgīsa Sutta	S 8.12 S 757/1:196	Vaṅgīsa*

5.2 THE 4 VEDAS

5.2.1 Ritualizing the “heard”

5.2.1.1 A study of the evolution of the Vedas is an instructive insight into how we invent religion by surrendering ourselves to some kind of higher being or state. In the case of the Vedas (as in any religion that is priest-centred, faith-rooted or power-based), it is being inspired, or at least being convinced that

¹⁵² The parables—a desert (*īriṇa*) ... a jungle (*vipina*) ... disaster (*vyasana*)—appear to be a play on the words *Iru-b, beda* (the Pali word for Rgveda, but a late term) and *veda*.

¹⁵³ **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4,23-33/1:21-23), SD 44.3; **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73,18-26/1:494-496), SD 27.4.

¹⁵⁴ On the 3 knowledges, see SD 1.8 (2.2). For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

something higher is speaking to us. This is an “impersonal” (*apauruṣheya*) voice that seers (*rṣī*) hear within themselves (*adhyātma*), inspiring them with knowledge beyond their (and our) understanding.

The three Vedas [5.1.1] are regarded as “the heard,” *śruti* (P *suti*, *suta*), contrasted with other teachings or stories that we are told, that is, what we have heard (second hand or third hand) from others and “remembered” (*smṛti*; P *sati*). The heard includes accounts of great heroes and their struggles in works such as the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and pietist polemics such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* (5th-2nd century BCE). The last-named is perhaps the Hindus’ most successful polemical work against Buddhism.¹⁵⁵

5.2.1.2 The Atharveda—like the three Vedas, it is said—comprises texts that have been “heard” by seers (*rṣī*). Even though they existed alongside the three Vedas even during the Buddha’s time, they were not accepted as the “fourth Veda.” Even in the Brahmānand Valli or Ānand Valli (2nd chapter of the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*) “three Vedas” are mentioned, and in Vyasa’s *Bhagavad Gītā* (ch 9, śloka 21), Krishna speaks of the “three Vedas”!

Alongside the formal designations Rgveda, Yajurveda, and Samaveda as the “three Vedas,” sometimes the terms *Atharv-aṅgīrasas* or *Atharvans*, “the texts of Atharva and Aṅgīrasa,” are used to refer to “the fourth” of the Vedas¹⁵⁶ [5.2.2.1]. The term Atharvaveda does not occur until the Sūtra period (600-200 BCE), that is, during or after the time of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, when Brahmanism appealed more to the common masses, especially in some secularized form or catering to secular needs. It was a time of the rise of rival philosophical schools fomented by the growing urbanization and money economy.¹⁵⁷

5.2.1.3 The texts which make up the Four Vedas are the Rgveda [5.1.1.2], the Samaveda [5.1.1.2], the Yajurveda [5.1.1.2] and the Atharvaveda [5.1.2.1, 5.2.2]. Each of these texts is further divided into various types of text such as:

Araṇyakas	observances and rituals in a forest dwelling;
Brahmanas	commentaries on the rituals;
Saṃhitas	benedictions, prayers, mantras;
Upaniṣads	philosophical speculations, narratives and dialogues.

The Upanishads are the best known and most often read of the Vedas because their discourse is presented in dialogue or narrative form, and they were the first to be translated into modern languages. The four Vedas, conversely, are considered the literal sounds of the Divine which, when recited or sung, recreate the primal vibrations of the universe. Accordingly, they are actually impossible to translate and what one reads in a translation should be understood as a paraphrase at best.

5.2.1.4 A few centuries after the Buddha, we see references both to the “three Vedas” (*tayo vedā*) and to the “fourth Veda” (*cātu-b,bedā*) in the *Milinda,pañha* (100 BCE-200 CE). The text’s protagonist, Nāgasena,¹⁵⁸ as a boy, is told by his father that the “trainings” (*sikkhāni*) are in the “three Vedas,” which he is said to have mastered with only a single recitation (*eken’eva uddesena*), by which “vision arose in him” (*cakkhum udapādi*) of all the brahminical learning, that is to say:

¹⁵⁵ **Myth in Buddhism**, SD 36.1 (1.7.1), & **Māra**, SD 61a (4).

¹⁵⁶ See Chāndogya Upaniṣad (ChU 7.1.2,4, 7.2.1, 7.7.1) lists “the Rgveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, with the Atharvana as the fourth.” Cf Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BAU 2.4.10, 4.5.11, 4.1.2; Maitri 6.32).

¹⁵⁷ See SD 36.1 (2.2.2).

¹⁵⁸ On Nāgasena, see I B Horner, *Milinda’s Questions* (Miln tr), London: Luzac, 1969:xxvi-xxviii.

*tisu vedesu sa,nighaṇḍu,keṭubhesu
sākkhara-p,pabhedesu
itihāsa,pañcomesu
padako veyyākaraṇo
lokāyata,mahā.purisa,lakkhaṇesu
anavayo ahosi.*

in the three Vedas, along with their vocabulary and rituals, phonology and etymology, and the Iti,hāsa Purāṇas as the fifth; learned in the Vedic padas [verses], grammarian, well-versed in nature-lore and the marks of the great man. (Miln 10,13-15) [5.1.2.2]

Having mastered the Vedas, Nāgasena, on account of his past karmic impressions (*pubba,vāsanāya*), found that “these Vedas are empty indeed ... mere chaff indeed ... pithless indeed ... and was remorseful and downhearted.”¹⁵⁹ In due course, Nāgasena met a monk, Rohaṇa, and learned the “supreme mantra” (*uttamaṃ mantraṃ*), that is, the Abhidhamma and the Dhamma from Rohaṇa, which changed his life. (Miln 11)

The other protagonist of the Milinda,pañha is **Milinda**, purportedly the Indo-Greek king of Bactria, Menander (c 2nd cent BCE).¹⁶⁰ Like Nāgasena, Milinda, too, is said to be remarkably learned and wise—he is said to know the “fourth Veda,” too:

*Bahūni c’assa satthāni uggahitāni honti,
seyyathidaṃ suti sammuti
saṅkhyā yogā nīti visesikā gaṇikā
gandhabbā tikicchā **catu-b,bedā**¹⁶¹
purāṇā itihāsa jotisā māyā
hetu¹⁶³ mantanā yuddhā chandasā
mudda,vacanena¹⁶⁴ ekūna,vīsati*

Great were the learning that he had mastered, that is to say: revelation, conventions, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, counting, music, medicine, **the four Vedas**,¹⁶² Purāṇas, the oral traditions, astronomy, conjuring, logic, spells, warfare, poetry, reckoning on the fingers, totalling 19.

(Miln 3,30-4,1)

As noted in the footnote, **catu-b,bedā** (“the four Vedas”) are listed in full later as **irubbedam yajubbedam sāmavedam athabbaṇavedam** followed by the next two words (Miln 178,15). We are thus given the impression that in the boy Nāgasena’s time, the “three Vedas” were the learning syllabus, while by the time of King Milinda or in his area, the “four Vedas” were well known enough for him to learn them.

5.2.2 The Atharvaveda

5.2.2.1 The Atharvaveda (AV) differs significantly from the other three Vedas, as it does not treat the *śrauta* (*śruti* or scripture-based) rituals, but contains magical (black and white) and healing spells, as well as two more large sections containing speculative hymns and materials dealing with some important domestic daily rituals such as those for initiation into learning (*upanayana*), marriage and funerals, and also secular royal rituals and the duties of the court priests.

The Atharvaveda, aptly described as the “Veda of the masses” or “Veda of magical formulas,” is more heterogeneous and less inhibited than the Ṛgveda. Its special name, **Atharv-aṅgirāsaḥ**, indicates the two-

¹⁵⁹ Tucchā vata bho ime vedā, palāpā vata bho ime vedā, asārā vata bho ime vedāasārā nissārā ti vipptaṅgārī anattamano ahosi (Miln 10,24-26).

¹⁶⁰ See I B Horner, 1969:xxii-xxvi.

¹⁶¹ Ce dhanubbedā.

¹⁶² See Miln 178,15 f for **irubbedam yajubbedam sāmavedam athabbaṇavedam lakkhaṇam itihāsam purāṇam**. Note the presence of the last 2 words foll **catu-b.bedā** above, which is a term for the 4 in bold print.

¹⁶³ Be *ketu*. This refers to the 19th lunar mansion (*nakṣatra*), whose deity is associated with Niriti, the god of dissolution and destruction. The Lord of Mūla is Ketu (south lunar as a node). This suggests the later items in this list falls under Atharvaveda. [5.2.2.1]

¹⁶⁴ Ce Ee buddhvacanena.

fold character of its contents—the wholesome, auspicious “white” magic of Atharvan, and the terrible, sorcerous “black” magic of Aṅgirās.

It is also called Brahmaveda. The name has been explained by the fact that the Atharvaveda consists of *brahmans* (magically potent for *mūlas*), or by the fact that this Veda is the special concern of the brahmin priest in the Vedic ritual. Another explanation of the name is, because of the peculiar character of the contents of this Veda, it was for a long time (such as in the Buddha’s time) not recognized as being as authoritative as the other three Vedas (*trayi*).

5.2.2.2 In reaction to this exclusivism, the Atharvavedins went to the other extreme and stated that the three Vedas were essentially “limited,” for *brahman*¹⁶⁵ alone was infinite, and this *brahman* was truly reflected only in the Atharvaveda. Thus, the Atharvaveda was called Brahmaveda, the “diviner or perfect Veda.”

The Atharvaveda is also known by several other names, each of which emphasizes a specific trait of its character. It proves particularly significant in the performance of the duties of the *purohita* (royal chaplain), and is thus known as the Purohitaveda. It contains many hymns pertaining to the kshatriyas or warrior-class members, and is thus called the Kṣatraveda.¹⁶⁶

5.3 THE 5 VEDAS

5.3.1 The Atharveda in the suttas

5.3.1.1 The Artharva [5.2.1.2] is also referred to in the Pali texts in places *not* explicitly as a Veda but with the implication that it is one, as in **the Sela Sutta** (M 92 = Sn 3.7) description of the *mahā,sālā*¹⁶⁷ by the brahmin **Sela** (a devout follower of the part-time matted-hair holyman, Keṇiya), thus:¹⁶⁸

<p><i>selo brāhmaṇo ... tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sa,nighaṇḍu,keṭubhānaṃ sākkhara-p,pabhedānaṃ iti.hāsa,pañcamānaṃ padako veyyākaraṇo lokāyata,mahā.purisa.- lakkhaṇesu anavayo</i></p>	<p>The brahmin Sela ... expert in the three Vedas, along with their vocabulary and rituals, phonology and etymology, with the Iti,hāsa¹⁶⁹ as the fifth, learned in the Vedic padas, grammarian, well-versed in nature-lore and in the marks of the great man.</p>
---	--

(M 92,5.2 = Sn 3.7/p105), SD 45.7a

5.3.1.2 The suttas usually use the term **Athabbaṇa** to refer to the Sanskrit Atharvan, such as in the Sutta Nipāta Commentary (SnA 2:447,18) on **M 92,5.2** (Sn p105,1-3). This, which seems to be the earliest reference to the Atharva in the Pali texts; it is found in the Sutta Nipāta Commentary, which runs thus:

¹⁶⁵ *Brahman* is neuter and the gender-neutral for the Deity in Brahmanism. This is the “impersonal” supreme self that is the whole of the cosmos. This term and belief are found in Taittiriya Saṃhita, but are not known in the suttas.

¹⁶⁶ On the Vedas, see S W Jamison & M Witzel, *Vedic Hinduism*, 1992, see esp 4-27.

¹⁶⁷ *Mahā,sālā* lit means “those with great halls,” ie, very wealthy.

¹⁶⁸ On the terms in the foll passage, see **Sela S** (M 92,5.2 nn), SD 45.7a.

¹⁶⁹ **Itihāsa** or fully, Itihāsa Purāṇa, refers to the encyclopaedic miscellany of cosmogony, myths, royal genealogies of the lunar dynasty and solar dynasty, and legendary events, esp Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, and various secular interests. See NcA 15,2-6. See G Bailey, “Puranas,” in (ed) O Leaman, *Ency of Asian Philosophy*, Routledge, 2001: 437-43; K K Klostemeier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, SUNY Press, 2007:59-85 (ch 4).

*Itihāsa,pañcamānan ti athabbaṇa,vedaṃ catutthaṃ katvā “itiha āsa itiha āsā ti īdisa,vacana,-
paṭisaṃyutto purāṇa,katha,saṅkhāto iti,hāso pañcamo etesan ti itihāsa,pañcamā. Tesam
itihāsa,pañcamānam.* (SnA 447,18-21)

With the Iti,hāsa as the fifth: “Historical lore” (*itihāsa*) is a designation for accounts of ancient events, connected with such a statement as “So it was, so it was” (*itiha āsa itiha āsa*). Having taken the Atharva Veda as *the fourth*, historical lore is the fifth among them; thus, it is said “with the Itihāsa as the fifth.”

Since the sutta stock description of a learned brahmin always refers to the three Vedas, it is possible that the Itihāsa is “the fifth,” not of the Vedas, but of the auxiliary branches of learning, along with the vocabularies, rules of ritual, phonology, and etymology. However, the ancient Indian theologians tend to see the sacred *monistically*: their pietist imagination is closely associated with the Vedas as a Veda *by association*. After all, these are merely names (*nāmaivaitat*), the most fundamental level of reality (ChU 7.1.2).

5.3.1.3 The Sutta Nipāta Commentary on the brahminical terms continues:

*Padam̄ tada,vasesaṃ ca byākaraṇam̄ ajjheti vedeti [NcA adhīyanti vedenti] cā ti padako
veyyākaraṇo.* (SnA 2:447,21-28;¹⁷⁰ cf NcA 14-15)

Skilled in philology and grammar: He recites and understands their terms and the rest of the grammar.

The Dīgha Subcommentary explains further, thus:

*Te eva vede padaso kāyatī ti padako. Tam̄ tam̄ saddam̄ tad atthaṃ ca byākaroti byācikkhati
etenā ti byākaraṇam̄, sadda,sattham̄.* (DAṬ 1:380,4-6)

“One who states those same Vedas by way of words is a **philologist**. Grammar is the science of words, by which one explains and expounds each word and its meaning.”

5.3.1.4 The Commentaries continue, going on to explain Lokāyata and the “great man prophecy”:

*Lokāyate vitaṇḍa,vāda,satthe mahā.purisa.lakkhaṇādhikāre ca dvādasa,sahasse mahā,-
purisa,lakkhaṇa,satthe anūno paripūrakārī ti lokāyata,mahā,purisa,lakkhaṇesu anavayo, avayo
na hotī ti vuttam̄ hoti. Avayo nāma yo tāni atthato ca ganthato ca sandhāretum̄ na sakkoti.*
(SnA 2:447,21 f;¹⁷¹ cf NcA 14-15)

Well-versed in nature lore—the science of disputation—and **in the marks of the great man**. He has fulfilled, without any omission, nature lore and the lore of the marks of the great man, the 12,000 treatises on the marks of the great man. What is meant is that he is not deficient; for one who is deficient is not able to maintain these either by way of meaning or by way of texts.

Dīgha Commentary on the Ambaṭṭha Sutta (D 3) clarifies the nature of “the marks of the great man,” thus:

A lore consisting of 12,000 works explaining the marks of great men, the buddhas and so forth, wherein there are 16,000 verses called ‘buddha hymns’ (*buddha,mantā*), by which it could be determined that those possessing certain marks are buddhas; those with other marks are

¹⁷⁰ Recurs at AA 1:147,19-248,11 (at A 1:163,12).

¹⁷¹ Recurs at AA 1:147,19-248,11 (at A 1:163,12).

pratyeka-buddhas [buddha without dispensation]; those with still other marks are the 2 chief disciples, the 80 great disciples, a buddha's mother, a buddha's father, the chief layman supporter, the chief laywoman supporter, and the wheel-turning monarch. (DA 1:248,1-8)

5.3.1.5 We can see that even the later Commentaries, such as that on the Apādāna, distinguish between the three Vedas and the Atharva, such as in the commentary on the Therāpadāna of the Sakya elder **Upāli Thera**, a Vinaya expert, thus

*Manta,dharo ti mantā vuccati paññā,
athabbana,veda,byākaraṇ'ādi,jānana,paññavāti attho.
Tiṇṇaṃ vedāna pāragū ti iru.veda,yaju.veda,sāma.veda,sāṅkhātānaṃ tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ
pariyosānaṃ patto ti attho.* (ApA 275,33-276,2)

In the phrase, “**mantra expert**,” mantra means wisdom. The meaning is that the wise have the knowledge of foresight or prophecy (*vyākaraṇa*),¹⁷² such as prophesying by means of the Atharvaveda.

In the phrase, “**expert in the three Vedas**,” the three Vedas are the Rgveda, the Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda, meaning that the goal is (their) attainment.

5.3.1.6 From our surveys of both the Vedic sources and the Pali sources, we can see that both traditions regard **the 3 Vedas** as a canonical set, and that the Atharva was not regarded as a part of the triad. Yet there is acceptance of the Atharva as a Veda in its own right—the “Vedas of the magic and the masses” —and that there is a fifth category also called a Veda. This fifth Veda was known even in the Buddha's time, but only mentioned *once* in the early Buddhist texts, as we have noted [5.1.2.2].

The Sanskrit sources, too, have mentioned the “fifth Veda,” perhaps even before the Buddha did. The earliest mention of the “fifth Veda” is probably at the start of chapter 7 of the Chandogya Upanishad, where Nārada, a student of the Vedas, tells the sage Sanatkumāra:

<i>rgvedaṃ bhagavo'dhyemi yajurvedaṃ sāmavedaṃ- ātharvaṇaṃ caturtham- itihāsa-purāṇaṃ pañcamaṃ vedānāṃ</i>	“Lord, I have learned (<i>adhyeti</i>) the Rgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda, and the Atharvan as the fourth; with the Itihāsa and Purāṇa as the fifth of the Vedas.” (ChU 7.1.2+3)
--	---

We know the Rgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda as the “three Vedas,” but instead of saying the “four Vedas,” Nārada refers to the Atharvan “as the fourth”; similarly, the Itihāsa and Purāṇa as the “fifth Veda.” While only the first three Vedas are regarded as “canonical,” the additional titles are simply those things that have been learnt (*adhyemi*). They are simply names (*nāma*) to be known and glorified.

— — —

¹⁷² It is unlikely in the context of the Atharvaveda that *vyakarana* or *byākaraṇa* can be tr as “grammar.”

SD 61.4(6) (Vedanā) Samādhi Sutta

The (Feeling) Discourse on Concentration | S 36.1/4:204
Theme: When feelings are fully understood, one attains nirvana

*Tisso imā, bhikkhave, vedanā
Katamā tisso
Sukhā vedanā,
dukkhā vedanā,
adukkhā-m-asukhā vedanā –
imā kho, bhikkhave, tisso vedanā ti.*

*samāhito sampajāno
sato buddhassa sāvako
vedanā ca pajānāti
vedanānañ ca sambhavaṃ
yattha c’etā nirujjhanti
maggāñ ca khaya, gāmināṃ
vedanānaṃ khayā bhikkhu
nicchāto parinibbuto ti*

Bhikshus, there are these **3 kinds of feelings**.
What are the three?
(1) Pleasant feelings,
(2) unpleasant feelings,
(3) neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feelings.
These, bhikshus, are the 3 kinds of feelings.

Concentrated and fully aware,
mindful, is the Buddha’s disciple.
And he understands feelings
and the arising of feelings;
and how they cease, too;
and the path leading to their destruction.
The monk who has destroyed feelings
is hunger-free, fully quenched.

— — —

(1) We are not told who spoke these words. Although there are parallels to these passages in other texts, where they *are* ascribed to the Buddha, here they seem to have been added by redactors, perhaps quoted from other sources. This teaching could well be from the Buddha himself, of course, on account of its spirit or of reflecting the Buddha’s teaching.

(2) The verses refer to the 4 noble truths, with feeling taking the place of suffering based on the understanding that “whatever is felt is included in suffering” (*yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmin ti*)¹⁷³ and because feeling is one of the 5 aggregates mentioned in the formula for the 1st truth.

(3) The Commentary and Subcommentary point out that 2 terms, *samāhito* and *sampajano*, respectively, signify calm and insight (*dvipada*) and the rest, the 4 noble truths. “Hunger-free” (*nicchāta*) means “without craving” and “fully quenched” (*parinibbuto*) refers to the full quenching of the defilements (*kilesa, parinibbāna*). Hence, the verses well encompass the 4 planes (*catu, bhūmi*), that is, the 3 worlds (the sense-world, the form world and the formless world), and the 4 stages of the path (stream-winning, etc). (SA 3:74; SAṬ:Be 353)

— — —

¹⁷³ **Raho, gata S** (S 36.11,2 f) + SD 33.6 (2.1).

(Devatā) Sakalika Sutta

The (Devata) Discourse on the Stone Splinter

S 1.38

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the Maddakucchi deer park at Rājagaha.

2 Now on that occasion the Blessed One's foot had been cut by a stone splinter.¹⁷⁴ Severe¹⁷⁵ pains assailed the Blessed One—bodily feelings that were painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable. But the Blessed One endured them, mindful and clearly aware, without becoming distressed.

3 Then the Blessed One, having folded his outer robe fourfold, lay down, mindful and clearly aware, on his right side in the lion posture with one leg resting on the other.¹⁷⁶

4 Then, when the night was far advanced, 700 devatas belonging to the Satullapa host, of exceedingly great beauty, illuminating the entire Maddakucchi Deer Park, approached the Blessed One. Having approached, they saluted the Blessed One and stood at one side.

5 (1) Then one devata, standing to one side, uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One: **[28]**

“The ascetic Gotama is indeed **a naga** (*nāga*), sirs! [2.1].

And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his **naga-like**¹⁷⁷ manner he endures them, mindful and clearly aware, without becoming distressed.”¹⁷⁸

6 (2) Then another devata uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One:

“The ascetic Gotama is indeed **a lion** (*sīha*), sir! [2.2]

¹⁷⁴ The Buddha's foot was injured when his evil cousin Devadatta tried to murder him by pushing a boulder down from Mount Vulture Peak onto the Buddha who was below. The boulder was deflected by other boulders but a splinter from it cut the Buddha's foot and drew blood. The full story of Devadatta's assassination plot is related in the Vinaya (V 2:184-203; see Ñāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha*, Kandy 1972, Onalaska 1992: ch 13). This same incident forms the background to **Sakalika S 2** (S 4.13/1:110 f), SD 61.7. Comy to **S 1.38** says that the 700 devas who came to see the Blessed One included all the devas of the Satullapa host (SA 1:80,1 f).

¹⁷⁵ Be Ce Ee *bhusā*; Se *bhūsā*.

¹⁷⁶ For the same incident, see **(Māra) Sakalika S** (S 4.13,2 f), SD 61.7.

¹⁷⁷ Comy glosses *nāga, vatā* as “with the state of a naga” (*nāga, bhāvena*, SA 1:80,13). Geiger takes *nāga, vatā* as the instrumental of the adjective *nāgavant* used adverbially for the purpose of a comparison (Geiger 1930 1:38 n2). On the other hand, as Norman suggests (Sn:N 330 f n782) that *-vata* here is prob the Pali equivalent of Skt *-vrata*, in the sense of “sphere of action, function, mode or manner of life, vow” (MW). Hence, *nāga, vatā* can mean “(like) the way of a naga.” Ee2, based on a Lannā comy, emends the text to read *nāgo va tā ca pan'uppannā sārīrikā vedanā* (and similarly in the parallel passages that follow); see Ee2 xvi. However, this sudden switch from metaphor to the *nāga* itself seems disruptive and difficult to read.

¹⁷⁸ Comy: He is called a **nāga** on account of his strength [n on **nāga** above]; a lion (**sīha**) on account of his fearlessness [2.2.3.1]; a thoroughbred (**ājāniyo**) on account of his amenability through learning (**byatta, paricay'atthena**), or because he knows the right means from the wrong [2.3]; a chief bull (**nisabha**) because he is without a rival [2.4]; a draught bull (**dhorayha**) because of bearing the burden [2.5]; tamed (**danta**) because he is free from deviant conduct [2.6].

*And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his **lion-like** manner he endures them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed."*

7 (3) Then another devata uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One:

"The ascetic Gotama is indeed **a thoroughbred** (*ājānīya*), sirs! [2.3]

*And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his **thoroughbred** manner he endures them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed."*

8 (4) Then another devata uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One:

"The ascetic Gotama is indeed **the chief bull** (*nisabha*), sirs! [2.4]

*"And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his manner of **a chief bull**, he endures them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed."*

9 (5) Then another devata uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One:

"The ascetic Gotama is indeed **a draught bull** (*dhorayha*),¹⁷⁹ sir! [2.5]

*And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his manner of **a draught bull**, he endures them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed."*

10 (6) Then another devata uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One:

"The ascetic Gotama is indeed **tamed** (*danta*), sir! [2.6]

*And when bodily feelings have arisen that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, through his **tamed** manner he endures them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed."*

11 (7) Then another devata uttered this inspired utterance before the Blessed One:

"See the samadhi well cultivated and the mind well freed—neither leaning forward nor bending backward neither curbed nor checked by suppressing with effort!"¹⁸⁰ [3.4.1.1]. If anyone would think such a one could be violated, such a naga of a man, such a lion of a man, **[29]** such a thoroughbred of a man, such a leading bull of a man, such a draught bull of a man, such a tamed man—
what is that but clearly a lack of vision?"¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ *Dhorayha*, also *dhoreyya*, a bull fit to be harnessed to the pole, or fit (strong enough) to bear a burden: "the *dorayha*'s nature is that of a vehicle of burden," *dhura, vahana, sīlatāya dhorayha, sīlam*, DhA 3:272). An imagery of noble strength invoking not only the Buddha's warrior (kshatriya) background, but also his 6 years of self-mortification, and defeat of Māra. This metaphor also evokes the Buddha's "burden" of learning and meditation that benefit us to this day. See J Brough, *The Gandhārō Dharmapada*, 1962: 236 f; O van Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittellindisch im Überblick*, 1986, § 149. See DP *dhorayha*.

¹⁸⁰ Ce Ee2 *Passa samādhim subhavitam cittañ ca suvimuttam, na cābhinatam na cāpanatam na ca sa saṅkhāra, -niggayha, vārita, vatam*. Be -*gataṃ*; Ee1 Se -*carita, vatam*. [3.4.1.1]

¹⁸¹ *Atikkamitabbarā maññeyya kim aññatra adassanā*.

- 12** *pañca,vedā sataṃ samam¹⁸²
tapassī brāhmaṇā caram
cittañ ca nesaṃ na sammā vimuttaṃ
hīn’attha,rūpā na pāraṇ,gamā te* **S 125** Brahmins learned in the 5 Vedas¹⁸³
practise austerities for a hundred years,
but their minds are not rightly freed: because of
their low nature, they reach not the far shore.¹⁸⁴
- 13** *taṇhā’dhipannā vata,sīla,baddhā
lūkham tapam vassa,sataṃ carantā
cittañ ca nesaṃ na sammā vimuttaṃ
hīn’attha,rūpā na pāraṇgamā te* **S 126** Bound to vows and rules, they are caught in craving,
practising crude austerity for a hundred years,
and their minds are not rightly freed: because of
their low nature, they reach not the far shore.
- 14** *na māna,kāmassa damo idh’atthi
na monam atthi asamāhitassa
eko araṇṇe viharam pamatto
na maccu,dheyassa tareyya pāraṇ ti* **S 127** There’s no taming here for one who loves conceit,
nor is there sagehood for the unconcentrated.
Heedlessly dwelling alone in the forest,
one cannot cross beyond death’s realm.
- 15** *mānam pahāya susamāhit’atto
sucetaso sabbadhi vippamutto.
eko araṇṇe viharam appamatto
sa maccu,dheyassa tareyya pāraṇ ti.* **S 128** Having abandoned conceit,¹⁸⁵ well concentrated,
for the noble mind is everywhere freed.¹⁸⁶
Dwelling alone in the forest, diligent:
one crosses beyond death’s realm.

—evam—

240511 240601.2 241023.2 241102

¹⁸² *Sataṃ samam*, “for a hundred years” (*satam saman ti vassa,satam*, SA 1:81,2). *Samam*, acc sg of *samā* (f), “a year” (Dh 106; Mahv 7.74 (misprinted as 78); Uv 24.21; Mvst 3:434,19* *satam satam*). See Dh:N 90 n106. On *samā*, “year,” see K R Norman, “Pāli lexicographical studies X,” JPTS 17 1992:215-218 (*Collected Papers* 5, PTS, 1994:80-82.

¹⁸³ *Itihāsa,pañcamā* often occurs as part of the brahmin def in the suttas: D 1:88, 114, 120, 121, 123, 130, 138, 141; M 2:133, 134, 141, 142, 146, 147, 165, 168, 210; A 1:163, 166, 3:223x2; Sn p105; Nc:Be 56. On the 5 Vedas, see [5.3].

¹⁸⁴ It is not clear who is speaking these verses, and the verses themselves have no evident connection to the Sutta’s prose. It is possible they were annexed to the prose text by the sutta redactors. Reading of line a folls Be, Ce, and Ee2 thus: *pañca,vedā sataṃ samam*. The mention of 5 Vedas is odd but Comy explains: *itihāsa,pañcamānam vedānam*, “the Vedas with the histories as a fifth” (DA 1:247; SA 1:81; AA 2:261; NcA 15; SAṬ:Be 1:116). Comy glosses *sataṃ samam* as *vassa,satam*, “a hundred years.” (SA 1:81,2). Geiger is certainly wrong in rejecting this explanation in his German tr of S (1930:41 n3). Comy mentions a variant, *hīn’attha,rūpā*, glossed as *hīna’ttha,jātikā parihīn’atthā*, “those with low goals, who have fallen away from the goal.” SAṬ glosses *hin’atta,rupā* as *hīn’atta,sabhāvā*, “low self-nature” (SAT 1:81,17 f).

¹⁸⁵ See foll n.

¹⁸⁶ “Having abandoned conceit” (*mānam pahāya*) refers to the arhat [§128a]. The adv *sabbadhi*, “everywhere, in every respect,” should be understood as referring to “the all” (*sabba*), ie, the sense-faculties and all our experiences, sense-based and mental: “for the noble mind” (*sucetaso*) (of an arhat) “everywhere freed” (*sabbadhi vippamutto*, S 128b), ie, freed from the influxes (lust, existence and ignorance) when reinforced by our sense-experiences and thoughts. Elsewhere, the arhat is said to be “unshaken and calm everywhere [towards everything]” (*anejo sabbadhī samo*, Sn 952) towards “the streams (that) flow everywhere” (*savanti sabbadhī sotā*, Sn 1034). The Buddha tells Ajita (**Ajita Māṇava Pucchā**, Sn 5.2) “Their restraint is mindfulness, | I will tell you the constraint for streams. | They are dammed by wisdom” (*sati tesam nīvaraṇam*, | *sotānam samvaram brūmi*, | *paññāy’ete pithiyyare*, Sn 1035).