

**SD 63.4****Pāthika Sutta**

The Pāthika Discourse, or The Pāṭika Discourse | D 24

Be Ce Pāthika,sutta; Ee Se Pāṭika,sutta

Theme: Irony and miracles in early Buddhism

Translated &amp; annotated by Piya Tan ©2011, 2025

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## 1 Sutta summary, highlights and title

### 1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

#### 1.1.1 Summary and significance

**1.1.1.1 SUMMARY.** The Pāthika Sutta (D 24) is a record of the Buddha's conversation with the wanderer **Bhaggava,gotta** [2.1] in the latter's hermitage at Anupiyā. On Bhaggava's mentioning **Sunakkhatta**, the young Licchavī [2.2], the Buddha explains that he has given up the training because the Buddha will not work miracles or show him "knowledge of the foremost" (ie, the beginning of things). The Sutta is divided into 2 "recitals" (*bhāṇavāra*):

- (1) the first on 3 false ascetics held in high esteem by Sunakkhatta [1.1.2], and
- (2) the second recital includes Pāthika's fear and inability to meet the Buddha, and the Buddha's mastery of "knowledge of the foremost" (*aggañña*) [1.1.3].

**1.1.1.2 SIGNIFICANCE.** The Pāthika Sutta is an early Buddhist criticism of **wrong religious behaviour** and their negative effects on religious teachers and their followers. At a glance, the Sutta seems to be a burlesque depiction of the 3 naked ascetics and Sunakkhatta's unquestioning admiration of them. The activities and fate of these naked ascetics can be seen as a parody that ridicules serious religion. The 3 false ascetics are seen as treating the noble aspects of religion in an undignified style, and sacralizing mundane conduct in an ironically elevated pretence. [4.1]

We also see **irony** pervading the narratives of not only the 3 naked ascetics, but also of Sunakkhatta, the erstwhile monk, and of the wanderer Bhaggava, the Sutta's protagonist. The Sutta narrative, as a factual account or as a humorous myth serves as a powerful lesson for followers of religion (including Buddhists) not to fall for religious appearances and cultish charisma of teachers and leaders. [4.2-4.4]

The Pāthika Sutta also makes an engaging and interesting study in **religious humour**. If we take irony as a literary motif of a humorous sutta, it is highlighted by **ritualization** or pathological ritual behaviour—a psychological fixation with attachment to rituals and vows (*sila-b.bata,parāmāsa*)—as a psychocritical analysis of pathological religious behaviour. [2.6]

The Sutta closes with a case of **dual belonging**—of the open acceptance of two faiths at once—in Bhaggava's closing testimony [4.4.4]. Despite Sunakkhatta's lack of faith in the Buddha, and the religious antics of the 3 naked ascetics [2.6.2], Bhaggava shines as a bright light of faith and humility.

#### 1.1.2 The 1<sup>st</sup> cycle: The 3 false ascetics

The Buddha highlights how Sunakkhatta tends to look up to ostentatious religiosity, such as those of:

- the naked dog-ascetic, **Kora,khattiya** or **Kora-k,khattiya**, who is reborn as an asura [2.3];
- the naked ascetic, **Kālara,maṭṭaka**, who claims to keep strict vows but ends up as a worldly layman [2.4];
- the naked ascetic, **Pāthika,putta**, who makes false prophecies and boasts as being better miracle-worker than the Buddha, but is unable to face the Buddha before an assembly [2.5],

Despite the religious façade of these ascetics, they are not spiritually developed at all.

#### 1.1.3 The 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle: Knowledge of the foremost

The story of **Pāthika,putta** continues into the first part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, describing how, despite his boasts and challenges against the Buddha, he is unable to rise from his seat to face the Buddha in debate before the Licchavī assembly—despite attempts by a messenger, a Licchavī chief minister and Jāliya (the wooden-bowl teacher's pupil) to bring him before the Buddha.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle is highlighted by **Jāliya's Jātaka story** [§2.6 f], chastising Pāthika for his arrogance and cowardice [2.5.2], and the Buddha's presentation of his knowledge of the foremost [3], including the beginning of the world and evolution of society.

#### **1.1.4 Date and critical comments**

The Pāthika Sutta is a canonical text, belonging to the early centuries of Buddhism. It is however almost impossible for us to say whether it is older or later than **the Kevaddha Sutta** (D 11).<sup>1</sup>

For an interesting introduction to the Sutta by T W Rhys Davids, see D:RD 3:1-6.

### **1.2 THE SUTTA TITLE AND NAME**

#### **1.2.1 The Sutta title**

**1.2.1.1 The Pāthika Sutta** is the Burmese (Be) and the Sinhalese (Ce) version of the Sutta title. The alternate title is **the Pāṭika Sutta**, which is the Siamese (Se) and the Pali Text Society (Ee) reading. Thus we have the following variants of the spelling of the name: Pāthika, Pāṭika or even Pāthiya. Since the reading is uncertain, and the commentaries offer no help, I have settled for what I surmise is the older reading, that is, the Burmese and the Sinhalese, that is, **Pāthika**.

**1.2.1.2 Pāthika** is either the character's given name (*mūla, nāma*) or a brief form of his fuller name, **Pāthika,putta**, which in turn may mean "son of Pāthika"—as a patronym (named after the father)—that is, his father is Pāthika. However, since the Sutta calls him Pāthika, it is thus likely that this is his own name, not his father's. This explanation also suggests that we take *putta* as meaning not as "son of," but as "the young Pāthika" or "Pāthika the youth." Pāthika's youth may also explain his impetuous and pretentious character, such as boasting that he could perform double any miracles the Buddha performs [§1.15].

We should also note that the young Pāthika is resident in **Vesālī**, around which the Pāthika Sutta centres. We can thus fully address him as "Pāthika the youth of Vesālī" to distinguish him from another Pathika who lives in Sāvatthī [1.2.2].

**1.2.1.3** The word **Pāthika** in the title is clearly a brief form of the name of the main character in the Sutta narrative, that is, part IV of the Sutta [§§1.15-1.18], where he is called **Pāthika,putta** [1.2.2]. Although 3 naked ascetics (*acela*)—Kora, khattiya, Kālara, mattaka and Pāthika,putta [1.1.2]—are featured in the Sutta, Pāthika,putta not only has the longest story, but is also the most interesting in terms of Buddhist teachings and humour [4]. Evidently, for this reason, the Sutta is named after him. [2.5]

**1.2.1.4** The Sutta could well have been entitled the Bhaggava Sutta or the Bhaggava,gotta Sutta since the whole Sutta is actually initiated by **Bhaggava,gotta**, a clothed wanderer [2.1.1], whom the Buddha visits "some days" after Sunakkhatta has left the sangha [§1.3], and it is Bhaggava who reports that the ex-monk Sunakkhatta visited and informed Bhaggava that Sunakkhatta had left the sangha [§1.2]. At the end of the Sutta, Bhaggava requests the Buddha to teach him the "liberation that is beautiful."

<sup>1</sup> See D:R 3:3; also SD 1.7 (4.2.2).

## 1.2.2 Ājīvaka Pāthika of Sāvatthī

**1.2.2.1** The name Pāthika [1.2.1.1] is also that of an ājīvaka (an influential class of naked ascetics),<sup>2</sup> Pāthika of Sāvatthī. His story is related in the Pāthik'ājīvaka Vatthu (DhA 4.6), where his name is spelt Pāthika. He was supported by a woman of Sāvatthī who, hearing one day her neighbours praise the Buddha, wished to invite the Buddha to her home. When she consulted Pāthika, however, he dissuaded her from doing so.

Since the woman was unable to get the ājīvaka's permission to see the Buddha, she decided to invite the Buddha to come to her house. One day, unbeknown to Pāthika, the woman sent her son to invite the Buddha. On the way, the boy called at Pāthika's hermitage, and the ascetic tried to dissuade him from going. The boy replied that he was afraid of his mother's scolding him for that.

Failing to dissuade the boy, the ājīvaka told him not to tell the Buddha where the house was located and take a different route when returning home, hoping that the Buddha would then not know where her house was. That way, the ājīvaka told the boy, they would have the food his mother had prepared for the Buddha all for themselves instead. The boy did as the ājīvaka had instructed him.

**1.2.2.2** At dawn, Pāthika furtively went to the woman's house. Together with the boy, they hid in the back-room. Neighbours had helped to spruce the house up and decorate it for the alms-offering that day. The Buddha came straight to the house and the woman welcomed him by saluting him with the five-pointed prostration.<sup>3</sup> She escorted him into the house and poured the water of dedication onto the Buddha's right hand. She then served him with the choicest of food.

At the end of the meal, during the thanksgiving, the Buddha gave her a Dharma talk. Deeply joyful, she applauded, "Sadhu! Sadhu!" (Excellent, excellent). Unable to control himself, the ājīvaka thought, "She is no longer my disciple!", came out, vilely abused her and the Buddha, and then ran off.

The woman was utterly shocked and distraught. The Buddha calmly told her:

"One should have no regard for what is said by such a strange person; one should pay no attention to such a one. One should consider only what one has oneself done or not done."<sup>4</sup>

With that the Buddha pronounced this verse:

<i>na paresam vilomāni</i> <i>na paresam̄ katākataṁ</i> <i>attano va avekheyā</i> <i>katāni akatāni ca</i>	Neither regard the faults of others nor things done and not done by others; one should only regard what one has done and not done. (Dh 50)
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At the end of the teaching, the lay disciple became a streamwinner and the crowd benefitted from it, too.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> An influential religious community of ājīvaka naked ascetics, and powerful rivals of the early Buddhists, was that founded by **Makkhali Gosāla** (died 484 BCE), an atheistic and strict determinist (*niyati*). As a cult, they survived until the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> cent. For the austerities of the ājīvakas, see eg DhA 2:55; see also DPPN: Ājīvaka (for refs), and A L Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Pañc'aṅga patiṭṭhita*. A traditional prostration expressing full respect: the 5 points are the 2 knees, the 2 elbows, and the forehead on the hands (spread flat on the ground): SD 52.1 (14.1.2.2).

<sup>4</sup> *Eva, rupassa visabhāga, janassa kathitam̄ kathaṁ nām āvajjittum̄ na vaṭṭati, eva, rūpaṁ asamannāharitvā attano katākataṁ eva oloketum̄ vaṭṭatī ti.*

<sup>5</sup> DhA 4.5/1:376-380.

**1.2.2.3** While the ājīvaka Pāthika was from Sāvatthī,<sup>6</sup> the naked ascetic (*acela*) Pāthika was from Vesāli.<sup>7</sup> The two ancient towns were some 450 km (280 mi) apart by road. Both were naked ascetics; the words *ājīvaka* [1.2.2.1] and *acela* (a broad Buddhist term meaning “unclothed”), overlap in meaning. The former term is however subsumed under the latter. Other than the fact that both of them have the same name and both rejected the Buddha, we have no evidence to show that they were the same person.

## **2 Sutta actors**

### **2.1 THE WANDERER BHAGGAVA, GOTTA**

#### **2.1.1 Clan name**

**2.1.1.1** The Sutta narrator uses the name **Bhaggava, gotta**, “one of the Bhaggava gotra,” which is a gens or clan (*gotta*) name. The Buddha, too, always addresses him, keeping to common courtesy, as **Bhaggava**, the shortened form of his gotra name, and not by his given name (*mūla, nama*, “root-name”), which is not mentioned in the Sutta or its commentaries.

**Bhaggava** was a clothed wanderer (*channa, paribbājakka*) (DA 3:816); hence, he is sometimes mistakenly called Channa by some scholars, since Channa is a common name, too. From the **Pāthika Sutta**, evidently, Sunakkhatta knew Bhaggava, gotta, and probably held him in great esteem [§1.2].

**2.1.1.2** Bhaggava briefly speaks with the Buddha when they meet, but is silent for the rest of the time, politely listening to the Buddha. Bhaggava speaks again only at the end of the Sutta to declare his faith [4.4.2]. Apparently, he is only mentioned, albeit at length, in the **Pāthika Sutta** (D 24). To be the occasion for the teaching of a long (*dīgha*) discourse is very significant. It means that the Pāthika Sutta serves as a lesson in dealing with non-Buddhists or those new to Buddhism.

The Pāthika Sutta is valuable as a case study in human religious frivolities and cultish behaviour that are common even today. Hence, it is a useful document in the study of religious psychology. The fact that the Sutta is mostly narrative and lacks “serious” dharma teachings characterizes it as a *dīgha sutta*, which is presented to attract and impress non-Buddhists.<sup>8</sup>

Those who fail to see this role of suttas as a disseminative or missionary tool may dismiss the Pāthika Sutta (or parts of it) as being frivolous or uncharacteristic of a “sutta.” However, many of the Dīgha suttas have similar features of an interesting and important early Buddhist genre: **humorous narrative**. The Pāthika Sutta is a remarkable masterpiece in the study of religious irony in early Buddhism. [4.2]

**2.1.2 The Dhātu, vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140) mentions a certain **Bhaggava** who was a potter (*kumbha. kāra*), in whose shed the Buddha meets Pukkusāti (who renounced in the Buddha’s name before ever meeting the teacher, and while there listening to the Buddha teaching recognized him as his teacher).<sup>9</sup>

It is thus likely that the Bhaggava clansmen were a potter caste [2.1.4]. However, the **Aṅguli, māla Sutta** (M 86) commentary also tells us that Aṅguli, māla’s father was the brahmin named Gagga, of the Bhaggava gotta, the purohit (royal chaplain) of king Pasenadi of Kosala.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sāvatthī (Skt *śrāvastī*) was the capital of the kingdom of Kosala, located near the West Rapti River (ancient Acīra, vati), about 170 km (106 mi) NW of Lucknow, in NE Uttar Pradesh, close to the Nepalese border.

<sup>7</sup> Vesāli (Skt *vaiśālī*) was the capital of the Vajjī league (6<sup>th</sup> cent BCE), the 1<sup>st</sup> republic to arise in ancient India. It was located N of modern Patna in Bihar, India.

<sup>8</sup> Joy Manné, “Case histories from the Pali Canon I & II,” *J of the Pali Text Soc* 1995:1-128.

<sup>9</sup> M 140,1.2/3:237 (SD 4.17).

<sup>10</sup> M 86,13.2/2:102 (SD 5.11 (1.2.1)); MA 3:54.

**2.1.3** Further, the **Therī,gāthā Commentary** introduction says that when the bodhisattva was in Rājagaha (after meeting king Bimbisāra), he went to Bhaggava's hermitage, and studied and mastered his teaching, before going on to master the teachings and meditations of Ālāra Kālāma and of Uddaka Rāma,putta.<sup>11</sup> Again, this name Bhaggava seems to appear only in this connection and nowhere else.

**2.1.4** The **Kumbha,kāra Jātaka** (J 408) mentions the vocative *bhaggava* (masculine) and *bhaggavī* (feminine). Although the word, *kumbha,kāra*, means “potter,” neither the Jātaka nor its commentary says that the word *bhaggava* or *bhaggavī* means “potter.” But we have such a connection in another Jātaka.

The **Kacchapa Jātaka** (J 178) commentary says that (in this Jātaka) Bhaggava is said to be a “potter” (*Bhaggavā ti kumbha,kāram ālapati*, J 2:80), that “This name Bhaggavā is designated to the clan since they are potters (*kumbha,kārānañ hi nāma,gotta,paññatti esā, yad idam bhaggavā ti*, J 2:80). This is the only place, it seems, that the Bhaggava gotra members are said to be potters. However, the word itself does not mean “potter”,<sup>12</sup> *bhaggava* seems to have the sense of “brightness.”<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2 SUNAKKHATTA THE YOUNG LICCHAVĪ

### 2.2.1 Sunakkhatta denounces the Buddha

Sunakkhatta was a young Licchavī (*licchavi,putta*) of Vesālī, who was at one time a monk and part-time personal attendant of the Buddha (*anibaddh'upatīhāka*).<sup>14</sup> The **Sunakkhatta Sutta** (M 105) was evidently given to Sunakkhatta when was a monk.<sup>15</sup> In due course, Sunakkhatta gave up the training accusing the Buddha of (1) not showing him superhuman psychic miracles [§1.4] and (2) not explaining the “beginning of things” to him [§1.5]. The Buddha explained that neither had he promised to Sunakkhatta any of these things, nor did Sunakkhatta join the sangha with these requests.

The Buddha reminded Sunakkhatta that at one time he had been loud in his praises of the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha. The Buddha warned him that people would say that he had left the sangha because its discipline had proven too hard for him [§1.6]. Sunakkhatta nevertheless left the sangha and went about defaming the Buddha, claiming that the Buddha had no superhuman powers and was no different from others who teach liberating faith, that the Buddha’s teaching did not lead to the destruction of suffering.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.2.2 Significance of Sunakkhatta

**2.2.2.1** Sāriputta, on his alms-rounds in Vesālī, heard Sunakkhatta’s public slanders against the teacher. After Sāriputta reported this to the Buddha, he thereupon taught the **Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 12)<sup>17</sup> and the **Loma,haṁsa Jātaka** (J 94).<sup>18</sup> The details of Sunakkhatta’s dissatisfaction and the failures of various false teachers are reported in the **Pāthika Sutta** (D 24). Sunakkhatta’s dissatisfaction with the

<sup>11</sup> ThīA 2.

<sup>12</sup> Pace W Pruitt, ThīA:P 4 n2.

<sup>13</sup> PED: **Bhaggava** (cf Skt *bhārgava*), a derivation from *bhṛgu*, and *bhārgah*, of same root as Latin *fulgor*, lightning; Greek φλόξ, light; German *blitzen*, blank; Anglo-Saxon *blanca* white horse; all of the idea of “shining, bright, radiant.” The word apparently occurs in Skt with the sense, “potter.”

<sup>14</sup> **Juṇha J** (J 456/4:95); SA 1:258,23.

<sup>15</sup> M 105/2:252-261 (SD 63.4)

<sup>16</sup> M 12,2/1:68 (SD 49.1).

<sup>17</sup> M 12/1:68-83 (SD 49.1). The Buddha was then 80 years old (M 12,62.2/1:82).

<sup>18</sup> J 94/1:389 f; see also **Juṇha J** (J 456/4:95).

teacher was, as we have noted, that the Buddha did not show him any superhuman psychic miracles [§1.4] and had not explained to him the “beginning of things” [§1.5].

**2.2.2.2** Sunakkhatta had probably remained a monk for at least 3 years before giving up the training. **The (Dīgha) Mahāli Sutta** (D 6) reports the Licchavi Otth’addha—his given name (*mūla, nāma*) is Mahāli—telling the Buddha how Sunakkhatta had come to him 3 years after joining the sangha, claiming that he could see divine forms but could not *hear* heavenly sounds.<sup>19</sup>

The Commentary explains that Sunakkhatta could not gain the power of hearing divine sounds because in a previous birth he had ruptured the ear drum of a virtuous monk and made him deaf (DA 1:311). The Sutta itself says that Sunakkhatta had only developed one-sided mental concentration.<sup>20</sup>

**2.2.2.3** Sunakkhatta is identified with **Kānārittha** (blind Arittha) of **the Bhūri,datta Jātaka** (J 543). Kānārittha is the youngest of the 4 sons of the nāga-king Dhata,raṭṭha and his queen Samudda,jā; the other sons are Sudassana, Bhūri,datta and Subhaga. Due to his extreme cruelty, Kānārittha was sent to serve in the deva realm to prevent him from destroying the human world. Kānārittha, in his life immediately before that, was a brahmin well versed in sacrificial lore.<sup>21</sup>

**2.2.2.4** As a sutta actor, **Sunakkhatta** shows great moral failure in not being able to see the Buddha for what he truly is and what the Buddha’s teachings are really about. His admiration of and devotion to 3 remarkably ludicrous naked ascetics only confirms Sunakkhatta’s own ignorance and gullibility in religious matters; hence, he seeks neither truth nor reason even when shown by the Buddha himself. Instead, Sunakkhatta deeply admires Kora,khattiya the dog-ascetic, Kālara,maṭṭaka the false ascetic boasting of 7 vows, and Pāthika,putta the braggart and cowardly ascetic.

The Sutta records the Buddha’s correct predictions on the karmic destinies of **the 3 naked ascetics** (which are no small miracles in themselves) on these 3 occasions, thus:

- §1.10.2 **Kora,khattiya** dies in 7 days, and is reborn as an asura of the lowest class; [§1.9]
- §1.14.3 **Kālara,maṭṭaka** gives up his vows for a worldly life, and soon dies; [§1.13]
- §2.13.4 “Incapable is the naked ascetic, **Pāthika,putta**, of meeting me face to face.” [§2.12]

On each and every one of these occasions, Sunakkhatta *agrees* that the Buddha had actually performed a miracle. Apparently, the fact that the Buddha has proven Sunakkhatta wrong may have caused him to harden his wrong views, and to refuse to acknowledge that the Buddha has actually performed miracles for him. Or, perhaps he does not consider these as “real” miracles, but regards them as being merely “showy.”

**2.2.2.5** In religious psychological and literary terms, Sunakkhatta can be regarded as a kind of typical or **archetypal cult follower**. Although he spent at least 3 years as a monk under the Buddha [2.2.2.2], he proved himself unamenable to the Buddha’s teaching, and was drawn to ostentatious cultish religious figures. Despite the Buddha proving these ascetics to be false and as facing the dire consequences of their foolishness, Sunakkhatta was still unrelenting in his wrong views.

The name “Sunakkhatta” seems to darkly hint at his own mind being drawn to subhuman aspects of religiosity. Although **Su-nakkhatta** means “bright star,” it also sounds like Sunakha-tta, which means “a dog-state.” He may not be outwardly a “dog-ascetic” like Kora,khattiya, but Sunakkhatta was certainly *dogged* in his wrong views and *dogged* after cultish figures.

<sup>19</sup> D 6,5/1:152 (SD 53.4).

<sup>20</sup> D 6,6/1:153 (SD 53.4).

<sup>21</sup> J 543/6:157, 168, 219. For a summary of J 543, see DPPN: Bhūridatta Jātaka; Kānārittha.

## 2.3 KORA,KHATTIYA THE DOG-ASCETIC

### 2.3.1 Living like an animal

**2.3.1.1** Probably, even as a monk, Sunakkhatta was influenced by the teachings of the dog-ascetic **Kora,khattiya** whose bizarre ritual practice Sunakkhatta piously admired. The Buddha told him that Kora,-khattiya would die of epilepsy in 7 days and be reborn among the lowest of the asuras, the Kāla,kañjakā. In a curious development, Sunakkhatta consulted Kora's corpse, which resurrected just long enough to confirm what the Buddha predicted. Even so, Sunakkhatta was not convinced. [§§1.8-10]

This episode may not appear to be a serious Dharma teaching for some of us, but it is certainly an interesting dramatic scene that draws and holds the attention of crowds and enthusiasts. People love a good story, but often well know where the dramatized bits are. Furthermore, most of us would perhaps know the story for its moral: that the foolish and evil are reborn in a suffering state, that is, they have to face their bad karma.

**2.3.1.2** What is seriously wrong with “dog-asceticism” is that it is merely a life of **rituals and vows**, and that it emulates the habits of **an animal**, a dog in this case. A life of rituals and vows only has an appearance of religiosity, in the sense that it is something difficult to do and which most normal people would not do—simply because they are not dogs.

The idea of being **human** is essentially that humans have the capacity for learning and change (evolving into better beings). The human state is capable of being free from the very things that define or limit humans, that is, the 5 physical senses and the mind, can be understood and properly used so that the mind is freed from becoming *subhuman*—an animal, an asura, a preta, or a hell-being—all of which are suffering states.

**2.3.1.3** When we ritualize our own life in the manner of **an animal**, we are limiting our capacity for mental growth. We are directing our senses—what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch—as those of an animal. Even worse, we are preventing the mind from being free of a cyclic life of dog habits. On an unwholesome level of being, when we are caught in an unwholesome level of being, we are likely to pretend to be what we are not, or when we are chained to a habit that limits our growth, we will be *fixed* into that state of being. This is called “**the downfall**” (āpaya).

Now, even when we only pretend to be good, say, to be generous, loving, kind or peaceful, to the extent we do *think* of any of these wholesome qualities, we know that goodness. However, our intention (the mind) is still unwholesome: we are driven by *greed, hatred or delusion*. In the end, or even now as we *pretend*, that unwholesome root—even a single one of them—is spreading like undergrowth that suffocates us, depriving us of wholesome mental and spiritual development.

### 2.3.2 The cow ascetic and the dog-ascetic<sup>22</sup>

**2.3.2.1** The episode on Kora,khattiya **the dog-ascetic** [§§1.7-1.10] is not the only case of bestial asceticism in the suttas. There are at least 2 other cases reported in the suttas, but those bestial ascetics, having heard the Buddha's teachings, saw the error of their ways and gave it up for Dharma practice. The 2 cases of Puṇṇa, the cow ascetic, and Seṇiya, the dog-ascetic, are reported in the **Kukkura,vatika Sutta** (M 57).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The nn here are mostly from SD 23.11 (1.1).

<sup>23</sup> M 57/1:387-392 (SD 23.11).

The Sutta opens with the young Koliya, **Puṇṇa**, a naked ascetic and cow ascetic, and **Seniya**, a dog-vow ascetic, visiting the Buddha. Each of them asks the Buddha about the other's destiny or future birth. The Buddha characteristically refuses to answer such questions [M 57,2 + 4], as they would be rather negative and troubling.

Puṇṇa questions the Buddha first, asking about Seniya's dog-asceticism, stating that he "is one who does what is hard to do. He eats his food when it is thrown to the ground. He has for a long time fully observed the dog vow" [M 57,2.2-4].

Only after being pressed thrice, the Buddha answers that if one regularly and completely behaves like a dog, *one would be reborn as a dog*. Puṇṇa weeps with remorse, saddened by his colleague's fate. [M 57,3 f]

Seniya then asks the Buddha about Puṇṇa's cow asceticism, but the Buddha, as before, thrice hesitates to answer. Finally, the Buddha replies that if Puṇṇa persists in his cow asceticism, *he would be reborn as a cow!* Seniya, too, weeps with remorse at his colleague's fate. [M 57,4 f]

**2.3.2.2** In both cases, the Buddha explains that *a false ascetic practice has less severe consequences when it is undertaken without wrong view than when it is accompanied by wrong view* [M 57,3 + 5]. We may not see cow asceticism or dog-asceticism today, but we still see various deviant religious practices justified by wrong views and casuistry. The consequences of such beliefs and practices can only be very harmful for their followers and bring great suffering in a karmic way even in the afterlife.

Both the ascetics, after realizing their ill-fated posthumous destinies, weep, "not because the Blessed One spoke thus to me," but that their false asceticism "has been fully observed for a long time" [M 57,4.2 + 6.2]. Apparently, this means that they are not upset at what the Buddha has said, but realize, after all, that the bestial conduct not only has no religious merit but would bring them future pain.

Puṇṇa then declares his faith in the Buddha and that both of them would like to abandon their wrong practices [M 57,6.2]. The Buddha admonishes them on the 4 types of karma.<sup>24</sup> At the end of the teaching, Puṇṇa takes refuge, Seniya joins the sangha, and in due course becomes an arhat [M 57,12-15].

## 2.4 KĀLARA, MATTĀKA AND HIS 7 VOWS

### 2.4.1 Living only on liquor and meat

**2.4.1.1** Later, Sunakkhatta directed his allegiance to the naked ascetic, **Kālara, mattāka**, who boasted of keeping to 7 vows, that is, he would observe religious nudity; live a celibate life; take only liquor and meat and abstain from rice and broth; and would never go beyond the 4 shrines around Vesālī [§1.11]. The vow to "take only liquor and meat" (*surā, mārīsen'eva yāpeyyām*) is a piece of wry humour and irony that contrasts with worldly or lax practices projected as religious acts, especially when ritual nudity was meant to epitomize ultimate renunciation of the world (outside of Buddhism).

**2.4.1.2** Kālara, mattāka however did not seem very bright. The Sutta relates that Sunakkhatta, who admired this naked ascetic, asked him a question. The result was simply disappointing:

Kālara, mattāka did not understand the question, and not understanding, **showed resentment, anger, and dejection**.

2 Then it occurred to Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī:

<sup>24</sup> The 4 kinds of karma are: (1) black karma with black result, (2) white karma with white result, (3) black-and-white karma bringing black-and-white result, and (4) neither black nor white karma with neither black nor white result: M 57,7-11/1:389-391 (SD 23.11).

“Let me not come into conflict with the admirable arhat recluse. Let nothing be that would bring us harm and ill for a long time!”

[§1.12]

Sunakkhatta’s reaction was equally disappointing. He thought he had troubled Kālara.maṭṭaka; but he failed to understand the significance of Kālara.maṭṭaka’s inability. Sunakkhatta feared offending the naked ascetic, that he would taste the fruit of bad karma! Yet, one must wonder, why was it that Sunakkhatta was not respectful of the Buddha in a similar manner, especially since the Buddha had answered all Sunakkhatta’s questions?

**2.4.1.3** This seems to suggest that Sunakkhatta not only admired the naked ascetics but was **fearful** of them, too—at least of Kālara.maṭṭaka—or he was defensive of them. However, he felt no fear of the Buddha, but then he had little respect for the Buddha, too. Clearly, then, Sunakkhatta was one inclined towards blind faith in cultish teachers.

The Buddha tells Sunakkhatta that Kālara.maṭṭaka, so admired by Sunakkhatta, would before long “end his days clothed and married; his diet (will be) rice broth and gruel; his range past all shrines in Vesālī ...” [§1.13.4]. Indeed, Kālara.maṭṭaka grew to be the wealthiest man in Vesālī thanks to the faith and generosity of his followers; and so he turned to a worldly life. Such a life of plenty and pleasure quickly took its toll on the worldly Kālara.maṭṭaka. He soon died—just as the Buddha predicted. [§1.14]

## 2.4.2 Fear and hope

**2.4.2.1** When it comes to **Pāthika,putta**, the situation is more dramatic, since he slandered the Buddha. Pāthika,putta boasted that he would meet the Buddha “halfway” in his own hermitage, and that he would work *twice* the number of miracles that the Buddha did! Sunakkhatta excitedly relayed this challenge to the Buddha.

Apparently, the Buddha’s response was, I think, for Sunakkhatta’s benefit. Perhaps the Buddha’s strong response could help Sunakkhatta see true reality and turn away from Pāthika and return to his monastic training. The Buddha replied with an act of truth (*sacca,kiriya*),<sup>25</sup> declaring that Pāthika,putta—on account of his slander—would never be able to meet the Buddha. If we were to try to do so, his head would split asunder!

**2.4.2.2** Sunakkhatta’s **fearfulness** towards Pāthika, or perhaps Sunakkhatta’s timidity, caused him to be defensive (again) this time of Pāthika: [2.4.1.3]

“In any case, bhante, the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta, may come to meet the recluse Gotama in an altered shape<sup>26</sup> to meet the Blessed One; and that would render the Blessed One’s words false.”

[§1.17.3]

Sunakkhatta desperately hoped that the Buddha’s words were false, or that Pāthika would outwit the Buddha. The problem was that Sunakkhatta had no idea whether Pāthika had any psychic power at all. [2.5.2.3]

<sup>25</sup> **An act of truth** (*sacca,kiriya*) is a solemn declaration of truth, expressed in wholesome or ritual speech, that is believed to have a wonder-working power to effect a naturally good outcome or a wholesome wish. The act is rooted in the idea that truth itself is a moral force, capable of influencing events, even natural phenomena. See SD 39.2 (2).

<sup>26</sup> Comy: He may assume an invisible body, or the form of a lion, or a tiger, and so on. (DA 3:325,6-8)

## 2.5 PĀTHIKA,PUTTA THE CHAIR-BOUND ASCETIC

### 2.5.1 Thunder but no rain

**2.5.1.1** Sunakkhatta next directed his devotion and admiration to Pāthika,putta, a naked ascetic of Vesālī, who publicly boasted that he could outdo the Buddha by performing twice more miracles than him. Sunakkhatta was naturally excited and deeply impressed with Pāthika,putta [§1.15]. Sunakkhatta invited the Buddha to “meet him halfway” (*upaḍḍha, patham agaccheyya*), that is, honour Pāthika,putta as an equal. The Buddha then told Sunakkhatta that Pāthika,putta had falsely predicted that **Ajita** the Licchavī general who had just died was reborn in “the great hell” (*mahā,niraya*).

The Buddha, by his own mind-reading ability, knew of Ajita’s actual destiny, and furthermore the deva Ajita, who had been born in Tāvatimsa, himself told the Buddha that Pāthika,putta was “a shameless liar.” Yet, Sunakkhatta remained unconvinced. [§1.18]

Later, the Buddha went to Pāthika,putta’s hermitage for his day-rest. The excited Sunakkhatta at once went into Vesālī to announce the impending confrontation—a duel of miracles—between the Buddha and Pāthika,putta. A large crowd of thousands gathered in the hermitage in anticipation of a grand display of superhuman psychic miracles. [§1.19]

**2.5.1.2** Pāthika,putta, however, upon hearing that the Buddha was at his own hermitage and that a huge crowd of thousands had gathered there, was simply terrified [§1.20.1 f]. At once he fled to the tinduka-stump wanderers’ park (*tinduka, khānu paribbājak’ārāma*). Three messengers went, one after the other, to Pāthika,putta, reminding him of his claims of miracle-working, and that the Buddha had come to his hermitage to accept the challenge.

(1) The 1<sup>st</sup> messenger was “**a certain man**” (*aññatara purisa*) who was sent to Pāthika,putta, asking him to return to his hermitage and face the Buddha. When that man went before Pāthika,putta with the request, Pāthika,putta said, “I’m coming, avuso! I’m coming, avuso!” but he was simply unable to rise from his seat. The man, being either simple or crude, asked Pāthika,putta:

“How now, avuso Pāthika,putta? Is your rump stuck to the seat, or is the seat stuck to your rump?”

(*Kiṁsu nāma te āvuso pāthika,putta, pāvaṭā su nāma te pīṭhakasmīṁ allīna pīṭhakam su nāma te pāvalāsu allīnam.*) (§1.21.5)

The man, noticing that Pāthika,putta was discomfited, returned to the assembly with the message. [§§1.20.3-1.21]

(2) The 2nd messenger was a **Licchavī chief minister** (*licchavī mahā,matta*), who appeared sympathetic to Pāthika,putta. For he coaxed Pāthika,putta, “If you come, we will make you the victor, and cause the recluse Gotama to lose” [§2.1.6]. Again, Pāthika,putta only uttered, “I’m coming, avuso! I’m coming, avuso!” but remained stuck to his seat.

The chief minister, too—like the first messenger (a certain man)—then asked:

“How now, avuso Pāthika,putta? Is your rump stuck to the seat, or is the seat stuck to your rump?” But the tone here was more likely of impatience or ridicule, probably annoyed at his own failure to move Pāthikka,putta. Noticing that Pāthika,putta was discomfited, the chief minister returned to the assembly with the news. [§§2.1-2.3]

(3) The 3<sup>rd</sup> messenger was Jāliya Dāru, **pattik'antevāsi** (the resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher), who went to fetch Pāthika,putta, but on discovering that he could not rise and was discomfited, Jāliya reviled him for his charlatany. We have no further information about Dāru, **pattika** the wooden-bowl teacher; but his pupil had approached the Buddha before for teachings [§2.4.1 n] and clearly knew some Buddha Dharma.

The Sutta presents Jāliya as being deeply respectful of the Buddha, since he severely chastises the discomfited Pāthika,putta as he remains immobile in his own seat. He relates **the Loma,haṁsa Jātaka** (J 94) to Pāthika,putta for being like the old jackal (in the Jātaka) who tried to roar like a lion, and for living on alms by pretending to better the Buddha. [§§2.6-12]

The assembly of Vesālī people then realized the real situation. Even if they were to declare:

**'Let us bind the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta with thongs, and drag him here with ox-yokes,'**<sup>27</sup> those thongs would break! [§2.3.3]

This is, of course, hyperbole, but it makes great literature, highlighting human pride and folly, and their consequences. We laugh, smile or nod wistfully, because we see it as true, and deservedly so. Pāthika,putta vainly boasts but fears to meet the Buddha; this is like thunder without rain, as stated in **the Valāhaka Sutta 2** (A 4.102),<sup>28</sup> or an “empty vessel,” in modern lingo.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.5.2 On being stuck to a chair

**2.5.2.1** One of the most hilarious moments in the suttas is when the boastful naked ascetic **Pāthika,putta**, who remained stuck to his seat when he was thrice [2.5.1.2] invited to meet the Buddha whom he had claimed he could best by doubling any miracles that the Buddha performed [§1.15]. Fear first arose in him when, as a result of this boast, Sunakkhatta enthusiastically announced the “duel” between Pāthika and the Buddha to the leading citizens of Vesālī [§1.19].

As a result, a huge assembly (of thousands) gathered in Pāthika,putta’s hermitage where the Buddha was waiting for Pāthika,putta [§1.20]. Hearing this, Pāthika,putta, “fear and trembling arose in him ... fled to the tinduka,stump wanderers’ park” [§1.20.2]. While Pāthika,putta was in the tinduka-stump wanderers’ park, 3 separate attempts by different people were made to dislodge Pāthika from his seat, so that he could meet the Buddha. Pāthika,putta remained stuck to his seat, unable to meet the Buddha.

**2.5.2.2** A possible cause of Pāthika’s being stuck to his chair is the tightening of muscles, that is, in the hip flexors, hamstrings, and calf muscles. This restricts the range of movement, making it harder for one to rise from a chair. The Sutta, however, only mentions that Pāthika,putta was filled with **fear**; and the commentary offers no further details. His fear could have paralyzed him.

Now, Pāthika,putta’s first felt **fear** was when he heard that a huge assembly had gathered in his own hermitage where the Buddha was too. We may thus surmise that it must be a symptom of **stage-fright**, the fear of facing such a huge crowd. In psychological terms, we can say that the Buddha was already very well known then and so the public generally attributed him **charisma**, that is, a personal ability to attract or influence others.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Evam assa mayaṁ acelaṁ pātika,puttaṁ yāhi vasrattāhi bandhitvā go,yuttehi āvinjeyyāmā ti,*

<sup>28</sup> A 4.102/2:103 (SD 73.16); cf **Valāhaka S 1** (A 4.101/2:102), SD 73.15.

<sup>29</sup> This saw is found in Shakespeare’s *Henry V* (1599), where we see the phrase “an empty vessel makes the loudest sound” (Act 3, Scene 4). The saying goes back as early as 1430 (*Pilgrimage of Man*, Early English Text Soc 1. 159-33): “A voyde vessel ... maketh outward a gret soun, Mor than ... what yt was ful.” (Oxford Concise Dict of Proverbs, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Sociologically, one with **charisma** is not merely forceful and strong but is one whose authority is based on supporters’ “devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and on the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.” (M Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1921; tr 1968:215).

**2.5.2.3** Another possible contributing factor to Pāthika,putta's fear and discomfiture was that the Buddha invoked **an act of truth** (*sacca,kiriya*) [2.4.1.3]. When Pāthika,putta made the false claim that he was capable of making twice the number of miracles that the Buddha performed, the Buddha declared:

"Incapable, Sunakkhatta, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.

If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, **his head would split asunder** (*muddhā'pi tassa vipateyya*)."

[§1.16.3]<sup>31</sup>

The suttas relate that when, in an engagement, the Buddha asks a reasonable question and the other party does not answer, **Vajrapāni**<sup>32</sup> appears mid-air with a thunder-bolt ready to hurl at the perpetrator!<sup>33</sup> This seems to be a dramatic vision of the fear of karmic consequences of "losing one's head" over wrong speech or conniving silence. The commentary explains the head-splitting phrase *literally*: "As ripe palm fruit would fall from its stalk and break up in 7 places."<sup>34</sup>

However, we find *no* references at all in the suttas or commentaries of anyone actually losing their head in this manner; they all wisely stayed with truth and reacted with respect for Dharma. The point is that the "head-shattering" expression was common in ancient India, especially since, for a *brahmodya* (brahminical philosophical debate) to proceed properly, fair questions have to be duly answered. The expression thus symbolizes speaking the truth and giving proper answers so that truth, justice and goodness prevail. [2.4.1.3]

**2.5.2.4** Similarly, Pāthika's fear led to his inability to rise from his seat to go to meet the Buddha in debate. Pāthika must have realized that he had slandered the Buddha with some serious untruths, and that he actually lacked any powers, psychic or not. Whether this immobility was due to paralysis of his bodily muscles or simply his reluctance to meet the Buddha, the dramatization of his immobility is to expose Pāthika as the dastardly charlatan that he was.

Ironically, Pāthika's immobility—reflexive or deliberate—shows that he knew his place in terms of superhuman psychic miracles (at least). He would be a greater fool to have to face the Buddha before a huge crowd, which would then expose him to greater public ridicule. In this sense, he may be said to be a better person than Sunakkhatta who remained *unremorseful, unchanged and untouched* throughout the narrative.

## 2.6 RITUALIZATION AND THE SUBHUMAN STATES

### 2.6.1 Rituals and vows as sources of charisma

**2.6.1.1** The humorous stories and ironic tales of **the Pāthika Sutta**—those of Sunakkhatta, of the 3 naked ascetics and of Bhaggava—all have an important and interesting Dharma teaching underpinning

<sup>31</sup> The Buddha mentions this phrase at §1.16.3, and it recurs 14 other times at §§1.17, 18 (6x), 22; 2.1, 3 (2x), 4, 12 (x2).

<sup>32</sup> A guardian of the Buddha, a deified but fierce form of the Greek Hercules hovering mid-air, ready to hurl a bolt of glowing iron-shaft, just above the antagonist, visible only to him and the Buddha: SD 21.3 (4.2); SD 54.22 (4.5.3.1).

<sup>33</sup> **Ambatṭha S** (D 3,1.20), SD 21.3 (1.1.3); **Cūla Saccaka S** (M 35,13-14), SD 26.5.

<sup>34</sup> *Bandhanā mutta,tāla,pakkarā viya gīvato pateyya, sattadhā vā pana phaleyya* (DA 3:824,37 f).

them: that of **attachment to rituals and vows** (*sīla-b, bata parāmāsa*). This is, technically, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3 fetters,<sup>35</sup> and is here taken to broadly refer to any kind of ritual or ritualized attitude, especially motivated by greed, hatred or delusion. Such a ritualized conduct can occur psychologically, morally, and spiritually.

In this context, we should be familiar with 2 useful psychological terms for a better understanding of the conduct of the 3 naked ascetics, for example, of Sunakkhatta's attitude towards them, and of the wanderer Bhaggava's conduct.

The 2 terms are **rituals** [2.6.1.2] and **ritualization** [2.6.1.3]. I'm using these terms for a clear purpose, that of the better understanding of a psychology of unwholesome religious conduct, such as those depicted in **the Pāthika Sutta** (D 24). This is an attempt at exploring and explaining the early Buddhist psychology of the misuse and dangers of rituals and vows (ritualization) and the human state (humanity). Understandably, this is also a modern examination of the 3<sup>rd</sup> fetter that prevents us from reaching the path of awakening.<sup>36</sup>

**2.6.1.2** Generally, I have used “**ritual**” (uncountable) to refer to either rituals or vows, or both in a psychological sense. This idea is closely represented in the APA Dictionary of Psychology's 1<sup>st</sup> definition of ritual, thus:

1. a form of **COMPELSION**<sup>37</sup> involving a rigid or stereotyped act that is carried out repeatedly and is based on idiosyncratic rules that do not have a rational basis (eg, having to perform a task in a certain way). Rituals may be performed to reduce distress and anxiety caused by an obsession.
2. a ceremonial act or rite, usually involving a fixed order of actions or gestures and the saying of certain prescribed words. ....
3. more generally, any habit or custom that is performed routinely and with little or no thought.

(APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2007: 922 f)

In the suttas (especially here in D 24, and also in **the Sunakkhatta Sutta**, M 105), we see **Sunakkhatta** as a person obsessed with “religious power (experience and knowledge)” —he is especially interested in superhuman miracles (*uttari, manussa, dhamma pāṭīhāriya*) and knowledge of the “beginning of things” (*aggañña*). He gives up the monastic training because the Buddha refuses to show him miracles or teach him the beginning of things [2.2.1].

We may thus say that Sunakkhatta is “**obsessed**” with the notions of miracles and the “first cause,” that is, with “religious mysteries,” beliefs and events that depend on mere faith and belief. Sunakkhatta is drawn to the 3 naked ascetics because they exhibit external signs of religious power; hence, he believes in

<sup>35</sup> That is, the first 3 of the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*) that prevent us from reaching the path of awakening: 1. self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), 2. spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), and 3. attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*). In a few places, *vicikicchā* is listed 3<sup>rd</sup>, eg, Pm 1:300; Thī 165; ThA 175 f (on Thā 74); ThĀ 158; can 110. In this context, *vicikicchā* is one of the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). Cf the 2 lists of “10 fetters” in Abhs 7.10 f.

<sup>36</sup> **The “3 fetters”** (*ti saṃyojana*) are 1. self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), 2. spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), and 3. attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*). See SD 56.1 (4.4.1); **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8. For a broader psychological explanation, see eg B Spilka, “Ritual,” Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion, 2010:789-791.

<sup>37</sup> **Compulsion** n. a type of behavior (eg, hand washing, checking) or a mental act (eg, counting, praying) engaged in to reduce anxiety or distress. Typically, the individual feels driven or compelled to perform the compulsion to reduce the distress associated with an obsession or to prevent a dreaded event or situation. For example, individuals with an obsession about contamination may wash their hands repetitively until their skin is cracked and bleeding. Such compulsions do not provide pleasure or gratification, although the individual may experience some temporary relief from engaging in them, and they are disproportionate or irrelevant to the feared situation that they are used to neutralize. See COUNTERCOMPULSION; OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER.

them—by attributing **charisma**<sup>38</sup> to these 3 naked ascetics. It is likely that Sunakkhatta himself lacks self-confidence in his own spiritual abilities, and feeling helpless, is *unconsciously*<sup>39</sup> drawn to external manifestations of power in others, especially a religious teacher. By associating with such individuals, Sunakkhatta thus feels “empowered” and secure.

In other words, Sunakkhatta is ritualistically drawn to the 3 naked ascetics as cult teachers. He is repeatedly, compulsively, inspired by them “based on idiosyncratic rules that do not have a rational basis.” Hence, he refuses to believe or is unable to accept that these naked ascetics have failed even when this is clearly the case.

**2.6.1.3** The strange behaviour of the cultish **naked ascetics**—Kora,khattiya [2.3], Kālara,maṭṭaka [2.4] and Pāthika [2.5]—can be explained by the psychological term, ritualization. The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines **ritualization** as follows:

**ritualization** n. the process by which a normal behavioral action becomes a communication signal representing the behavior or its physiological consequence. For example, among non-human animals, threat displays may be the ritualization of the conflict between attack and escape, incorporating aspects of both, or a ritualization solely of impending attack, as when dogs pull back their lips in a snarl in response to a threat. This lip-pulling began as a way for dogs to avoid biting themselves in an attack, but as other animals recognized this behavior as a precursor to biting, it became ritualized into a warning communication. Animals learn that ritualized behavior can be an effective form of avoiding a fight.

(APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2007:923)<sup>40</sup>

Cult teachers and charismatic leaders may be said to have special “animal” instincts for reading people, that is, to understand and exploit human weaknesses and tendencies. A cult guru, for example, may conduct himself as being a profoundly compassionate person who does not respond to criticisms from others. He would thus insinuate to his devoted followers (the more influential ones) by “playing the victim,” and say, for example, “Critic A is scolding me, you know!” His followers would then reprimand the critic to keep him in line or to alienate him.

## 2.6.2 “The downfall” of the 3 naked ascetics

**2.6.2.1** The suttas speak of at least 2 “dog-ascetics”—Seṇiya and Kora,khattiya—and a “cow ascetic,” Puṇṇa, a friend of Seṇiya [2.3.2]. Indians have respected cows since ancient times.<sup>41</sup> Hence, for a human to emulate a cow would surely attract the admiration of many who love cows and move others with the

<sup>38</sup> **Charisma** n. the special quality of personality that enables an individual to attract and gain the confidence of large numbers of people. It is exemplified in outstanding political, social, and religious leaders. APA Dict of Psychology 2007:176.

<sup>39</sup> Meaning here, on account of his latent tendencies of lust (for power), repulsion (against a feeling of insecurity) and ignorance (of true reality). Since these are powerful unconscious tendencies, he is also likely to feel compulsive and irrational **fear** due to a lack of such powers. Hence, his demands on the Buddha, rejection of the Buddha, and being drawn to the 3 naked ascetics, as sources of power.

<sup>40</sup> On an examination of potential evolutionary ritual behaviour in animals, See J Huxley, “A discussion on ritualization of behavior in animals and man: Intro. *Phil Trans of the Royal Soc of London, ser B, Biological Sciences*, 251 n 772, 1966:249-524.

<sup>41</sup> Cows are said to provide humans with the “5 bovine tastes” (*pañca go, rasa*): milk (*khīra*), cream (*dadhi*), buttermilk [curds] (*takka*), butter (*navanīta*), and ghee (*sappi*) (V 1:244; DhA 1:158, 323, 397; SnA 322; VvA 147). See **Potthapāda S** (D 9,52 +n) SD 7.14; SD 50.20 comy 9-10 (2) n.

ascetic habit of living naked in the open like a cow. A “dog’s life” to the ancient Indians, too, can be remarkable when a human ascetic lives such a naturally simple life.

Sunakkhatta, for example, on seeing **Kora,khattiya**, the dog-ascetic, thinks:

“How truly admirable does he look, the holy man, the recluse *creeping on all fours, or sprawling on the ground, taking up food, hard or soft, with only his mouth!*” [§1.7]

The other two ascetics—Seṇiya the dog-ascetic and Puṇṇa the cow ascetic—heeding the Buddha’s warning that *when one lives like an animal one would be reborn as an animal*, they both gave up their bestial asceticism to live moral lives, and are thus spared subhuman rebirths.

Kora,khattiya, however, remains a dog-ascetic, exploiting the support and admiration of those who are deluded enough to accept *subhuman conduct* as a sign of spirituality. Ironically, such a bizarrely false imitation of helpless **animals** is also a summary misrepresentation of animal nature. Since Kora misrepresented animal nature and exploited human gullibility, his karma was worse than either: he was reborn as the lowest of **the asuras**, the most exploitative of subhumans!

The Buddha himself has declared animals are likely to be more loyal and trustworthy than most humans, and through such goodness animals are reborn in heaven.<sup>42</sup>

**2.6.2.2** Similarly, the naked ascetic, **Kālara,maṭṭaka** [2.4] shows religious novelty and artfulness by living as a naked ascetic who claims to observe a celibate life, taking only liquor and meat, abstaining from rice and broth, and never going beyond the 4 shrines around Vesālī [§1.11]. This odd mishmash of “vows” will impress any deeply religious person who is piously moved by the mysterious ways of holiness, when even feigned. Kālara,maṭṭaka goes on to become the wealthiest man in town but dies shortly as one. [§1.14]

The suttas do not mention Kālara,maṭṭaka’s karmic destiny. Since he has been living on the undeserved faith and support of deluded humans, Kālara,maṭṭaka is likely to be reborn as a **preta**, a type of subhuman beings who are horrifically ugly and perpetually hungry, who see images of their favourite foods but that turn into waste the moment they try to feed on them. They do not even have their own domain and wander along walls, entrances and crossroads, hoping for something that may assuage their hunger and suffering.

**2.6.2.3** As for the naked ascetic **Pāthika,putta**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> cultish guru, we know very little about him, except that he has his own park as a hermitage [§1.19], and that he lives off the Buddha’s success, “living on the harvests of the well-farer, feeding on food left over after the well-farer has been served” [§2.7.4]. He does not have any powers or eccentricities of the other 2 naked ascetics. However, as we have noted [§2], he outdoes them by his loud boasts that he could outdo the Buddha’s miracles by doubling them himself.

On hearing that the Buddha is resting in his hermitage, waiting for him, and there is a huge crowd anticipating the tournament of miracles (where he claims he will double the Buddha’s miracles), Pāthika,-putta flees to another wanderers’ park and is unable to rise from his seat despite being invited to return to his own hermitage three times! Despite all that, Sunakkhatta still has more faith in Pāthika,putta than in the Buddha!

We are not told about Pāthika,patta’s karmic fate. Apparently, he remains stuck to his seat, echoing, “I’m coming, avuso! I’m coming, avuso!” whenever invited to meet the Buddha. In this sense, his karmic fate is worse than any of the other devious naked ascetics. Perhaps, we may still see Pāthika,puttas in our own days, **stuck to their seats** unable to rise to the occasion even when the Buddha is within human reach just by listening to the Dharma.

<sup>42</sup> On the elephant and the monkey serving the Buddha in Pārileyyaka forest, see eg DhA 1.5/1:58-60. On animals going to heaven, see SD 6.1 (3); Reflections R68a & R152.

**2.6.2.4** It does not really matter whether the disreputable naked ascetics of the Pāthika Sutta really lived or not, or whether any of the Sutta stories is historically real. We may even take them as **myths**, that is, powerful stories of the lustful, the hateful and the deluded, the karma works by itself, and what we can learn from the karmic effects.

Thus, the tragically comical naked ascetics are cultish gurus and charlatans who clearly have no respect for others, whom they exploit for their faith and wealth. Such charlatans lack love and respect for humans and for life, and capacity for *doing good*. In short, they lack any **humanity**.

Understandably, the basic Buddhist practice is that of living by the moral precepts of respect for life, for property, for others, for truth and for mindfulness. We live as moral humans so that we grow as divine beings, or at least do not lose our humanity, our capacity for self-awakening.

### **2.6.3 Ritualization as moral downfall**

**2.6.3.0** The karmic destinies of the 3 naked ascetics of the Pāthika Sutta, charlatans who peddle religion in a showy way, are fittingly known as “**the downfall**” (*apāya*) or existential failure, the state of loss and deprivation. One who falls into any of these subhuman states has almost no way of rising out of it on one’s own effort since subhumans are mostly bereft of wholesomeness and is unable to cultivate any.

The sutta teachings on the downfall should not be misconstrued as referring to “other bad people.” Rather they are stories about what happens to us when we disrespect and exploit others, and fail to see our own capacity for wholesome growth. So long as we are rooted in greed, hatred and delusion, we are surely inching our way towards our own **downfall**.

Moments and durations of **downfall** arise in us surreptitiously. When we are not acting, speaking or thinking *charitably, kindly and wisely*, it is likely that we may be treading the path of our own downfall, which may happen in any of 3 ways: *socially, psychologically and spiritually*.

**2.6.3.1 The social path to our downfall** is alluded to in the **Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31) as the 6 personal and social conditions by which we are nose-led to a deprivation of mindfulness and heedfulness, resulting in a sure loss of happiness and wealth, if not a loss of our humanity. These are the 6 ways that tend to lead us down the path of moral downfall:

- (1) habitually **taking strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks**;
- (2) habitually **loitering in [roaming] the streets** at unseemly hours;
- (3) frequenting **fairs [shows]**;<sup>43</sup>
- (4) being addicted to **gambling**;
- (5) habitually associating with **bad friends**; and
- (6) the habit of **idleness**

(D 31,6-14), SD 4.1

By “**immoral**” here is meant the lack of self-love (or self-regard) and a respect for others (a wholesome acceptance of others as they are). Thus, to be moral means that *we love ourself* (by keeping a healthy mind in a healthy body) and *we respect others* (when we communicate positively with others, we shape our own minds and lives positively, too).

In short, the moral life—wholesome words and deeds that are timely—is the foundation of humanity, that is, how we conduct ourself towards others. This is significant because we are somehow connected with people in different ways all the time. Yet, we at some point say or do the wrong thing, or fail to say or

<sup>43</sup> In modern terms, these would be places that induce us to be unmindful or unrestrained in the senses.

do something; but so long as we learn from such occasions, we would surely be more happily and beneficially connected with others, especially those whom we regard as significant.

#### **2.6.4 Ritualization as psychological downfall**

**2.6.4.1** As we interact with others, we will notice how words and actions move people with joy or peace, or hit them with anger and pain. When we reflect with some care over such situations, we would realize that to be “moral” we need to know ourselves better. This self-knowledge becomes clearer and wiser when we understand that the key factor behind being *moral*—how we treat others well—is **how we think**; that is, we need to be free from *greed, hatred and delusion* for our actions and speech to be positive and wholesome. Our actions and speech should be rooted in charity, kindness and wisdom; we need to have **good intention**.

**2.6.4.2** Conversely, when we lack good intention, and harbour a **bad intention**—when we act out of greed, hatred or delusion—we will fail others, and when this becomes a habit, we keep failing ourselves. Our actions and speech become reactive; we simply, often without a thought, we act or speak just to counter others or be on top of things, as it were. On a simple level, we become disagreeable; on the far side, we become narcissistic, self-centred. Such a reactive habit drags us into the path of **psychological downfall**.

**2.6.4.3** We may learn a bit about **psychological downfall** and how to avoid it from the teaching on the **sources of loss** (*apāya, muha*)<sup>44</sup> in the **Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3). The Buddha explains to Ambaṭṭha, the pupil of the brahmin Pokkhara-sāti, that one should first have “supreme attainment of knowledge and conduct” (*anuttara vijjā, carāṇa sampadā*) before one can successfully live the religious life and serve others properly, thus:

“What do you think, Ambaṭṭha?

*Without fully realizing this supreme attainment of knowledge and conduct, could you, Ambaṭṭha, along with your teacher, live on available fruits as food, and live on bulbs, roots and fruits, and dwell attending to the fire god [Agni], and build a four-door almshouse at a crossroads [where four highways meet], and dwell there, thinking,*

*‘Whosoever, whether recluse or brahmin, shall come here, from any of these 4 quarters, we shall honour him according to our ability and according to our power?’*

“No, master Gotama.”

(D 3,2.4), SD 21.3 (1.1.5 f)

**2.6.4.4** What then are the qualifications of a truly awakened religious teacher? The **Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3) lists the following qualifications of the “supreme attainment of knowledge and conduct” (*anuttara vijjā, carāṇa sampadā*) as follows:<sup>45</sup>

##### SUPREME CONDUCT

(1) restraint by moral virtue (training in moral virtue)	<i>sīla, saṃvara</i>	[§§2.2.1-D 1.27],
(2) sense-restraint	<i>indriya, saṃvara</i>	[D 2,64],
(3) mindfulness and clear knowledge	<i>sati, sampajañña</i>	[D 2,65],

<sup>44</sup> *Cattāri apāya, mukhāni*. Comy: *vināśa, mukhāni*, “sources of destruction” (DA 1:269 = S 943); A 2:166,16 (= *apāya, vāhanaka-c, chiddāni*, “uncertainties leading to destruction,” AA 3:155); A 4:283,14 (= *vināśassa ṭhānāni*, “bases for destruction,” AA 4:138) = 287,21; opp *āya, mukha* (cf D 1:74,21); cf AA 3:156 f. Cf *cha bhogānam* ~, “6 sources of destruction of wealth” (D 3:181,20, 182,21).

<sup>45</sup> SD 21.3 (1.1.5).

(4) contentment	<i>santuṭṭhi</i>	[D 2,66],
(5) abandoning the mental hindrances, ie, meditation	<i>saṃādhi</i>	[D 2,67-75.1],
(6) the 4 dhyanas	<i>jhāna</i>	[D 2,75.2-82].

SUPREME KNOWLEDGE

(7) knowledge and vision (insight knowledge)	<i>ñāṇa,dassana</i> <sup>46</sup>	[D 2,83-84],
(8) knowledge of the mind-made body	<i>mano.mayā,kāya,ñāṇa</i>	[D 2,85-86],
(9) psychic powers	<i>iddhi,vidhā</i>	[D 2,89-90],
(10) the divine ear (clairaudience)	<i>dibba,sota</i>	[D 2,91-92],
(11) mind-reading	<i>ceto,pariya,ñāṇa</i>	[D 2,93-94],
(12) the divine eye (retrocognition)	<i>dibba,cakkhu</i>	[D 2,95-96],
(13) the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes	<i>āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa</i>	[D 2,97-98].

These 13 qualities comprise the Buddha's knowledge and conduct; hence he is said to "have attained knowledge and conduct" (*vijjā,carāṇa,sampanna*). (1-4) constitutes moral training; (5-6) mental or meditative training; (7-12) wisdom training; and (2) full liberation (arhathood). The wisdom training refers to the fullest development of one's mental powers, along with the various **superhuman psychic powers**; but the defining quality for the arhat, of which the Buddha is one, too, is "the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes," that is, the destruction of the influxes (*āsava*) or defilements of *sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance*.

**2.6.4.5 The unawakened practitioner** should at least have "supreme conduct," which means one is "morally restrained and virtuous" (qualities 1-4) and mentally developed (qualities 5-6), too. In practical terms, the various aspects of "**supreme conduct**" (cultivation of the body) can be explained briefly as follows:

- (1) **restraint by moral virtue**—keeping to the 5 precepts;
- (2) **sense-restraint**—keeping the sense-faculties away from unwholesome sense-objects, and keeping them wholesomely engaged, that is, reflecting on impermanence, etc;
- (3) **mindfulness and clear awareness**—directing the mind away from unwholesome objects; directing it to a wholesome object, and keeping the mind fixed on it;
- (4) **contentment**—enjoying the moment wholesomely, and using things and regarding beings as being impermanent, accepting them as they are;
- (5) **abandoning the mental hindrances**—pushing away the 5 hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt); preparing conducive conditions for mental cultivation and concentration;
- (6) **the 4 dhyanas**—freeing the mind from the 5 hindrances and letting go of the 5 sense-faculties, so that the mind is fully focused in dhyana.

Quality 6 (the 4 dhyanas) is not easily accomplished by most people today; hence, we should focus on practising at least the first 5 qualities to the best of our ability. One who has fully developed the first 4 qualities is said to be "**bodily cultivated**" (*bhāvita,kāya*). One who is also able to fully and easily cultivate quality (5) and possibly (6) reach the path, is said to be "**mentally cultivated**" (*bhāvita,cittā*).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> On *ñāṇa,dassana* and claims of omniscience, see Jayatilleke 1963:419 (§720).

<sup>47</sup> On these 2 terms, see *Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja S* (S 35.127,7) SD 27.6a.

Such a person—who is bodily cultivated and mentally cultivated, or diligently cultivating both body and mind—is said to be a “good” **worldling** (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), that is, one who keeps to the 5 precepts at least. With both body and mind cultivated, one is safe from any moral downfall or psychological downfall.

### **2.6.5 Ritualization as spiritual failing**

**2.6.5.1** The Buddha often speaks against **ritualization** in spiritual practice. We have to be mindfully present in our spiritual practice, which is a renewed attempt to look directly into true reality. By **ritualization** is meant either a deliberate or an unconscious habit of allowing *greed, hatred or delusion* (the 3 unwholesome roots) to drive and control our behaviour; this is the passive aspect of a pathologically ritualized life. We are but dark shadows cast by the blinding lights of these unwholesome roots.

As we get caught up in ritualized living of our own habits, we also notice those of others, especially the human crowd. We see them as being driven and nose-led by the same dark powers which have shaped us. We learn to use and exploit the *predictability* of such behaviour. This is the active or exploitative aspect of a pathologically ritualized life.

We notice that people tend to use the same kind of strategy to avoid negative or undesired states, and to keep repeating certain acts to gain some fancied or favourable goals or results. There is always a ritualized pattern in our reactions to problems.

Another word for such ritualization or ritualized tendency is **superstition**. It has 2 key characteristics: that of depending on an external agency, that is, there is dependence (a lack of self-effort and self-reliance) and belief in some kind of “external agency,” some other person, or being, or disembodied agent (like spirits, demons, gods, God and so on).

**2.6.5.2** In psychological terms, the significance of ritual within individuals implies a broad range of possibilities. At one end of this continuum, there is an *obsessive compulsive* approach that is narrow and protective-restrictive. In the extreme, pathology as in **scrupulosity** (a form of OCD<sup>48</sup> involving religious or moral obsessions) may be present. At the other extreme the search for meaning and spur of purpose in ritualistic actions often reflect a desire for connections, even for merging with oneself, others, and the sacred, the mysterious or the feared.<sup>49</sup>

When we feel we are powerless to change things for ourselves or in the conditions that control us, we tend to see them as more “powerful” than we are. Hence, we slave to please and perhaps influence our master. We hand our remote to this greater other-power, and imagine ourselves doing its bidding. We feel moved by the spirit. Our word, speech and mind are those of that spirit; *we merely do its bidding*.

**2.6.5.3** Once we see and accept ourselves as mere creatures and tools of some higher external agency, some Higher Mover, our *greed, hatred, delusion and fear* assume the voice and hand of the Mover. The Moving Hand writes our fate that shapes our acts, our speech, our thoughts. We are taught or conditioned to accept this Moving Hand as being that of Almighty God or some unremitting Fate.

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<sup>48</sup> An **obsessive compulsive disorder** (OCD) a disorder characterized by recurrent intrusive thoughts (obsessions) that prompt the performance of neutralizing rituals (compulsions). Typical obsessions involve themes of contamination, dirt, or illness (fearing that one will contract or transmit a disease) and doubts about the performance of certain actions (eg, a preoccupation that one has neglected to turn off a home appliance). Common compulsive behaviors include repetitive cleaning or washing, checking, ordering, repeating, and hoarding. The obsessions and compulsions—which are recognized by affected individuals (though not necessarily by children) as excessive or unreasonable—are time-consuming (more than 1 hour per day), cause significant distress, and interfere with functioning. Although OCD has traditionally been considered an anxiety disorder, it is increasingly thought to be in a separate diagnostic category. (APA Dict of Psychology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2007)

<sup>49</sup> See B Spilka, Ency of Psychology and Religion, 2010:791.

We may be born with a human body, but rarely are **our minds** human; *our mind is that of a creature*:

Such a mind becomes that of <b>a preta</b> when it is habitually driven by	insatiable desires.
Such a mind becomes that of <b>an asura</b> when we habitually	demean and exploit others.
Such a mind becomes that <b>of an animal</b> when we live in	fear and ignorance.
Such a mind becomes that of <b>a hell-being</b> when we are habitually caught in	hatred and violence. <sup>50</sup>

These are all states of protracted repetitive unwholesome routines, seeing and running after “something” out there. The *preta* runs after food; the *asura* seeks power; the *animal* is driven by sense-pleasure; the *hell-being* lives in violence.

These are states of “deprivation” because we are deprived of our humanity; states of “downfall” because we fall from the human state. These are suffering states; these are hells. These are the sub-human states of “deprivation, suffering, downfall, hell” (*apāya duggati vinipāta niraya*).<sup>51</sup> They are such terrible states that we simply try to deny them: they do not exist! Perhaps, they do not exist “out there.” What we fear most punishes us worst. Even by denying them, we deny *something* into existence! The suffering is real; we call them by different names.<sup>52</sup>

**2.6.5.4** When we meet **the Buddha** or hear him (even today), a window opens for us into the light of a bright new day. We see the rising and setting of the sun, the beaming of the moon and twinkle of stars. We begin to see **time** as determining and embracing us and everything. Looking deeper, we see the unremitting cycle of time at work. It is a cycle of change, becoming other, ending and arising. We see time as patterning and shaping our behaviour.

What we *did* before, we tend to *do* now, and *will* likely do again. Yet a new day always comes and time changes; we can change with the times. **A single good thought** shapes a good act, that makes what we are, and acting over time in this way, we shape our destiny. Time is karma; it shapes and feeds us; we grow old with karma; we grow up when we understand karma. We grow in wisdom and mature in freedom. We are then free from time itself by awakening; this the Buddha calls **nirvana**, it is time-free; hence, death-free.

### 3 Aggañña: Knowledge of the foremost

#### **3.0 MEANINGS OF AGGAÑÑA**

##### 3.0.1 Dictionary meanings of *aggañña*

The term ***aggañña***<sup>53</sup> has the following dictionary senses, with references to their usages:<sup>54</sup>

- (1) (mfn & n) “chief, foremost, principal, primary; primal, primordial, primitive, original”; [3.1]

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<sup>50</sup> On these 4 states of decline (rebirth): asura, animal, preta and hell states, see SD 54.3f (2.2.4).

<sup>51</sup> SD 2.22 (1.7).

<sup>52</sup> As wrong-view destinies, see (**Sāla, vatika**) **Lohicca S** (D 12,20), SD 34.8; as psychological states, ie, mental experiences, see SD 62.11 (2.3.11.2).

<sup>53</sup> DP 1:10d (*agga-ñña*): Cf Skt *agrañī*, acc *agrañyam*. See n10, *porāna agga akkhara*.

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion on *aggañña*, see Collins, “The Discourse on What is Primary (*Aggañña-sutta*),” *J of Indian Philosophy* 21 1993a:352 n72.

(2) (n) the beginning of things, “origin, (re)arising,” as in **the Pāthika Sutta** (D 3:4,12 + 28,8 f), or more specifically, the beginning of the world (*aggam akkharan’ti lok’uppatti, vamśa, katham*, DA 868,32). [3.1.1.2; 3.2]

### **3.0.2 The 5 senses of *aggañña***

**3.0.2.1** The term ***aggañña*** is used in the suttas in at least 5 ways, depending on the context, that is, with the following senses:

1. a natural sense	“naturally foremost”;	[3.1]
2. a cosmological sense	“the beginning of things”	[3.2]
3. a social sense	“socially foremost”	[3.3]
4. a spiritual sense	“the primal good”	[3.4]
5. a general sense	‘knowledge of the foremost’	[3.5]

Senses 1-4 are the connotative usages of *aggañña*; they each reflect a special usage or context of a teaching or statement. Sense 5 is the denotative sense, meaning that it underpins all the connotations of *aggañña*. These 5 senses of *aggañña*, like numerous important words in the Pali canon, depend on the context of its usage or situation. In a certain context, a single sense will predominate, and that sense helps to clarify the teaching or the nature of things. However, each of these senses is, in some way, interrelated with all the other senses. In other words, we should imagine these meanings as forming a network of senses, even as one of the senses plays a key role in the discourse.

**3.0.2.2** How does *aggañña* have the sense of “**knowledge of the foremost**”?

Analogous with *paññā*, *saññā*, etc, it is possible to see *aggañña* resolved as follows:

*agga*, “foremost” + *ñāṇa* “knowledge”, “knowledge of the foremost” or “foremost knowledge.”

This is the denotative or defining sense of *aggañña*. Contextually or connotatively, it can mean “beginning of things,” in the sense of a re-arising of the world or universe, not “the first cause” or even *a* first cause; for there is none. Everything in samsara occurs as a cycle, endlessly, happening in time, and time has neither beginning nor ending. Without time, we cannot even say there is “nothing.”

These 5 usages can be seen in, for example, **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), which we will now briefly examine.<sup>55</sup>

### **3.1 THE 1<sup>ST</sup> SENSE OF AGGAÑÑA (NATURAL SENSE)**

#### **3.1.1 Aggañña as “naturally foremost”**

**3.1.1.1** On the face of it, **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27)<sup>56</sup> appears as a narrative of the early evolution of the physical universe, of plant-life, of beings and of society. The details of the Sutta describe how early humans learned to conduct themselves in mutually beneficial ways, and to organize themselves socially, economically and morally into an orderly and just society, so that progress—physical, mental and spiritual—was possible.

Underlying the Aggañña Sutta is a subtext of **wry humour** relating the actions of the early humans (our common ancestors) while driven by greed, lust, hatred or delusion—sometimes subtly, sometimes crude-

<sup>55</sup> For an early study of *aggañña* and its polysemy, see SD 2.19 (1.2).

<sup>56</sup> D 27/3:80-97 (SD 2.19).

ly. In a delightful, remarkably science-fiction-like fashion, the Buddha relates that “sweet earth”<sup>57</sup> arose and “spread itself evenly over the waters where those [early] beings were; it looked just like a skim of cream that forms over hot milk as it cools.” It was richly colourful (like butter), fragrant (like ghee) and sweet (like pure wild honey).

A certain greedy being (says the Sutta) “tasted the sweet earth **with his finger**,”<sup>58</sup> and was enthralled by the taste. Other beings followed suit. Craving overcame them; they began “feeding on the sweet earth, **making lumps** (large morsels) of it.”<sup>59</sup> Virtuous monastics listening to this episode would probably blush or clear their throat, perhaps politely laugh. They see irony [4] in these stories; and *irony* is a common theme in humour.<sup>60</sup>

**3.1.1.2 The Aggañña Sutta** narrative continues by relating that, over time, the “sweet earth” [3.1.1.1] disappeared. This left the early beings dismal; says the Sutta:

13.5 “When the sweet earth disappeared, they assembled and lamented,  
‘Oh, the taste! Oh, the taste!’<sup>61</sup>

13.6 Nowadays, when people get a taste of something good, they say,  
‘Oh, the taste! Oh, the taste!’

they are merely resorting to a **primordial**<sup>62</sup> **norm**<sup>63</sup> without knowing its meaning.<sup>64</sup>

(D 27,13.5 f/3:86,24) SD 2.19

The emotional reaction of the early beings to these changes in the evolving new world of ours, it is hinted, remains in our collective memory. So it was in the past, so it often is in the present. When we are unable to obtain any kind of food or unable to get the right taste that we are used to, we tend to lament “Oh, the taste! Oh, the taste!” This is “resorting to or falling merely back on an ancient primordial norm” (*tad eva porāṇam aggarām akkharam anupatanti*, says **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27) [above]).

### **3.1.2 Subtext of the Aggañña Sutta**

**3.1.2.1 The subtext** of the Aggañña Sutta is clear: even in the earliest times, such actions as licking one’s fingers or hands while eating, and taking large morsels, are simple unbecoming—what more for monastics who have avowed the training to be mindful, to eat in moderation, and so on. **The Aggañña Sutta** of course does not stop here; it goes on to relate in a most gripping manner, how some beings acted **immorally**, thus:<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Some kind of primal nourishing or protein crusts.

<sup>58</sup> *Rasa,paṭhavīm aṅguliyā sāyi*. This action contravenes **Sekh** 52, 53 (V 4:198,1 f).

<sup>59</sup> *Rasa,paṭhavīm hatthehi ālumpa,kārakām upakkamīṁsu paribhuñjitum*, which contravenes **Sekh 39** (V 4:194,15 f), **40** (V 4:194,25 f), poss **42** (V 4:195,10 f) & **46** (V 4:195,27 f).

<sup>60</sup> SD 2.19 (7.2 + 7.4).

<sup>61</sup> *Aho rasām aho rasām*, or “Tasty, tasty!”

<sup>62</sup> “Primordial,” *aggañña*, also “primordial, primitive, original.” For other usages see [3].

<sup>63</sup> *Tad eva porāṇam aggarām akkharam anupatanti*. “Norm,” *akkhara*, also “imperishable” Walshe renders it as “observance.” See §15.9 + n on “Norm” there.

<sup>64</sup> This phrase *porāṇa agga akkhara* recurs 7 times in the Sutta: **D 27**,13.6, 15.7, 16.10, 21.4, 23.5, 24.3, 25.3, (SD 2.19). Cf *paurāṇam akṣaram agninyam*, Mvst 1:340,17, tr “ancient primeval expression” (Mvst:J 1:287), where in fn 1, Jones suggests “making the obvious emendation of *-agninyam* into *-agrajñam*.

<sup>65</sup> On Aggañña S and the Vinaya, see SD 2.19 (7.2).

**Aggañña Sutta (D 27)**

§12 they tasted the sweet earth with their finger  
they made large lumps of the sweet earth and ate it

§16 they committed sexual misconduct  
§17 they built houses and enjoyed sensual pleasures therein  
§17 they stored food for 8 days or more

§19 they stole from others (who had food-stores)  
§19 they consciously lied  
§19 “taking up of a rod” (physical violence) against one another  
§25 shudras “lead cruel, mean lives” (including killing beings)

**Vinaya rules violated**

**Sekhiya 52, 53** (V 4:198,1 f).  
**Sekh 39** (V 4:194,15 f), **40** (V 4:194,25 f), possibly **42** (V 4:195,10 f) & **46** (V 4:195,27 f).

**Pār 1**; see following point;  
cf **Nissaggiya Pācittiya 23 & 38**;  
**Nis Pāc 23** (V 3:251,14-18) & 28 (V 3:261,20-24);  
**Pār 2**; see V 1:46; Kkhv 26 f;  
**Pāc 1**; cf Pār 4;  
**Pāc 74** (V 4:146,13 f); **75** (V 4:147,14 f);  
**Pāc 61**; similar to Pār 3.

**3.1.2.2** The Aggañña Sutta may relate the arising or rebirth of the world and society in interesting detail, but its theme is *not* “the origin of the world.” The setting of primal cosmic times, that is, “from the beginning of time,” is the backdrop to dramatically show how **moral conduct** is profoundly significant for the wholesome rise of a good society. Hence, moral conduct was not only right and good in primal times (the past), but *is* vitally relevant today (here and now), and *will be* relevant in the future. This is the primal truth constituting the knowledge of the foremost goodness (aggañña), naturally.

**3.2 THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SENSE OF AGGAÑÑA (COSMOLOGICAL SENSE)****3.2.1 Aggañña and world definition**

**3.2.1.1** The Pāthika Sutta (D 24) closes with a long section on the *aggañña* theme, which is actually the Buddha’s response to Sunakkhatta’s accusation that the Buddha did not teach him “knowledge of the foremost” (*aggañña*), which was a narrow sense of “*the beginning of things*” [§1.5]. The Buddha’s initial response was simply that when Sunakkhatta first joined the sangha, there was no request for such knowledge, nor did the Buddha at any time state that he would give such a teaching.

Such questions as those regarding the beginning of the world are **unanswerable (avyakata)**<sup>66</sup> (they have to do with time, for example) and **unconnected** with or not conducive to the spiritual life. Hence, the Buddha has left them “undeclared” (*avyākata*) and “set aside” (*thapanīya*), that is, unanswered.<sup>67</sup> While the more mature followers accepted the 10 theses as they are (undetermined and irrelevant), Sunakkhatta remained unconvinced and insisted on knowing their “answers.”

Apparently, Sunakkhatta had joined the sangha out of faith in the 3 jewels [§1.6]. But then he lacked the wisdom, diligence and respect for the training.<sup>68</sup> In due course, he was distracted by speculative views and by those who displayed ostentatiously superhuman or miraculous conduct. Despite the falsity and failure of those religious charlatans, Sunakkhatta still did not see the faults in his own views and biases.

Sunakkhatta, in his arrogance and disappointment, thus left Buddhist training, accusing the Buddha of not teaching him “the knowledge of the foremost” and not performing superhuman psychic miracles for

<sup>66</sup> The 10 *avyākata* theses are that: the world is 1. eternal, 2. not eternal, 3. finite, 4. infinite; self and body are 5. identical, 6. separate; a tathagata (being), after death 7. exists, 8. does not exist, 9. both, 10. neither.

<sup>67</sup> See **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72 *passim*), SD 6.15; **Cūla Mālunkyā,putta S** (M 63 *passim*), SD 5.8 (2); **Vacchagotta Saṃyutta** (S 33); **Nānā Titthiyā S 1** (U 6.4), SD 40a.14; **Titthā S** (U 6.5), SD 5.8 (2+4).

<sup>68</sup> The student’s 4 respects (gāravatā) should be for: 1. the Buddha, 2. the Dharma, 3. the sangha, and 4. the training. SD 47.14 (1.3); SD 61.3 (1.1.2.3).

him. Thus, in **the Pāthika Sutta**, the Buddha pointed out to Sunakkhatta (and posterity) the ludicrousness of showy religiosity, as evident in the cases of:

- Kora,khattiya the dog-ascetic who died a week later and was reborn as an asura [§§1.7-1.10];
- Kālara,maṭṭaka the naked ascetic who despite his vows ended up as a worldly layman [§§1.11-1.14];
- Pāthika,putta the naked ascetic who despite his boasts could not rise from his seat to meet the Buddha in debate [§§1.15-2.12]

### 3.2.2 Aggañña and the “beginning” of things

**3.2.2.1 The Pāthika Sutta** closes with the Buddha explaining *aggañña* as “**knowledge of the foremost**” as in **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1). D 1 mentions long-lived brahmas and devas who are able to recall their previous lives in the remote past, but this knowledge still does not come close to the “knowledge of the foremost”; they have yet to not attain it.

The Buddha explains the diversity of the common world-view or “world-definition” (*loka,paññatti*) [3.2.1.3] as arising from various views such as those of the following diverse sources and details:

#### **(1) Ābhassara brahmas**

The Ābhassara brahmas<sup>69</sup> have “streaming radiance” (*ābhassara*), brilliant rays (*pabhassara*) that shoot out like lightning-bolts. They are brahmas of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana, with a lifespan of 8 world-cycles.<sup>70</sup> When the world<sup>71</sup> re-evolves, says **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1), a certain brahma from this realm dies and is reborn in an empty “brahma-mansion” (*brahma,vimāna*) (a sprawling celestial domain).

There he dwells mind-made, feeding on zest, self-luminous, moving about through space, glorious—and he stays like that for a very long time.

Then, as a result of dwelling there all alone for so long, unrest, discontent, agitation arise in him, thus:

‘O that other beings might come here, too!’

Just then others beings, due to the exhaustion of their life-span, [18] or due to the exhaustion of their merit, pass away from the Ābhassara realm and arise in the empty brahma-mansion in companionship with that being.

There they dwell, mind-made, feeding on zest, self-luminous, moving about through space, glorious—and they stay like that for a very long time.

**42** 〈2.5〉 Thereupon, bhikshus, the being who first arose there thought thus:

<sup>69</sup> “Devas or gods” (*deva*) is the generic term for all divine beings, esp those in the sense-world; “brahmas” (*brahma*) refers to those devas of the worlds of the form dhyanas and the formless dhyanas. For a locational table, see DEB App 3.

<sup>70</sup> Ābhassara brahmas are described in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,2.7-9/1:19 f), SD 25. See S 483\*, (SD 16.13) + Dh 200, SD 16.13 (2.4.1.2); for the 31 realms or planes, see DEB App 3.

<sup>71</sup> The physical universe goes through 4 cycles: expanding, stable, contracting, and contracted. The universe is destroyed due to 3 of the 4 primary elements (fire, water or wind, ie, heat, fluid or motion). Heat burns the universe up to the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana brahma world; cosmic meltdown goes up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana (up to Ābhassara); and gaseousness (motion) swallows up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana (Subha,kiñha). During such destruction, beings are mostly reborn in higher planes; some lower beings are reborn in other universes. See **Early Buddhist cosmology**, SD 57.10. On other universes (multiverses), see SD 57.10 (2, 5).

‘I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Vanquisher, the Unvanquished, the Supreme Seer of All, the Lord God [the Overlord], the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be.<sup>72</sup> By me have these creatures been created.

What is the reason for that?

Because first I thought: “O that other beings might come here, too!” And on account of this mental resolution of mine, these beings have come here.’

42.2 And this thought, too, arose in the beings who arose after him, thus:

‘He must be Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be. By this Lord Brahmā have we been created.

(D 1,41 f/1:17 f), SD 25.2<sup>73</sup>

In summary, during the world-contraction (the collapse cycle of the physical universe), Mahā Brahmā (the lord of the brahmas) arose first and alone in **the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana**. Only later did other brahmas arise there after a period of celestial solitude. He thus considered himself as the creator of that universe. The Brahmas who came after him also thought in the same way. This was how the creator-God idea arose.<sup>74</sup> [§§2.15-2.17] [D 1,2.2-2.6, SD 25]

## (2) *Khiḍḍā, padosikā devas* (devas defiled by play)

The devas “defiled by play” (*khiḍḍā, padosikā* or *khiddā, padusikā*)<sup>75</sup> are a class of celestials of the heaven of 4 great kings (*cātum, mahā, rājika*).<sup>76</sup> They were present at the “great congregation” (*mahā samaya*) of **the Mahā, samaya Sutta** (D 20). This is a roll-call of sorts for the denizens of the earth-bound heavens of early Buddhism. This sutta exemplifies a case of an early Buddhist “conversion” or assimilation of many popular or well-known local deities and spirits, including those in a related text, **the Ātānātiya Sutta** (D 32).<sup>77</sup> The names of some of these beings do not seem to occur elsewhere in the suttas.

These devas “defiled by play” spend their time in communal laughter and sensual amusement,<sup>78</sup> resulting in a corrupted self-absorption, on account of which they fall from their divine state.<sup>79</sup> They are so called because they are corrupted and destroyed by amusement (*khiddāya padussanti vinassanti*, DA 1:113,3).

It is said that while sporting about in such Tāvatīmsa pleasantries as Nandana, vana, Cittalatā, vana and Phārusaka, vana—especially in celebrating their own beauty and splendour—they forget to eat or drink. Now humans, whose (digestive) karmic heat (*kammaja, teja*)<sup>80</sup> is delicate but the physical body is strong,

<sup>72</sup> *Aham asmi brahmā mahā, brahmā abhibhū anabhibhūto aññad-atthu, daso vasavatti issaro kattā nimmātā setho sañjitā [v]l sājītā] vasī pitā bhūta, bhavyānam.* This is stock: (**Tathāgata**) **Loka S** (A 4.23,3/2:24,13 = It 4.1.13/-122,7), SD 15.7; **Bhaddajī S** (A 5.170/3:202,9); (**Puñña**) **Mettā S** (A 7.58a,11/4:89,9), SD 2.11a; **Satta Suriya S** (A 7.62,10/4:105,3), SD 47.8. For humorous riposte to this, see **Kevaddha S** (D 11,80-83/1:220-222), SD 1.7.

<sup>73</sup> See Punnadhammo, *The Buddhist Cosmos*, 2018, 2023:393.

<sup>74</sup> On Mahā Brahmā, see Punnadhammo, 2018, 2023:396-398.

<sup>75</sup> The reading *khiḍḍā, padūsikā* is found in canon (D:Be 3:30,27) but not in the comys.

<sup>76</sup> The lifespan of the devas of the 4 great kings is 500 celestial years (*sañvacchara dibba*), ie, 9 M years in earthly time (A 8.42/4:252), SD 89.11b. The lesser beings there—such as the *nāga* (dragons), *supaṇṇa* (harpies), *yakkha* (yakshas), *gandhabba* (celestial minstrels) and *kumbhaṇḍa* (orcs) [D 32/3:203]—prob have shorter lives and are less powerful, but more numerous than the devas whom they protect. Cf S 56.102/5:474.

<sup>77</sup> D 20/2:260 (SD 54.4). An older, more primitive list of earth-bound heavens—the 4 great kings (*cātum māhā, rājika*) and Tāvatīmsa, and also Māra and his horde—is given in **Ātānātiya Sutta** (D 32). Section 7-20 of D 20 *māhā, samaya* seems an improved or “updated” version of D 32 list.

<sup>78</sup> *Khiḍḍā ratī hoti sahāya, majhe* (Sn 41; *khiḍḍā ti kīlanā* SnA 86,4).

<sup>79</sup> D 1,45/1:19 (SD 25.2); PmA 613; NmA 1:154.

<sup>80</sup> “Karmic heat,” *kammaja, tejo*, here meaning the process of digestion.

can survive for a week on merely warm water and clear gruel, for example. These devas, however, have strong karmic heat but delicate material bodies. Thus when they miss even a single meal, though they eat and drink later, they cannot endure and so pass away.

Just as a red or blue lotus placed on a heated rock at noon in the hot season would not be able to resume its original condition in the evening even if one were to pour a hundred jars of water over it, it would only perish; in the same way, though these devas eat and drink immediately after missing their meal, they pass away.<sup>81</sup>

Hence, their death is by self-volition (*atta,sañcetanā*).<sup>82</sup> They are, as it were, burnt up by the delusion of their own infatuation.<sup>83</sup>

Reborn on earth, they became renunciants who developed deep meditation by which they could only recall their past life but not beyond that. They came to hold the view that those other devas were “permanent,” while they themselves were not since they fell from that state.

[§§2.18] [D 1,45 f, SD 25.3]; SD 62.14 (1.2.2).

### (3) **Mano,padosikā devas** (devas defiled by mind)

The devas that are “defiled by mind” (*mano,padosikā*) are said to be the lowest class in the heaven of the 4 great kings (*cātum,mahā,rājika*). However, as devas, they rank higher than non-devas, such as nagas, harpies, yakshas and orcs. They are called “**defiled by mind**” (*mano,padosikā*) because they habitually contemplate each other with excessive envy. Thus their minds become corrupted by anger towards one another. As a result, their bodies and minds become exhausted, and consequently they pass away.

For example, one young deva, wishing to celebrate a festival, set out by chariot along with his retinue. Another, going out for a walk, saw the first one riding ahead of him. He became angry and exclaimed: “That miserable wretch! There he is moving along puffed up with joy to the bursting point, as if he had never seen a festival before.”

The first, turning around and noticing that the other was angry—angry people easily recognize one another—became angry in turn and retorted, ‘What have you to do with me, you hot-headed fellow? My prosperity was gained entirely by my own merits of giving and so on. It has nothing to do with you!’”

Now, if one of these devas gets angry but the other remains unangered, the latter prevents the former from passing away. But when both get angry, the anger of one becomes the condition for the anger of the other, and both will pass away with their harems weeping. This is the nature of things.<sup>84</sup>

On account of hatred, the **devas defiled by mind** fell from their celestial state. While on earth, they developed deep meditation by which they could only recall their past life but not beyond that. They came to hold the view that those other devas were “permanent,” while they themselves were not since they fell from that state.

The Khiḍḍa,padosikā and the Mano,padosikā devas may be reflected on as **parodies** of the wealthy upper classes or crust of society who look down on those they deem as “lesser” beings, and are yet competitive or jealous with their own kind. Due to their assumed “higher” positions, they fall and hit the ground of reality in harder and more painful ways with affairs, scandals, litigations and health issues. Hence, their human or functional lives tend to be often shorter than kinder and wiser others.

[§§2.19] [D 1,2.8, SD 25]

<sup>81</sup> For tr of comy here: Bodhi (tr), *The All-embracing Net of Views*, 1978:166 f, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2007:159 f.

<sup>82</sup> AA 3:147,11-16.

<sup>83</sup> *Mohassa anudahanatāya,mohana,vasena ... hi tesam sati,sammoso hoti. Tasmā kхиḍḍā,vasena āhāra,kālam ativattetvā kālam karonti* (VbhA 498,31-34).

<sup>84</sup> For tr of comy here: Bodhi (tr), *The All-embracing Net of Views*, 1978: 167 f; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2007:160 f.

#### (4) Adhicca,samuppanna (fortuitous arising)

The Pāthika Sutta next mentions believers in fortuitous arising of the self and the world. Believers in fortuitous arising view that beings arise simply by chance (that is, without karma). The Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1,69 f) refers to them as recluses and brahmins who were “reasoners or inquirers,” that is, those steeped in personal opinions and views.<sup>85</sup>

The Commentary explains that **the rationalist** sees breakup of the eye, etc; but because every preceding act of consciousness (*citta*), in ceasing, conditions the arising of its successive state, he does not see the breakup of consciousness, even though the latter is more prominent than the breakup of the eye, etc.

The subcommentary explains that by “the breakup of consciousness ... is more pronounced” is meant that the mind moves more rapidly than our physical actions. For in the time a single material state endures, 16 *mind-moments* have passed.<sup>86</sup> This point is exemplified by a fire-circle (that is, a seemingly unbroken circle of flame formed by swinging a torch in rapid circular motion).

Because the rationalist partial-externalists fail to understand and apply the method of **diversity**, they do not see the discreteness of the mind-moments comprising the mental continuum; and misapplying the method of **unity**, they take similarity of form and function as indicating identity of substance. Thus, they arrive at the false conviction: “This very consciousness which always occurs with a single nature is a permanent self.” (DAT 1:209,1-5)

(See following.) [§§2.20.1-3]

#### (5) Asañña,satta (non-percipient or non-conscious beings)<sup>87</sup>

The form-dhyana heavens are much less crowded than the sense-realms, and more pleasant and beautiful. In fact, the highest of the form realms, the 4<sup>th</sup> form dhyana plane, unlike the preceding three, has no graded stages but only separate celestial realms, except that they have progressively longer lives. The highest” (that is, longer-lived) of these heavens is the “pure abodes” (*suddhāvāsa*), populated only by nonreturners. “Below” them, with a maximum lifespan of 500 aeons are **the non-percipient beings**.<sup>88</sup>

Despite this spaciousness and pleasantness of the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana world, the non-conscious beings exist not experiencing anything; they are unconscious, in a state we understand to be a kind of protracted “suspended hibernation.” The non-percipient beings have neither sense-based nor mind-based experiences at all. Their actual life-span is determined by the karma of their preceding rebirth dhyana, “like an arrow shot is propelled through the air by the force of the bow-string.”<sup>89</sup>

In other words, they may die *at any time* depending on their karma. While they exist, they simply remain as immobile form-based bodies, lacking any consciousness or mental factors. As soon as a single thought arises in them, they fall away from that realm and are reborn in a lower one.<sup>90</sup>

Non-percipient existence is considered to be an “inopportune plane” (*akkhaṇa,bhūmi*) since it gives no opportunity for spiritual development.<sup>91</sup> The non-percipient rebirth occurs when a human meditator, who

<sup>85</sup> For tr of comy here: Bodhi 1978:166 f, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2007:161 f.

<sup>86</sup> DAT 1:208,24 f.

<sup>87</sup> Also tr as “unconscious” or “non-percipient.”

<sup>88</sup> They are located in the same dimensional plane (*eka,tala,vāsino*) as the Veha-p,phala (boundless fruit) brahmas: Vbh 425; MA 1:35; BA 37; DAT 1:219; DA 2:511 = AA 4:28 = NcA 60 = PmA 1:112; Abhk 2.41 (Abhk:Pr 221), which says that they dwell on a “raised place” within Vehapphala (Skt *bṛhatphala*). For the 31 planes of beings, see SD Guide. App.

<sup>89</sup> *Yathā nāma jiyā,vega-k,khitto saro yuttako jiyā,vego tattakam ākāse gacchati* (DA 1:118,17; DAT 1:219,24-29).

<sup>90</sup> D 1,68/1:28 (SD 25.2): see prec comys. Abhk says the non-percipient being, upon dying, will be reborn in the sense-world (*kāma,dhatu*) and nowhere else: Abhk 2.41d (Abhk:Pr 222); DAT 3:219; AAT:Be 3:326.

<sup>91</sup> DAT:Be 3:168; DAT 3:218,12-15.

is an “outsider” (*bāhiraka*),<sup>92</sup> that is, a non-Buddhist, who emerges from 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana, reflects upon the disadvantage of thought and perception as the causes of suffering, and resolves to eliminate the mental process altogether.<sup>93</sup> Understandably, we find very little description of the domain of the non-percipient beings in the Pali texts.<sup>94</sup>

Both **the Brahmajāla Sutta** (D 1/1:68)<sup>95</sup> and **the Pāthika Sutta** (D 24) [§§2.20,4-8] say that these non-percipient beings (*asañña,satta*) fell from their 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana state and were reborn on earth. They went on to become renunciants who mastered dhyanas. They recollected only their past life, but nothing before that. So they came to conclude that the self and the world arose fortuitously.<sup>96</sup> [§§2.20.4-7]

**3.2.2.2** The Commentary to the Pāthika Sutta goes on to define *aggañña* as “**world definition**” (*loka,-paññatti*), with the following details:

This term ***aggañña*** means a “definition of the world [universe]” (*loka,paññatti*). This means that the limits of the world cannot be laid out, that is to say, the beginning of the world thus cannot be known; the extent of beginning cannot be defined.

(DA 818,12-14)

*Aggaññan ti loka,pannattim. Idam nāma lokassa aggan ti evam jānitabbam pi aggam mariyādan na tam pannāpetī ti vadati.*

The subcommentary (*tīkā*) to this commentary [3.2.1.1] further explains:

**Aggañ** ti ñayatī ti *aggaññam*.

By ***agga*** is meant *aggañña*.

**Loka,paññattin** ti *lokassa paññāpanam*.

***Loka,paññatti*** means a defining of the world.

**Lokassa aggan** ti *lok'uppatti,samaye*.

***Lokassa aggar*** is the time of the arising of the world.

*Idam nāma lokassa aggan ti*

This is a word for the world’s beginning.

*evam janitabbam bujjhitabbam.*

Thus it should be known and understood.

**Agga,mariyādan** ti *ādi,mariyādan*.

***Agga,mariyādar*** is the extent of the beginning.

(DAT3:4)

**3.2.2.3** Both the commentary on the Pāthika Sutta and its subcommentary thus explain ***aggañña*** as referring to the beginning of the world. This is, of course, a cosmological sense of *aggañña*, that is, in connection with the Buddha’s knowledge of the re-arising of the world or the cosmic cycle of the universe. However, the Buddha was not interested in a cosmological explanation of the world, because there is no such beginning (the universe goes through a cyclic evolutionary process). And, more importantly, knowing the “origin” of the world has nothing to do with spiritual liberation, which frees one from the world.

On account of the common people’s interest in how things originate or arise, the Buddha makes use of the story of “the beginning of things” (*aggañña*) to describe what the actual re-evolution of the physical re-evolution of the world is like. However, a careful study of **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27) will reveal the Buddha’s profound sense of humour in his exposition of the world’s “genesis.”

<sup>92</sup> When applied to Buddhist practitioners, *bāhiraka* means they have not attained at least streamwinning. Applied to non-Buddhists, it means that they lack understanding and acceptance of the key Buddhist teachings, esp that of nonself, and have beliefs rooted in eternalism (eg the God-idea), annihilationism (eg materialism) or superstition (eg fatalism). DA 1:118,10-17; MA 2:333; MAT:Be 2:253.

<sup>93</sup> DA 1:118,23 f.

<sup>94</sup> We do have some later details on *asañña,satta* in a 14<sup>th</sup>-cent Siamese cosmological treatise, *Traibhūm Phra Ruang*: tr F E Reynolds & M B Reynolds, *Three Worlds According to Phra Ruang*, Berkeley, 1982:249 f.

<sup>95</sup> D 1,68/1:68 (SD 25.2).

<sup>96</sup> On *asañña,satta*, see Punnadhammo, *The Buddhist Cosmos*, 2018, 2023:420 f.

### 3.3 THE 3<sup>RD</sup> SENSE OF AGGAÑÑA (SOCIAL SENSE)

#### 3.3.1 *Aggañña* as “socially foremost”

**3.3.1.1** In the opening teaching of the **Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), *aggañña* is used in the sense of “the foremost,” or more exactly, the naturally foremost, applied to a social context. The Buddha uses this argument against the brahmins’ false claims to being the highest social class on account of their birth. The Buddha explains that one is not born good or evil, pure or impure; but by one’s actions (karma) one is morally wholesome or unwholesome. Despite the brahmins’ claims to be “high-born,” issuing from the mouth of Brahmā, the reality is that they are all born *like any other humans*—from the mother’s womb (*yoni, jā*) [D 3:82,1].

**3.3.1.2** No matter what class one comes from—the priestly, the noble, the merchant or the worker<sup>97</sup>—when one does evil, one is thus *impure*; when one does good, one is then *pure* in moral and social ways. The most wholesome of beings in a moral and social way is **the arhat**, who is free of all defilements of the mind, the root of both social and moral well being.

Hence, when one renounces the world, practises Dharma and gains arhathood,<sup>98</sup> one then is **the foremost** of beings:

Because, Vāsetṭhā, anyone from any of the 4 classes who becomes a monk,  
**an arhat**, with mental influxes destroyed,  
 who has lived the holy life,  
 done what is to be done,  
 laid down the burden,  
 reached his own goal,  
 destroyed the fetters of being,  
 freed through his own direct knowledge—  
 he is justly, not unjustly, proclaimed “the foremost” (*aggañña*).<sup>99</sup>

For, Vāsetṭhā, **the dharma** [dhamma]<sup>100</sup> is the best (*settha*) for the people in this life and  
 in the next.<sup>101</sup> (D 27,7.3 f/3:83), SD 2.19

<sup>97</sup> Respectively, *brahmana, khattiya, vessa, sudda*. Only the first 3 classes may listen to Vedic rituals and perform brahminical rituals. The 4<sup>th</sup>, the shudras, are unclassed, encompassing the non-Aryans. Sometimes, a “fifth” (*pañcamā*) group, is mentioned, ie, the outcastes (*cāndāla*), esp, the dark-skinned autochthonous races. See SD 10.8 (6).

<sup>98</sup> Sunakkhatta (in Pāthika S) uses the term **arhat** (*arahata*), not in the Buddhist sense, but to refer to any of 3 kinds of persons: (1) a common religious (lacking the sutta qualities of the true arhat); (2) non-Buddhist ascetics merely on account of their asceticism (*tapa*); (3) priests and kings (ie, those of the highest social status to whom gifts were obligatory: ŚatBrāh (SBE 3) 4.1.6.8). Early Buddhism uses *arahata* for those fully awakened disciples. The Buddha’s attempt to use *brāhmaṇa* in the same way failed due to strong vested interests (D:R 1:141). See D:R 3:3-6. For lay arhats, see V 1:17; S 5:94; A 3:451; Kvu 367; ThāA 2:201; ThīA 64; DhA 1:308; J 2:229; Miln 2:57, 96, 245.

<sup>99</sup> *Aggañña* here it has the sense, “primal, primary,” ie, the 1<sup>st</sup> sense [3.0].

<sup>100</sup> Pali, **dhamma** (an alt tr for current Indian context for those who have difficulty with the Hindu notion of “Dharma” as class duties, which is unequivocally rejected by the Buddha). The English tr, “the Dharma,” refers to the Buddha’s teaching or true reality that he directly realized. A lower-case “dharma” or “the dharma” here refers to the universal social sense of “civility, norm, truth, justice, duty, etc,” which the Buddha’s audience was familiar with. In this Sutta, we see the Buddha readily shifting between the 2 senses, and also overlapping them. This is to impress on the audience that the Buddha’s Dharma is in harmony with the social dharma, yet is superior to it in its liberating power. This liberating power, as clearly evident in this Sutta, is both social and spiritual.

<sup>101</sup> Here the Buddha explains why the wise reject the brahmins’ claim to be the foremost and best class by stating that it is the arhat who is truly *agga* and that the Dharma is truly *settha*.

This is the 3rd sense of *aggañña*, that of “**the socially foremost**” or the best (*settha*) “for the people,” that is for society. Let us look a little deeper into this vital point.

### **3.3.2 Dharma as foremost**

**3.3.2.1** Here, *aggañña* qualifies **dharma** (*dhamma*) which is taken as meaning “the natural order of things” in human society, or simply, humanity. On a **habitual or instinctive level**, we tend to react to things as we (our ancestors) have done in the past. How we tend to socially react to circumstances is often a result of past conditioning or the “social unconscious,” so called because we tend to react in certain ways without understanding why, even without any ability to restrain ourselves.

**3.3.2.2** However, with an understanding and respect for others—by showing *charity, love and wisdom*<sup>102</sup>—we are able to restrain ourselves from unwholesome reactive habits, and cultivate wholesome responses that benefit both ourself and others here and now. In this way, we are better able to communicate healthily with others and live together productively, free from past negative conditioning.

For the good society to exist and flourish, there must be an order of good and true values—those of *life, happiness, freedom, truth and mindfulness*—these should be respected as the foremost values in society and the individual here and now. These values are embodied in the 5 rules of natural morality or the 5 precepts that define us as **human** and capable of attaining true divinity (by abiding in the 4 divine abodes of love, compassion, gladness and peace). Hence, we abstain from *killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication*.<sup>103</sup> [3.4.2.1]

## **3.4 THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SENSE OF AGGAÑÑA (SPIRITUAL SENSE)**

### **3.4.1 Aggañña as the noble lineage**

**3.4.1.1** While the Aggañña Sutta account of the reaction of beings to natural changes of their environment has a pervasive humorous tone, elsewhere the word **aggañña** is used to refer to a natural and wholesome state or habit that goes back in the earliest memories and wisdom of the ancient texts and wise teachers.

In the **Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), compiled by the elder Sāriputta as a numerical summary of the Buddha’s teachings, he speaks of the 4 noble lineages (*ariya, var̄msa*). Briefly stated, a renunciant has the “4 noble lineages” in that one:

- (1) is joyfully content with any kind of robe that he obtains;
- (2) is joyfully content with any kind of alms-food that he gets;
- (3) is joyfully content with any kind of lodging that he finds; and
- (4) delights in letting go (*pahāna*) (of sense-objects and mind-objects).

In this way, a renunciant lives with the supports of life mindfully dedicated to spiritual training and awakening, and speaks in praise of such a life to inspire others. They are then also said to be established in “the ancient **foremost** noble lineage” (*porāṇa aggañña ariya, var̄msa*).<sup>104</sup>

**3.4.1.2** The topic of “noble lineage” forms a popular text of its own—the **Ariya, var̄msa Sutta** (A 4.28)—where the same 4 noble lineages are listed: a renunciant’s contentment in *robes*, in *alms-food*, and in

<sup>102</sup> Ie, by way of countering greed, hatred and delusion (the 3 unwholesome roots).

<sup>103</sup> On the 5 values, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

<sup>104</sup> D 33.1.11(9)/3:225,1 (SD 2.19).

*lodging*,<sup>105</sup> and delighting in the cultivation of letting go of sense-objects and mind-objects. In the case of the 4<sup>th</sup> noble lineage, the Sutta reads: “delighting in cultivation” (*bhāvānārama*), that is, delighting in the 3 trainings, those in *moral virtue, in mental concentration and liberating wisdom*.<sup>106</sup>

The idea of “lineage” or continuity (*varṇsa*) is to show that there is “**the primal good**,” that is, the spirit of goodness or the wholesome that goes back to the earliest times. What we know as truly good, and the good that we should live by is, in spirit, neither something new nor sporadic. We may forget this true spirit of goodness or it may be obscured by religious dogmas, political doctrines, poor education or by sheer ignorance and superstition.

In human interaction and socialization, there will always be a tension and struggle between this spirit of true goodness (respect for *life, happiness, freedom, truth and the mind*) and the biases of greed, hatred, delusion and fear. When power and belief are concentrated in the hands of the greedy, the hateful, the foolish and the fearful, there will be little respect for the values of *life, happiness, freedom, truth and the mind*. Hence, we see these **values** (*dhamma*) expressed in various ways in the Buddha’s teachings, especially as the root principles of human relations, that is, the 5 precepts [3.3.2.2].

### **3.4.2 The overflowing streams**

**3.4.2.1 The (Atṭhaka) Abhisanda Sutta** (A 8.39) uses *aggañña* to qualify the practice of the 5 precepts. The Sutta speaks of the 8 overflowing streams of merits (*puññābhisanda*). The first 3 of the 8 streams are those of **the 3 refuges**—*those in the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha*—and the last 5 are those of **the 5 precepts**—*those against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, falsehood and intoxication*.

The first 3 (going for the 3 refuges) are said to be spiritually beneficial for oneself as:

overflowing stream of merits, overflowing stream of the wholesome, food for happiness—  
heavenly, fruiting in happiness, conducive to heaven—  
conducting to what is wished for, what is desired, what is agreeable, to goodness and happiness.  
 (A 8.39/4:246,1), SD 59.9j

In the case of the last 5 practices, we reflect on **the values** (*dhamma*) that each precept entails, thus:

by not killing,	one gives <u>life</u> ;
by not taking the not-given [stealing],	one gives <u>happiness and security</u> ;
by abstaining from sexual misconduct,	one gives <u>freedom and love</u> ;
by abstaining from falsehood,	one gives <u>truth</u> ;
by abstaining from intoxication,	one cultivates <u>mindfulness and wisdom</u> .

The 5<sup>th</sup> precept is special; while the first 4 precepts are directed to “others,” the 5<sup>th</sup> is for one’s own development so that the other precepts are not broken.

Living in this way, keeping to the 5 precepts,<sup>107</sup>  
 the noble disciple gives to countless beings  
 freedom from fear, freedom from hatred, freedom from affliction.<sup>108</sup>  
 Having given freedom from fear, freedom from hatred, freedom from affliction,  
 he himself enjoys boundless freedom from fear [fearlessness], from hatred, from affliction.  
 (A 8.39/4:245-247), SD 59.9j

<sup>105</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> support (*apccaya*), that of medicines is not mentioned but is implicit in the list.

<sup>106</sup> A 4.28/2:27,16 (SD 71.1).

<sup>107</sup> The 5 precepts as “great gifts” is similarly mentioned in **Kathāvatthu** (Kvu 341); also at DA 1:306.

<sup>108</sup> “Gives ... freedom from fear ... hatred ... affliction,” *abhayaṁ deti averaṁ deti avyapajjhamaṁ deti*.

### 3.4.2.2 Hence, these actions are also said to be:

... great gifts, **foremost** [primal], of long standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, never before adulterated,  
not being adulterated, will never be adulterated, unrepudiated by wise recluses and brahmins.

(A 8.39/4:246,1), SD 59.9j

... *mahā,dānam aggaññam rattaññam vamṣaññam porāṇam asaṅkiṇṇam asaṅkiṇṇa,pubbāni na saṅkiyati na saṅkiyissati, appaṭikuṭṭhāni samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi.*

In essence, then, while going for the 3 refuges one benefits *personally*, practising **the 5 precepts** one benefits others by giving others *fearlessness, love and happiness*. Hence, the 5 precepts are said to be “**foremost**” in human society and the world. The good society is rooted in moral virtue, which is essentially respect for both self and others. [3.4.3.2]

### 3.4.3 The 4 Dharma-paths

**3.4.3.1** Another important example of the usage of *aggañña* (this time in the plural) in the spiritual sense is found in **the Dhamma,pada Sutta** (A 4.29). This Sutta records the Buddha as stating them in the same ways as the keeping to the 5 precepts in **the (Aṭṭhaka) Abhisanda Sutta** (A 8.39) [3.4.2.2] (but in the plural form), thus:

Bhikshus, there are these **4 steps of Dharma**, of foremost [primal], of long standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, never before adulterated,  
not being adulterated, will never be adulterated, unrepudiated by wise recluses and brahmins.

(A 4.29/2:29), SD 82.16

*Cattār’imāni bhikkhave dhamma,padāni aggaññāni rattaññāni vamṣaññāni porāṇāni, asaṅkiṇṇāni asaṅkiṇṇa,pubbāni na saṅkiyanti na saṅkiyissanti, appaṭikuṭṭhāni samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi. [3.4.3.2]*  
*Anabhijjhā ... avyāpādo ... sammā,sati ... sammā,samnādhi ... .*

**3.4.3.2** The 9 terms beginning with ***aggañña***, qualifying the various Dharma-teachings reflecting true reality—*aggaññā, rattaññā, vamṣaññā, porāṇā, asaṅkiṇṇā, asaṅkiṇṇa, pubbā, na saṅkiyanti, na saṅkiyissanti, appaṭikuṭṭhā samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi* [3.4.3.1]—are briefly explained in the commentaries.<sup>109</sup> Based on these commentaries, I have here explained the broader definitions and implications of ***aggañña*** in following phrases in contemporary terms:

(1) <i>aggañña</i>	“foremost [primal]”;
(2) <i>rattañña</i>	“of long standing”;
(3) <i>vamṣañña</i>	“traditional”;
(4) <i>porāṇa</i>	“ancient”;
(5) <i>asaṅkiṇṇā</i>	“unadulterated”;
(6) <i>asaṅkiṇṇa, pubbā</i>	“never before adulterated”;
(7) <i>na saṅkiyanti</i>	“not being adulterated”;
(8) <i>na saṅkiyissati</i>	“will never be adulterated”;
(9) <i>appaṭikuṭṭhāni samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi</i>	“unrepudiated by wise recluses and brahmins.”

<sup>109</sup> DA 3:1009

(1) **Aggañña** should be understood as having the same sense as *agga* (foremost);<sup>110</sup> but *aggañña* has a wider range of meanings as evident here. We have already noted that *aggañña* has a total of at least 5 senses, depending on the context [3.0.2], that is, as follows:

1. a natural sense	“naturally foremost”;	[3.1]
2. a cosmological sense	“a beginning of things”	[3.2]
3. a social sense	“socially foremost”	[3.3]
4. a spiritual sense	“the primal good”	[3.4]
5. a general sense	‘knowledge of the foremost’	[3.5]

Of these 5 senses, the 5<sup>th</sup> sense—*aggañña* as “**knowledge of the foremost**”—is the over-arching one, since it encompasses all the other 4 senses. The knowledge of the foremost thus has a natural sense, a cosmological sense, a social sense, and a spiritual sense. We may say that these other 4 senses (the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup>) are applied senses—connotations—of *aggañña* as “knowledge of the foremost.” On account of one’s “knowledge of the foremost” (*aggañña*), one applies it *naturally, cosmologically, socially, and spiritually*.

(2) **Rattañña** means that *aggañña* should be understood as what has been occurring for a very long time.<sup>111</sup> “A very long time” (*dīgha,ratta*) here means that it is something real and true since the beginning of time. In this sense, the knowledge of the foremost is that of a natural truth and reality.

(3) **Varṣañña** means that it is a lineage (*varṣa*);<sup>112</sup> that is, a continuity of natural truth and reality. It *was* true and real in the past; it *is* true and real in the present; it *will* be true and real in the future, too. In short, the knowledge of the foremost is an eternal truth.

(4) **Porāna** means “ancient.” The knowledge of the foremost is not a novel reality,<sup>113</sup> put together by teachers, thinkers or authorities in our time. It is an ancient truth rooted since the evolution of the world, of life and of humanity itself. It is thus a time-tested and true reality.

(5) **Asaṅkinnā** means “not mixed up, not adulterated, not confused,”<sup>114</sup> that is to say, “neither scattered nor incorrect,”<sup>115</sup> teachings, practices, truth and reality that are cohesive, coherent and beneficial, especially to the diligent and wise who seek and love goodness.

(6) **Asaṅkinnā,pubbā** means “never before adulterated by the Buddha (in his teachings) by way of being not confusing” this knowledge of the foremost.<sup>116</sup> The Buddha clearly knows and understands this knowledge, expresses it in his teachings for the benefit of those who listen or seek the wholesome truth.

(7) **Na saṅkīyanti** means “not being adulterated”; that is, even in our times, the Buddha has not mixed up this knowledge of the foremost with unrelated or unbeneficial teachings or truths.<sup>117</sup> What we have of the Buddha’s teachings on this knowledge keeps to the true reality of things, and is taught in a

<sup>110</sup> *Te kho pan’ete aggañña aggā ti jānitabbā* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45)

<sup>111</sup> *Rattañña dīgha,rattarā pavattā ti jānitabbā* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45).

<sup>112</sup> *Varṣā ti jānitabbā* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45).

<sup>113</sup> *Porāṇā ti na adhun’uppattikā* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45).

<sup>114</sup> VismMhT intr 8\* = UA 2,5\* = PvA 1,22\*.

<sup>115</sup> *Asaṅkīṇā avikīṇā anapanītā* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45,1-18).

<sup>116</sup> A 2:28,22. Comy: *Asaṅkīṇa,pubbā atīta,buddhehi na saṅkīṇa,pubbā. Kim imehī ti na apanīta,pubbā?* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45,1-18)

<sup>117</sup> *Na saṅkīyanti ti idāni pi na apanīyanti* (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45).

manner to reach out to all kinds of individuals who are willing and able to learn, to reject evil and cultivate good.

(8) ***Na saṅkīyissanti*** means it “will never be adulterated”; that is to say, even future buddhas will not adulterate this knowledge of the foremost.<sup>118</sup> Even in the future, the Buddha Dharma teaches the very same teachings on social values (such as the precepts), for mental training (for freeing the mind from distraction), for gaining insight into true reality to attain liberating wisdom.

(9) ***Appaṭikuṭṭhāni saṃaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi***, “unrepudiated by wise recluses and brahmins in the world; these wise ones will neither reproach nor find fault with it (this knowledge of the foremost).”<sup>119</sup> Seeing the goodness of the Buddha’s teachings, especially his mastery of the knowledge of the foremost they would accept it, and use it in their own teachings and lives.

**3.4.3.3** In practical summary, **these 4 steps of Dharma (dhamma,pada)**<sup>120</sup> are those of these 4 wholesome states, namely:

(1) non-covetousness,	<i>anabhijjhā</i>	or charity ( <i>cāga</i> );
(2) non-ill will,	<i>avyāpāda</i>	or lovingkindness ( <i>mettā</i> );
(3) right mindfulness,	<i>sammā,sati</i> ;	
(4) right concentration,	<i>sammā,samādhi</i> .	

These 4 steps of Dharma are said to be “foremost [primal], long standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, never before adulterated, not being adulterated, will never be adulterated, unrepudiated by wise recluses and brahmins.” In short, these 4 steps of Dharma are not mere “Buddhist” truths, but are natural truths that reflect true reality, that is, the very nature of things in a wholesome sense.

(1) **Non-covetousness** (*anabhijjhā*) literally means “not desiring what others have.” These are, as a rule, material or worldly things broadly referred to as “gain, honour, praise” (*lābha,sakkāra,siloka*),<sup>121</sup> or anything that is not wholesome or conducive for one’s spiritual development. Broadly, this means letting go of all sense-experiences and mind-objects, and living in the moment, intending or doing what needs to be done next that is wholesome for oneself and benefits others.

(2) **Non-ill will** (*avyāpāda*) is directing the mind that is free from covetousness (or even when it may still have some negative quality) to show lovingkindness (*mettā*), that is, an unconditional acceptance of oneself and of others. In this way, one sees an interconnection and interbeing of all beings in terms of life and quality of life. Above all, it is faith that makes it possible for anyone to see their better side and to cultivate their minds for spiritual progress. We show a heart and hand of compassion for those with difficulties in bettering themselves. We rejoice when they are able to act with goodness even in a small way. Even in the face of apparently overwhelming odds, we hold a mind of equanimity, understanding that we all have to face our own karma.

<sup>118</sup> ***Na saṅkīyissanti*** ti anāgata,buddhehi pi na apanīyissanti (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45).

<sup>119</sup> Ye loke viññū saṃaṇa,brāhmaṇā, tehi appaṭikuṭṭhā, saṃaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi aninditā agarahitā (DA 3:1009; AA 3:45).

<sup>120</sup> Comy glosses *dhammapadā* with “Dharma-parts” (*dhamma,koṭṭhāsa*) (AA 3:61,9; VA 1:223; DA 3:1022; PmA 1:300; SA 3:248; DhsAMūṭ:Be 70).

<sup>121</sup> **Bhindi S** (S 17.31, SD 46.24; SD 61.5 (3.1.3)).

(3) **Right mindfulness** (*sammā,sati*) is basically keeping the mind on a wholesome mind-object, that is, the present moment. It is an effective “support for keeping the mind in the present” (*sati'paṭṭhāna*) in 4 ways, as needed, that is, being aware of:

1. the physical body as rising and falling, that is, impermanent, and letting it go;
2. feelings as being conditioned, dependent on our senses and how we think, and letting them go;
3. the mind as a thought arises and seeing it just as it is (lustful or not, focused or not, etc); and
4. realities (*dhamma*), such as the 5 aggregates, the 5 hindrances, the 4 noble truths and the 7 awakening-factors).<sup>122</sup>

(4) **Right concentration** (*sammā samādhi*) arises with the fulfillment of the previous 3 qualities—non-covetousness, non-ill will and right mindfulness—which free the mind from the distraction of the senses and thoughts. The mind is thus able to overcome the 5 hindrances—sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt<sup>123</sup>—and go on to attain the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana and remain in it. With the mastery of the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana, one then is able to progress to the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana and so on. One must progress through the 4 dhyanas<sup>124</sup> successively.

**The 4 dhyanas** are especially helpful as the bases for gaining mental freedom. After mastering a dhyana, one emerges from it with profound mental calm and clarity. With this calm and clear mind, one then examines impermanence, suffering and nonself according to one's inclination and ability. Thus, this set of 4 qualities is called “the steps of Dharma” (*dhamma,pada*) because they conduce to one's training on the path of moral virtue, mental concentration and liberating wisdom.

### 3.5 AGGAÑÑA AS USED IN THE PĀTHIKA SUTTA

#### 3.5.1 Sunakkhatta's notion of *aggañña* as “the beginning of things”

*Aggañña* is used in the **Pāthika Sutta** (D 24) by Sunakkhatta [§1.5] in its 2<sup>nd</sup> sense, that is, the cosmological, in a *narrow* sense to refer to the “beginning of things” [3.0.2]. Right from the start of the Sutta, the young Licchavī, Sunakkhatta is shown to be a *believer of the bizarre, supernatural and miraculous*. Sunakkhatta blames the Buddha for not showing him supernatural psychic miracles (*uttari,manussa,dhamma iddhi,pāṭihāriya*) [§1.4] and his knowledge of the foremost (*aggañña*), by which Sunakkhatta means “the beginning of things”<sup>125</sup> [§1.5].<sup>126</sup> The Buddha explains to Sunakkhatta that there was neither an understanding that Sunakkhatta's training as a monk included an explanation of “the beginning of things,” nor that the Buddha promised that he would teach Sunakkhatta the beginning of things as part of the latter's training [§§1.3 + 1.5].

#### 3.5.2 The 5<sup>th</sup> sense of *aggañña*—as “knowledge of the foremost”

**3.5.2.1 The Pāthika Sutta** (D 24) begins with an erstwhile monk, the young Licchavī, Sunakkhatta, disappointed with the Buddha for not showing him his superhuman psychic miracles and teaching him on

<sup>122</sup> For details of each of the 4 focuses of mindfulness, see SD 13.1 (3.4-3.6).

<sup>123</sup> Notice the close parallel between the 4 steps of Dharma and the 5 hindrances. On the 5 hindrances, see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1; (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12.

<sup>124</sup> On the 4 dhyanas (*jhāna*), see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4; **The layman & dhyana**, SD 8.5; **Nimitta**, SD 19.7; **Samādhi**, SD 33.1a.

<sup>125</sup> Comy: *aggaññan ti loka*, (DA 818,12). On *aggañña* as the “beginning” of things [3.2.2].

<sup>126</sup> D 24/3:5-7 + 4,12 f respectively.

the beginning of things; so he gives up Dharma training. The Sutta builds up momentum with 3 farcical tales of 3 naked ascetics:

- the first naked ascetic lives like a dog and dies an asura;
- the second boasts a strict life of vows and rituals but ends up as a worldly layman and dies;
- the third challenges the Buddha, flees when the Buddha comes to his hermitage, and even when thrice invited to face the Buddha in debate, remains stuck to his seat!

**3.5.2.2** The Sutta closes on a serious note with a long section on the Buddha describing “**knowledge of the foremost**” (*aggañña*) [§§2.14-21] to a wanderer, Bhaggava [§§2.14-21]. The Buddha however gives only a “limited edition” of his *knowledge of the foremost*, that is, a brief overview of the key cosmological views of the “beginning of things,” of what we today know as “the first cause.”

*Aggañña* as the “beginning of things” is the 2<sup>nd</sup> sense of the term [3.2]. The Buddha teaches only this probably because Bhaggava is not a follower. Yet, while **Sunakkhatta** follows teachers who are seemingly seen to be practising some bizarre or supernatural rituals or living false religious lives, **Bhaggava** is seen as one who tends to have faith in the word of a teacher. [4.4.1.2]

The Buddha explains the “beginning” of things by way of how the notions of creation and the “1<sup>st</sup> cause” arose; that is, by way of meditators who are able to recall their previous lives from the remote past but only for a finite duration, and not before that [3.2.2]. All these teachings (connected to the cosmological sense of *aggañña*) come from the **Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1) [3.2.2.1].

**3.5.2.3** The Buddha states that he knows not only the knowledge of the foremost but even higher things [§2.14]. The Buddha then mentions to Bhaggava an example of a teaching that is “higher” than any of the *aggañña* knowledges. This higher knowledge is that of **the liberation that is beautiful** (*subha vimokkha*) [§2.21]. The Commentary explains this liberation to be simply one of the form dhyanas; it is neither the path nor nirvana. [§2.21n]

**Bhaggava** is thus impressed by the Buddha’s explanation of the knowledge of the foremost as well as the Buddha’s claim to mastery of **the liberation that is beautiful** (*subha vimokkha*). However, Bhaggava neither asks questions about the liberation nor does he go for refuge nor does he join the sangha for Dharma training.

An irony is apparent here. The Buddha does not teach the beginning of things to **Sunakkhatta** who desires to hear it (but which is not part of the Dharma training). But then the Buddha teaches the essence of the beginning of things to **Bhaggava** who then shows faith in the Buddha. However, the Buddha explains it to him it would be difficult for Bhaggava to understand the Dharma in this way, especially when he lacks the proper commitment and training. [§2.21.4]

## 4 Irony and humour in the Pāthika Sutta

### **4.1 HUMOUR IN THE SUTTA**

#### 4.1.1 Instructive humour

**4.1.1.1 T W Rhys Davids**, in the introduction to his translation of the **Pāthika Sutta** (1921) starts by saying:

[The Pāthika Sutta] is concerned really with only two topics, firstly that of mystic wonders, and secondly that of the origin of things. The former has been dealt with much better and more fully in the Kevaddha [Sutta]; the latter, here treated quite curtly and by way of appendix only, is

fully discussed below in the Aggañña [Sutta]. The treatment here is clumsy. It is no doubt intended to be both humorous and edifying.

But the humour is far removed from the delicate irony of the Kevaddha<sup>127</sup> and the Aggañña.<sup>128</sup> The fun is of the pantomime variety; loud, and rather stupid. It is funny perhaps to hear how a corpse gets slapped on the back, wakes up just long enough to let the cat out of the bag, and then falls back dead again; or how an incompetent medicine-man gets stuck fast to his seat, and wriggles about in his vain endeavours to rise. But this sort of fun would appeal more strongly to a music-hall audience, or to schoolboys out for a holiday, than to those who are likely to read it in this volume. ...

(D:R 3:1; slightly edited)

By modern standards, this is a pleasantly polite feedback on the Pāthika Sutta from a Victorian pioneer in modern Buddhist studies. In some ways, Rhys Davids missed out on quite a few important and interesting aspects of the Sutta. First of all, we should consider the audience to which this narrative is related. Indeed, this Dīgha sutta has very little deep or key teachings, and purposely so. Clearly, it is meant to entertain and educate the common crowd of ancient India and the modern audience, too. We often forget that the suttas are really about us!

**4.1.1.2 The humour** of the Pāthika Sutta may be “loud and rather stupid” but this is purposely so. The key antagonists in the Sutta—all ancient Indian religious actors—are themselves *loud and rather stupid*, but who regard themselves as religiously attained and superior to others. If the Sutta were any more serious, it would certainly not be as “humorous and edifying.” **Humour**, by its very nature, often pokes fun at *the loud and stupid, and the powerful*. In an important way, humour points to something *stupid* but says it out loud where others would only politely whimper or sarcastically whisper; humour undresses the *loud* and punctures *the power balloon* so that it looks barely just as they are.

The Aggañña Sutta, for example, records the Buddha as relating a grand tale of early cosmology and human evolution that evinces the timeless roots and truth of the **dhamma** of human nature: the principles and practices of proper conduct since time immemorial. The cosmological tale is a parody on the Vinaya rules and a morality play, where primordial beings “tasted the sweet earth with their fingers,” “made large lumps [morsels]” of it and ate them, and built houses wherein they had sex [3.1.1.3].

#### 4.1.2 Divine comedies: Khiddā, padosikā and Mano, padosikā

**4.1.2.1** There is humour even in high heavens; the lowest of the high heavens, anyway. The devas “**defiled by play**” (*khiddā, padosikā*) are like little children engrossed in their play, forgetting their meals. Like children’s bodies, theirs are delicate, but more so, and missing even a meal can kill them. That is how they “fall” (*cavanti*) from their heavenly state.

The devas or gods are said to “**fall**” from heaven (they die) either because they have exhausted their good karmic fruits or they fret, seeing the signs of their impending demise; an unwholesome last thought results in an unwholesome rebirth. Upon dying, they invariably fall into the lower realms, especially the sense-world and live the suffering lives of mortals. [3.2.2.1 (2)]

The cosmic rule, then, is clear: *what goes up must come down*. The gravity of karma works on all beings, earthly or divine, low gods and High Gods. Only by attaining the path of awakening do we free ourselves from the burden of the senses and cycle of thoughts. We are that uroboros that is samsara, biting our own tail, and wondering why we suffer pain.

<sup>127</sup> Kevaddha S (D 11/1:211-223), SD 1.7.

<sup>128</sup> Aggañña S (D 27/3:80-97), SD 2.19.

Samsara is a ceaseless play that feeds on worldly food: *material food, sense-contact, mental volition and consciousness*.<sup>129</sup> Material food needs to be taken regularly and properly. Sense-contact arises and arrests us every moment we are awake. Volition is when the mind acts on body and speech on account of like, dislike or ignorance. Consciousness is the chain that holds us fast to **samsara**, the endless cycle and life and death, rebirth and redeath.

We feed on samsara; samsara feeds on us. The devas feed on joy; we are driven by pleasure. Seeing their joy coming to an end, the devas fret and fall. Baited by pleasure, we seek bodies, and make more bodies. Despite the pain—because of it—we think of the pleasure, we run after it, we play with it. Samsara is **the irony**, the cosmic play that is our cyclic lives.

**4.1.2.2** The devas “**defiled by mind**” (*mano,padosikā*), despite their divine status, are driven by jealousy and hatred, even toward their own kind. When two parties resent one another, they bring about their own demise. When one party remains calm, it is possible that the other will calm down, too. Hence, divine attributes are no guarantee for everlasting happiness. Whatever exists must change; change entails suffering. [3.2.2.1 (3)]

Humans may live heavenly lives in their earthly domains so long as their good karma supports them. Even then, such lives always breed jealousy and resentment, and are riven with defiled hearts and minds. The pious are driven by the desire for good karma—blessings to have and to be—forgetting the other side of the karmic coin. When one loses the momentum of good, one is likely to be drawn away by the bad; what one has, one can lose; what one is, will be no more. This is **the karmic irony**.

Only by understanding karma, can one use it like a knife without cutting oneself. Only by the constant good can one grow wholesomely by freeing the mind from greed, hatred and delusion. Karma makes something of good and bad; by freeing the mind from seeking *something*, one is then more likely to see the true nature of things; that good and bad arises in the mind. Therein lies the quest for spiritual liberation, beyond heaven and karma.

It begins with seeing and understanding that **irony is suffering; suffering is irony**.

#### **4.1.3 The fortuitous and the non-percipient**

**4.1.3.1** Then there is **the irony of the all** (*sabba*).<sup>130</sup> Although the *whole* world is present before us by way of *forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts*, we tend to see only the past in almost every experience of ours. Hence, we keep seeing only what we *want* to see, and conclude that *that* is what we speak of as “I am,” my self, my identity, my soul.

Since we “see” only **our body**—what we *see, hear, smell, taste and touch*—we conclude that *that is all* that there is. We fail to see how we are conditioned to “see,” to “hear,” to “smell,” to “taste,” and to “touch”: we often fail to see the thought behind each of these experiences. We fail to see how **feeling**, conditioned by the past, reacts to the present sense-stimulus. Then we perceive “something,” and when this something is desirable, we want it to be *permanent*, we want to own and *have* it.

Since we experience only the body (and other bodies), we conclude that this body is our **self**. What we experience is our self; then when we die, the self dies, too. We reject any idea of an afterlife and karma. Everything, we surmise, arises by chance.<sup>131</sup> [3.2.2.1 (4)]

<sup>129</sup> **Putta,mārīsa S** (S 12.63) + SD 20.6 (2); SD 55.14 (2).

<sup>130</sup> See eg **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1.

<sup>131</sup> In modern philosophy, this is also called materialism. According to early Buddhism, this is a result of the annihilationist view (*uccheda,ditthi*). Annihilationism is one of the 2 extreme views (*antā*); the other is that of eternalism (*sassata,ditthi*) [4.1.3.2 n]. See (**Pabbajjā Acela(ka) Kassapa S** (S 12.17), SD 18.5; SD 51.1 (1.2.1.3 + 1.2.1.4). For 2 related theistic wrong views, see **Titth'āyatana S** (A 3.61,1-4), SD 6.8.

Since everything happens by *chance* (so we believe), we must try to manipulate, master, even cheat, chance. We do this in different ways—depending on how we have been mentally, socially and religiously conditioned—we leave it to God, we pray, invoke gods and demons, we resort to good luck charms, we curse and cast hexes on others. We thus become **superstitious**: we seek answers in some outside agency for problems that have arisen *within* our own minds. We are even willing to place our remotes in the hands of others. **This is the irony of luck and belief**, of superstition.

**4.1.3.2** The roots of **belief in chance and superstition** can go deeper or higher. Brahmas who have lived as **non-percipient beings** (*asañña,satta*) [3.2.2.1 (5)], in time, fall from their state and are reborn on earth. Mastering meditation and gaining an ability to recall past lives, they can only recall their immediate past life as non-percipient beings, but not before that. So they come to the conclusion that the self and the world arose fortuitously, by chance.

We may thus say that some of those religions that believe in “this life and the hereafter” have arisen in this manner: simply put, the prophets and preachers of such a system are unable to see what were before their present life. So they conclude that this is our only life. Since they also have no real idea about karma, or rebirth, or future lives, they conclude that the future is “eternal”; that heaven (for believers) and hell (for unbelievers) are eternal. Such ideas are common sources of fear, ill health and suffering since those false views were preached.

Such theologians and believers fail to understand the impossibility of an “eternal” state of suffering or of happiness. **Suffering** means feeling pain, and pain comes from changes in our physical body, *changes* in our actions, thoughts, feelings and attitudes, and changes that arise in others; suffering arises from *change*.

To them, **happiness**, too, arises from change; when we feel discomfort and it goes away, we feel happy. When we feel suffering due to some kind of pain, loss or burden, we feel happy when the source of that suffering goes away. It is difficult, indeed impossible, to imagine a single thing that really keeps us happy (without changing) throughout our life (that is, a single life). How then is it possible for us to have happiness for “eternity”?

This is **the irony of beliefs in eternity**.<sup>132</sup>

## 4.2 IRONY IN THE SUTTA [2.1.1.2]

### 4.2.1 What is irony?

**4.2.1.1 Irony** is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual (typically literal) meaning of the words, for humorous or emphatic effect. The language or action seems to say or signify something different, even opposite, to reality. It may also refer to a state of affairs or an event that seems subtly or clearly contrary to what one expects and is often subtly or wryly amusing as a result.<sup>133</sup>

In the suttas, we see **dramatic irony** as a literary and stage technique (well known in Greek tragedy) in which the full significance of a character’s words or actions is clear to the reader or audience but unknown to the character [4.2.1.2]. Hence, it is a very instructive tool in presenting “case studies”—like the various characters and episodes in **the Pāthika Sutta**—in the study of religious psychology and wholesome religious practice.

<sup>132</sup> This is a result of an eternalist view or eternalism (*sassata,diṭṭhi*): prec n. See also SD 63.13a (6.1.1.3).

<sup>133</sup> See esp (ed) J Butterfield, *Fowler’s Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed, 2015: irony. *Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2006. (Ed) Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, rev 1984. Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 1984. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 1941, 1981. Historical survey of irony: Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed 1992. For etym, see OED 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

**4.2.1.2 The Pāthika Sutta** is characterized by dramatic and religious irony. **Dramatic irony** [4.2.1.1] is where “the character is ignorant ... and acts in a way grossly inappropriate to the circumstances,” or expects the opposite of what reality holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all.<sup>134</sup>

In **religious irony**, the character claims devotion to some teacher or teaching, or to mastery of some knowledge or practice, but this turns out to be just the contrary. In significant ways, we see religious irony in all the non-Buddhist characters in the Pāthika Sutta. An example of religious irony is when we worship suttas instead of studying and practising their teachings: it is like a sick person collecting and classifying various medicines without using the appropriate ones to heal himself.

Throughout the Sutta, the Buddha is the omniscient narrator, which also makes us *the omniscient audience* who realize *the irony* of the situation. We are thus warned against acting hastily or without wise consideration, especially in religious matters. The nature of religion is such that everyone easily falls into ironic roles and so suffers their ironic fruits.

The Pāthika Sutta is thus experientially valuable in reminding us to duly recognize any such ironic roles we fall into, and to at once climb out of them for the safe high ground of self-effort and wisdom. What follows are analyses of and comments on some of these interesting cases of irony found in the Sutta.

## **4.2.2 Sunakkhatta as an ironic believer**

**4.2.2.1** We will here examine **Sunakkhatta** as the most ironic character in the Pāthika Sutta. To begin with, Sunakkhatta started off in the sutta narrative as a monk for at least 3 years in the sangha [2.2.2.2]. Despite being close to the Buddha, even serving as the Buddha’s personal attendant for a brief while [2.2.1.1], Sunakkhatta rejected the Buddha, claiming that the Buddha neither showed him any super-human psychic miracles nor explained to him the beginning of the world, two things that are unrelated to the Buddhist training for awakening. [§1.4 f]

Instead of delving deeper into the Buddha’s teachings, Sunakkhatta was drawn to **3 naked ascetics**, one after another, that is, the dog-ascetic Kora,khattiya [§1.7], the 7-vow Kālara,maṭṭaka [§1.11] and the charlatan Pāthika,putta [§1.15]. Despite these 3 ascetics failing dismally, as predicted by the Buddha, Sunakkhatta was either unwilling or unable to see their wrong views and also his own.

In fact, Sunakkhatta remained unrepentant throughout the Sutta narrative. He departed from the Dharma-Vinaya “as one headed for the downfall and hell.” [§§1.6.4 f]

**4.2.2.2** What is even more ironic with Sunakkhatta was that he actually challenged or blamed the Buddha for pointing out the errors and failures of the first 2 naked ascetics—Kora,khattiya and Kālara,-maṭṭaka—accusing the Buddha that he was jealous of others’ “arhathood”:

“Does the Blessed One begrudge arhathood in anyone?” [§§1.7.5, 1.13.3].

The Buddha of course replied *no*, and predicted the disastrous end of these false ascetics.

Even when the Buddha warned that Pāthika,putta would face dire karmic consequences for making false claims against the Buddha—that Pāthika’s “head would split asunder”—Sunakkhatta actually scolded the Buddha, perhaps less from lack of respect for the Buddha but *more so out of belief in the naked ascetics*:

“Let the Blessed One take heed of what he says! Let the well-farer take heed of what he says!” accusing the Buddha of making a “one-sided” or biased statement. [§1.17]

Sunakkhatta even countered the Buddha’s prediction that Pāthika,putta would never be able to come and meet the Buddha. Sunakkhatta suggested that Pāthika might come “in an altered shape”; that is, in

<sup>134</sup> Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 1941, 1981:91.

an invisible form or as some large animal! [§1.17]. If Pāthika,putta had such powers, why did he flee from the Buddha in the first place?

**4.2.2.3** Sunakkhatta's most ironic situation was clearly that he was willing and able to agree with the Buddha's predictions against Kora,khattiya [§1.10.2], Kālara,maṭṭaka [§1.14.3] and Pāthika,putta [§2.13.4]. More significantly, Sunakkhatta also *agreed* with the Buddha when the Buddha asked him whether these predictions [4.3.1] were themselves works of superhuman psychic miracles [4.2.2.3], to which Sunakkhatta agreed that they were. Yet, for some inscrutable reason, Sunakkhatta neither repented nor gave up his wrong views.

One wonders how, if the Buddha had not made these prophecies, and had let the lives of those naked ascetics take their own course, would Sunakkhatta have reacted to those anticlimaxes? He would probably think nothing of them and simply move on to other cult figures. Cult followers tend to keep on looking for "successful" cult teachers and leaders. Whatever their failures may be, these believers will resort to various ways of rationalizing the failures of those failed cult figures.<sup>135</sup>

Sunakkhatta was blindsided by his own ignorance and cultish view of religion.

#### 4.3 THE IRONY OF MIRACLES

##### 4.3.0 The nature of miracles

**4.3.0.1** While not denying that the focused and adept **mind** is capable of "miraculous" wonders, the Buddha also teaches that they are not measures of spiritual wisdom or awakening. Whatever is defined or presented as "miracles" (*iddhi,pāṭihāriya*) are mental resolves (*adhiṭṭhāna*) of the mind that has mastered at least the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana.<sup>136</sup>

Such a dhyanic mind, it seems, is able to manipulate matter, and, to a certain extent, time (especially by way of one's memory). Thus, one would be able to transform oneself, or recall past lives and past events in the long distant past. When such miracles or wonders are performed, they are, as a rule, used in promoting the Dharma or in connection with spiritual joy.

**4.3.0.2** In simple terms, the early Buddhist idea of miracles is that they happen because they *can* happen. They are not exceptions to what we today know as "laws of science." We have yet to understand well enough the nature and working of the human mind to simply dismiss the possibility of psychic wonders. However, we now know better about the mind than we did before. Early Buddhist mind teachings are today helping both Buddhists and scientists understand the mind better so that we not only meditate better but also heal mind-related problems better, and in time, will understand how mental wonders or miracles work.

As for Buddhists, the best way to understand the mind is to master it; that is, *to know the mind, to tame the mind and to free the mind*. Such a freed mind will be in the best position to understand, even work, what we call miracles in a wholesome sense.

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<sup>135</sup> See eg L Festinger, H Riecken & S Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A social and psychological study of a modern group that predicted the destruction of the world*, Harper-Torchbooks, 1956. On other failed modern prophecies: N Howe & W Strauss, *The Fourth Turning: An American prophecy*, Random House, 1997.

<sup>136</sup> See **Miracles**, SD 27.5a (4.3.7).

#### **4.3.1 Predictions of the 3 naked ascetics' fate**

**4.3.1.1** The Pāthika Sutta records the Buddha as giving his predictions on the fate of the 3 naked ascetics—Kora, khattiya [2.3], Kālara, maṭṭaka [2.4] and Pāthika,putta [2.5]—as cases of **superhuman psychic miracles** (*uttari, manussa pāṭihāriya*), or more specifically, of “mind-reading.” The Buddha must have known that Sunakkhatta would not be deeply concerned with the fate of failed cult figures, since Sunakkhatta was more interested in “miracles.”

We could thus argue that the Buddha made those predictions simply because they would actually unfold as predicted: *the truth will out*.<sup>137</sup> In fact, like Sunakkhatta, most informed Buddhists (and non-Buddhists), would be unimpressed, too, by those predictions (but each for their own reasons). In other words, surely the Buddha had his reason for making those predictions; that is, as *a warning against falling for cult figures*, especially in our own times.

**4.3.1.2** The 3 cases of the cult figures (the 3 naked ascetics) started off with each of them displaying or pretending to have various remarkable religious abilities or powers in the eyes of the common people who depend on some external agency promising power and prosperity. Yet, as a rule, such cultish gurus in time reveal their clay feet and fall down crashing from their pedestal into the ground of reality.

Thus **Jāliya**, the resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher, castigates the silliest of the naked ascetics, Pāthika,putta, thus:

“Now, what are vile Pāthika,puttas, and what are tathāgatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas?”

[§§2.7.4, 8.3, 9.3, 10.4]

While cult figures feed and flourish on the ignorance and gullibility of the crowd, the compassionate wise, like the Buddha, teach to cultivate self-reliance and wisdom in the individual. Buddhas arise because **suffering** prevails in the world, in the worldly crowd, due to **craving**; the Buddha then teaches **the path** of awakening as true individuals, that is, become truly wise and emotionally independent of others.

#### **4.3.2 The Buddha's fire dhyana**

**4.3.2.1** After three failed attempts by various people to bring Pāthika,putta before the Buddha, the crowd did not wait in vain. The Buddha “instructed, inspired, roused, gladdened the assembly with a Dharma talk.” [§2.13.1]. By instructing, the Buddha dispels the listeners’ **delusion**; by inspiring them, **heedlessness** is dispelled; by rousing them, **indolence** is dispelled (and self-effort initiated); and by delighting them, the teaching is brought to a **conclusion**.

In keeping with the Buddha’s example, when we teach Dharma, we should do our best to **bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and joy** to the audience.<sup>138</sup> These 4 qualities are, in fact, the 6<sup>th</sup> or last of the ideal skills of a sufficiently capable monastic.<sup>139</sup>

The Sutta continues by saying that the Buddha, through teaching those assembled, “liberated them from great bondage, and uplifted 84,000 beings from the deep waters of suffering” [§2.13.2]. In other words, they attained various levels of the path.

<sup>137</sup> This saying is found in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* (1596), spoken by the young rascal Lancelot Gobbo to his blind father who thinks him a stranger. He asks Lancelot about his son. Lancelot replies: “Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me: it is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son: give me your blessing: truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man’s son may, but at the length **truth will out**.” (Act 2, Scene 2). The origin of the phrase is prob older.

<sup>138</sup> For details, see SD 11.4 (4.3.2).

<sup>139</sup> See (**Atthaka**) **Alāñ S** (A 8.62,2), SD 46.5.

**4.3.2.2** As the grand finale to the great assembly in Pāthika,putta's hermitage outside Vesālī (where Pāthika,putta himself failed to turn up), the Buddha publicly performed a superhuman psychic wonder:

“I entered into **the fire dhyana**, rose into the air to the height of 7 palm trees, projected a flame the height of another 7 palm trees, so that it blazed and glowed.” [§2.13.2]

It should be noted that the Buddha performed **the fire dhyana** psychic wonder some time after Pāthika,-putta had fled the scene. Hence, this display was not so much in response to Pāthika,putta's boastful claims as it was apparently to highlight his appreciation for the presence of such an adoring assembly of faith.

This is clearly a display of superhuman psychic miracle by early Buddhist definition. Moreover, the Buddha was then said to be 80 years old [2.2.2.1 n], by which time the Vinaya rule<sup>140</sup> forbidding monastics from publicly performing such wonders was already in force.

The rule forbidding a public display of miracles before the unordained (non-renunciants) was probably made later by the Buddha in connection with the monk Piṇḍola who used his powers to rise into the air to retrieve a costly sandalwood bowl suspended from a bamboo-pole 60 cubits (24.5 m = 80 ft) high. The Buddha reprimanded Piṇḍola for such a cheap and frivolous display of psychic power by a renunciant.

He then made this ruling as recorded in **the Culla,vagga** of the Vinaya:

Bhikshus, a superhuman psychic miracle should not be shown to householders. For whom-ever shows it, there is the offence of wrong-doing.

Bhikshus, break the wooden bowl into small fragments, and then give them to the monks as scent-mixed ointment.<sup>141</sup> And, bhikshus, a wooden bowl should not be used.

(Cv 5.8.2 = V 2:110 f)<sup>142</sup>

**4.3.2.3** Two important points should be noted here: the context of the rule [4.3.2.2] and its implication. The context of Piṇḍola's miraculous display is clear: it was to retrieve a sandalwood bowl hanging at a height of over 25 m. The elder Piṇḍola was then on alms round with the elder Moggallāna, when they came upon the spot of the bowl hung high on a bamboo pole in the midst of a crowd in Rāja.gaha. None of the other leading sectarian teachers,<sup>143</sup> who were there earlier, were able to retrieve the bowl.

When Piṇḍola invited Moggallāna (renowned for his psychic powers) to retrieve the bowl, Moggallāna in turn asked Piṇḍola to do so himself. We should thus not see this as being Piṇḍola's fault. Rather, the rule was made simply to forbid renunciants displaying superhuman psychic miracles in public before the unordained (non-sangha members) as a frivolous display of dhyanic mastery.

The implication of the rule is clear. Not all monastics are able to perform superhuman psychic miracles. Should people see “miracles” as some kind of criterion for a Dharma teacher, the true Dharma would simply be hindered in its growth, and false, cultish teachings and teachers would flourish. Hence, in the **Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), the Buddha declares that the greatest miracle of all is that of “**instruction**” [education] (*anusāsanī*), the willingness to learn and the self-training culminating in arhathood.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Cv 5.8.2 (V 2:110 f). See (**Pāṭihāriya**) **Mahaka S** (S 4.14), SD 27.2; **Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja Vatthu** (DhA 14.2.2a): SD 27.6a(2.5); **Miracles**, SD 27.5a (7.2).

<sup>141</sup> Cf V 1:203 where sandalwood is one of the five perfumes (*añjan'upapisana*) allowable.

<sup>142</sup> See SD 27.6a (1.4.3).

<sup>143</sup> These were the 6 sectarian teachers: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesa,kambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhi,putta and Niganṭha Nāṭa,putta (V 2:111,1-11).

<sup>144</sup> D 11,8/1:214 (SD 1.7).

In this spirit, however, *ironically*, the Buddha, having failed to get Sunakkhatta to learn and accept Dharma as true reality rather than as psychic wonder, actually did not perform any miracles, not in the highest spirit anyway. And yet, when we understand the true significance of the Pāthika Sutta—that we should know and avoid cult teachers and teachings, and cultivate self-reliance and realization—we have, in our own time and by our own wisdom, to turn the Buddha's teaching into a **miracle of instruction**.

**4.3.2.4** We still have the problem of why the Buddha performed the **fire-dhyana wonder** before the great assembly gathered in Pāthika,putta's hermitage. The fire dhyana itself is not unique to the Buddha,<sup>145</sup> and is described as follows:

I entered into the **fire dhyana**, rose into the air to the height of 7 palm trees, projected a flame the height of another 7 palm trees, so that it blazed and glowed.  
Then I reappeared in the hall of the gabled house in the great wood. [§2.13.3]

At the end of the fire dhyana, the Buddha disappeared and reappeared in the gabled house: this is a case of **teleportation**, another example of superhuman psychic miracle! From the Pāthika Sutta, we can deduce the reason for the Buddha's performing the fire kasina, that is, in response to Pāthika,putta's boast he could perform *twice* as many psychic wonders as the Buddha. Since Pāthika,putta simply fled the scene, it clearly shows that he is unable to perform such wonders.

Since both the Commentaries are silent on this psychic wonder, we are left with this conclusion—that Pāthika,putta is merely boasting but really has no dhyanic powers at all. We may also surmise that the Buddha performs the fire dhyana to inspire the multitude as a basis for their future quest to seek the Dharma.

**4.3.2.5** We know that the Buddha has laid down a Vinaya rule forbidding monastics from making a public display of psychic wonders. Perhaps the Vinaya rule was actually laid out some time after the Pāthika,putta incident. Moreover, the commentary on the Vinaya rule forbidding monastics performing miracles before the unordained mentions an exception to the rule, thus:

Here, the psychic display of magical transformation is disallowed, not psychic display by resolve.  
*Ettha vikubbana,iddhi,pāṭīhāriyā paṭikhittām; adhitthāna,iddhi<sup>146</sup> pana appaṭikkhitā ti veditabbā.*  
(VA 1203,3-5)

My understanding of this exception on the rule regarding psychic display (*iddhi,pāṭīhāriya*) is that monastics are not allowed to display magical miracles but that superhuman psychic wonders that are projected by mental resolve, that is, dhyanic abilities, are allowed. Even then, such displays should only be made on Dharma-spirited occasions (that is, in connection with Dharma teachings) and to inspire wise faith in the Dharma listeners. In other words, the miracles should not be used in themselves for merely impressing or even converting others.

Hence, we see the Buddha performing the **fire dhyana** only because it befit the occasion. The charlatan Pāthika,putta fails to turn up to defend or explain himself; the Buddha has given teachings that benefitted the assembly. At the end of it all, in the audience's mind the Buddha simply disappears. By then, the audience has already attained various levels of the path, which means that they are part of the noble sangha, which was clearly more than being merely "ordained" into the conventional monastic

<sup>145</sup> On the fire kasina, see SD 49.5b (1.3); on the fire element attainment (*tejo,dhātu samāpatti*), see SD 54.18 (2.3.2). Amongst monks who are able to perform the **fire dhyana** are the elders Ānanda, his parinirvana (DhA 5.15/2:99 f); Dabba Malla,putta, SD 62.12 (3.2.2.2); and Mahaka (S 4.14.16/4:290), SD 27.2.

<sup>146</sup> *Adhitthāna,iddhi* also occurs at VA 392,3; DhsA 15,5; ThaA 1:110,25, 3:70,6; PmA 663,27, 666,28,30.

sangha. These path-attainers have fulfilled the purpose of joining the monastic sangha; they have attained the sangha of path saints.

**4.3.2.6** When the fire kasina is combined with the water kasina, we have the **twin wonder**,<sup>147</sup> which only the Buddha can perform. The reason is that to perform this twin wonder, the meditator has to rapidly enter and emerge from each of the 2 kasinas so that rays of fire and jets of water seem to emerge simultaneously from each pore of the meditator.

#### 4.4 RELIGIOUS IRONY

##### 4.4.1 Knowledge of the foremost

**4.4.1.1** The long section on “**knowledge of the foremost**” (*aggañña*)—chapter VI [§§2.13-21]—is specially taught by the Buddha for Bhaggava’s benefit. It also serves as the Buddha’s response to Sunakkhatta’s accusation that the Buddha did not teach Sunakkhatta *aggañña*, by which he meant the “beginning of the world.”

There is a **double irony** here: the first is that Sunakkhatta did not even know the proper or broad sense of *aggañña*, which the Buddha has explained in some detail in, for example, **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27) [3.1], which Sunakkhatta could have easily learned from one of the senior monks, such as Ānanda. The second irony is that now the Buddha has taught *aggañña* to the wanderer Bhaggava, who appreciated the teaching.

**4.4.1.2** We have already surveyed the various senses of *aggañña* [3.0.2]. Sunakkhatta seriously handicapped his mental and spiritual progress by seeing *aggañña* merely as the “beginning of things.” Bhaggava was more open to the Buddha’s lengthy teaching on *aggañña*, but he only accepted it on the word level (*pada, parama*),<sup>148</sup> and held on to his old views.

Although **Sunakkhatta** and **Bhaggava, gotta** are, in a sense, opposites of another—the former an unbeliever in the Buddha, the latter a believer—they are both unwilling, perhaps unable, to let go of their wrong views. The point however remains that they both have met the Buddha, which in itself is the fruit of their past good karma. If the Buddha’s adversary and antithesis, Deva, datta, was prophesied to become a pratyekabuddha in the distant future,<sup>149</sup> surely these two—Sunakkhatta and Bhaggava, gotta—would, by their association with the Buddha, have good karmic connections with the future buddha, too, in whose time they would perhaps be able to reach the path.

##### 4.4.2 The Sutta’s ironic conclusion: Bhaggava’s faith

**4.4.2.1** The **Pāthika Sutta** presents Bhaggava as a good listener who is silent throughout the Sutta, politely listening to the Buddha. He speaks again only at the end of the Sutta to declare his faith. The opening quote for the Buddha starts with “What Sunakkhatta the young Licchavī said is true, Bhaggava”

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<sup>147</sup> On the twin wonder (*yamaka pātihāriya*), see SD 27.5b (3.2.2).

<sup>148</sup> *Pada, parama*, “word-at-best” (one who masters only the word of the teaching; who takes things literally without further thought). **Ugghatitaññū S** (A 4.143) lists **4 kinds of “learners”** (students): 1. the quick learner (*ugghatitaññū*), who grasps Dharma the moment it is spoken; 2. the diffuse learner (*vipacitaññū*), who grasps briefly taught Dharma after some analysis; 3. the tractable (*neyya*), who realizes Dharma in stages; and 4. the word learner (*pada-parama*), who masters only the word of Dharma at best; SD 3.13(3.3).

<sup>149</sup> Miln 111; DhA 1:148; NcA 56. See **Deva, datta**, SD 61.5a.

[§1.2.3]. The closing quote is the Buddha saying, “Whenever one attains the liberation that is beautiful ...” [§2.21.2] near the very end.

In the closing section, when the Buddha finally ends his long (*dīgha*) discourse, Bhaggava effusively<sup>150</sup> declares:

“But, bhante, it is they that are perverted, who on account of that perversion blame the Blessed One and the monks!

Inspired am I by the Blessed One that he may teach me such Dharma in which I may attain and dwell in the liberation that is beautiful.” [§2.21.3]

**4.4.2.2** The first case of irony here is that the Buddha has given a rather long discourse to Bhaggava, which includes debunking the wrong ways of both Sunakkhatta and the 3 naked ascetics, expounding the “knowledge of the foremost” [the whole of Part VI, §§2.14-20], and giving a brief teaching on the “liberation that is beautiful” [2.21]. Yet Bhaggava neither attains any level of the path, nor renounces to join the sangha, nor does he go for refuge!<sup>151</sup>

Bhaggava, as an uncommitted Buddha admirer, reminds us of modern entrepreneurial Buddhists who associate with famous Dharma teachers, canonizing them as “my teachers.” But they do not really practise the teaching. One does not become a “student” by merely calling another “teacher.” Only by living a Dharma-spirited life that one has the Buddha as one’s teacher. [4.4.2.5]

#### **4.4.3 The teachings of the Pāthika Sutta**

**4.4.3.1 The Pāthika Sutta** explanation of the term *aggañña* is not a summary of **the Aggañña Sutta** but deals with the “beginning of things,” that is, ideas of a creator-God and world-beginnings. In fact, much of the material of **Chapter VI**, “Knowledge of the foremost,” comes from **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1). In other words, these passages deal specifically with the following ideas, thus:

##### **D 24**

- §2.14 the creator-God idea;
- §2.15 Ābhassara devas (those with streaming radiance);
- §2.16 Mahā Brahmā and the creator-God idea;
- §2.17 origin of the creator-God idea;
- §2.18 Khiḍḍā,padosikā devas: a partly eternal, partly non-eternal universe;
- §2.19 Mano,padosikā devas: a partly eternal, partly non-eternal universe;
- §2.20 non-percipient beings: the view of fortuitous arising of things.

##### **Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1), SD 25**

- cf §§1.10-36
- §§2.2-2.6;
- §2.5;
- §2.6;
- §2.7;
- §§2.8 f;
- §§2.30 f.

Here again, while Sunakkhatta does not seem to accept these teachings, we see Bhaggava listening to them with enthusiasm. While the ex-monk Sunakkhatta rejects the Buddha’s explanation of the “beginning of things,” an outsider (the wanderer Bhaggava) accepts it.

**4.4.3.2** Towards the close of **the Pāthika Sutta**, the Buddha explains to Bhaggava **the “liberation that is beautiful”** (*subha vimokkha*) [§2.21]. Of this, the Buddha clarifies:

<sup>150</sup> On Bhaggava’s effusive character, see enthusiasm in welcoming the Buddha to his hermitage [§1.2].

<sup>151</sup> On the other hand, we have the case of the brahmin **Jāṇussoṇi** who apparently goes for refuge a record number of at least 12 times, ie, each time after listening to the Buddha’s teaching: M 4, 27; S 12.47, 45.4; A 2.2.7, 3.55, 3.59, 4.184. 6.52, 7.50, 10.119 = 167, 177. See SD 44.3 (2.4).

“Whenever one attains **the liberation that is beautiful**, at that time one clearly knows it as beautiful.” [§2.21.1 f]

The commentary explains *the liberation that is beautiful* as a form dhyana based on a “beautiful kasina,” that is, a colour meditation device (DA 3:830,27). There is no record of the Buddha explaining this in any detail to Bhaggava. Yet, Bhaggava is impressed; perhaps he thought this was the supreme liberation, that is, nirvana (or his idea of nirvana).

Now, earlier on, the Buddha already declared that he knows not only the “knowledge of the foremost” but also “beyond that” (*uttaritara*) [§2.14]. That higher or liberating wisdom has been gained through **quenching** (*nibbuti*), that is, the extinguishing of *the fires of greed, hatred and delusion*: in short, nirvana [§2.14.1]. Bhaggava may or may not have understood this statement; but he is silent on it.

#### **4.4.4 Dual belonging: Keeping faith in the Buddha**

**4.4.4.1** It is the Buddha’s mention of **the liberation that is beautiful** [4.4.2.4] that seems to impress Bhaggava deeply; or perhaps the Buddha has reached the end of his teaching to Bhaggava and Bhaggava is moved by the teaching itself. Understandably, the teaching on the “beginning of things” inspires Bhaggava to declare his faith in the Buddha:

“But, Blessed One, it is they that are all wrong, who impute to the Blessed One and to his monks that they err.

So delighted am I with the Blessed One [35] that I believe he is able so to teach me that I may attain and remain in the liberation that is beautiful.” [§2.21.3]

**4.4.4.2** The Buddha must have known that Bhaggava’s faith is *merely* in the Buddha’s words (that is, merely a cognitive faith) [4.4.1.2], not through his understanding of what has been taught (that is, affective faith).<sup>152</sup> In other words, Bhaggava may be excited about what the Buddha has said, but he remains stuck to his old beliefs and ways; he is still unchanged, unconverted spiritually.

This is clear from the Buddha’s response:

“Hard it is, **Bhaggava**, for you, as you do,  
holding a different view,  
keeping different priorities,  
having different likes,  
following a different practice,  
following a different teaching,<sup>154</sup>  
to attain to and abide in the liberation that is beautiful.

*añña,diṭṭhikena*  
*añña,khantikena*  
*añña,rucikena*  
*aññatrāyogena*<sup>153</sup>  
*aññatrācariyakena*

Look therefore to it, Bhaggava, that **you foster well this faith of yours in me.**” [§2.21.4]

This is one of those rare occasions when the Buddha knows that the listener is **not ready** for Dharma commitment, much less renunciation. This is clear enough since Bhaggava neither declares his under-

<sup>152</sup> Cognitive faith is based on definition or fiat with neither experience nor understanding, “believe that we may understand”; affective faith is faith rooted in experience and understanding: “experience that we may understand”: SD 10.4 (2.2.3).

<sup>153</sup> Be Ce *aññatrāyogena*; Ee Se *aññatra āyogena*; as in D 25,7/3:40.9,(SD 1.4) etc [foll n].

<sup>154</sup> “Holding a different view ... ,” D 9,24/1:187,17 (SD 7.14), D 24,2.21/3:35,3; D 25,7/3:40 (SD 1.4); M 72,18/-1:487,8 (SD 6.15), M 80,13/2:43,11 (SD 40a.15).

standing and vision in the **Dharma** nor expresses his desire to go forth, or even take refuge in the 3 jewels. Bhaggava only declares his “faith” in the Buddha, and hopes that the Buddha would teach him the “liberation of the beautiful.” This is like asking for empowerment from a lineage guru. The point is that the Dharma cannot be transferred, just as it is impossible to transfer good karma or merits from one person to another.<sup>155</sup> I cannot eat a meal just to transfer the fullness to you!

**4.4.4.3** This reaction is neither new nor rare; in fact, it is one of the most common reactions we see today during Buddhist talks and conferences. Apparently, most of those who attend such talks seem to be drawn to the feel of the crowd or the charisma of the teacher. There is often laughter but little is learned that would change the life of the listeners.

Yet, if one keeps going for such talks, as age catches up, one then realizes some kind of pattern of Dharma, and one begins to see how one can really see Dharma. One then realizes that one is like Bhaggava, drawn to the sounds of words and teachings, even to the charisma of teachers. This is **the Buddhism of faith**; it keeps us with the right crowd, as it were.

**4.4.4.4** Thus, Bhaggava remains undaunted, that is, he feels contented to have **faith**—an outsider’s belief—in the Buddha. He is drawn to the Buddha as a person, but not ready to renounce his old faith for the Dharma. Bhaggava declares:

“If, bhante, it be hard for me, *holding a different view, keeping different priorities, having different likes, following a different practice, following a different teaching*, to attain to and abide in the liberation that is beautiful, then, I will, at least, **foster well my faith in the Blessed One.**”<sup>156</sup>

[§2.21.5]

In time, Bhaggava will have faith through his seeing the Dharma, too, and so aspire for the path of the noble sangha. Meantime, the Pāthika Sutta happily closes, “the wanderer Bhaggava,gotta, satisfied, rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word.” [§2.21.6]

**4.4.4.5 The Pāthika Sutta** states that Bhaggava,gotta—or Bhaggava for short—was inspired by the Buddha’s teaching on “the liberation that is beautiful” [§3]; yet, he does not go for refuge, even less to go forth in the Buddha,dharma. When Bhaggava asks the Buddha to teach him about this beautiful liberation, the Buddha hints that he has to commit himself to the Dharma, since it is not just “talk,” but to properly follow the 3 trainings in moral conduct, mental concentration and insight wisdom. For such a training, one should first go for refuge in the 3 jewels. Bhaggava is silent here.

The Buddha then compassionately suggests,

“Come now then, Bhaggava, this faith of yours in me—guard it well!” (*iṅgha tvāṁ bhaggava yo ca te ayāṁ mayi pasādo, tam eva tvāṁ sādhukāṁ anurakkhati*).

**The Sutta Commentary** explains why Bhaggava, even after being convinced by the Buddha’s teaching, only says, “I will at least keep well my faith in the Blessed One” [§5] but does not even go for refuge. Bhaggava, it seems, “spoke on account of being overcome by deceit” (*sāttheyyanako haññena āha*, DA 3:830,35 f). This is Bhaggava’s “weak spot” (*mamma*, DA 3:831,4).<sup>157</sup>

<sup>155</sup> The notion of “merit transfer” is popular with Sinhalese Buddhism and their followers. This is a form of “mater-ialist” Buddhism where merits become a commodity transacted with “donations” to priests who act like a medium for the transfer. This is of course wrong view which should be pointed out and corrected.

<sup>156</sup> On Bhaggava’s “dual belonging” in faith, see **Religious pluralism and dual belonging**, SD 62.6b (1.2.5.2).

<sup>157</sup> Be DA DAT *mammām*, except Ee *cammaṁ*, “skin, hide”; Ce *vammaṁ*, “armour.”

Bhaggava has a number of spiritual “weak spots.” Firstly, he is an esteemed teacher of “clothed wanderers,” suggesting that he is less “ascetic” than the naked wanderers. Going for refuge in the Buddha means that he is putting the Buddha above himself, even renouncing his status as leader of the clothed wanderers. He may lose the reputation and influence that he holds at that time.

Secondly, he probably is still attached to his own tradition and views. He is only intellectually convinced by the Buddha but he is still unwilling to give up his beliefs—which apparently define him, his status and success. It should be recalled that Pāthika,putta—despite being a naked ascetic—“was the foremost in wealth, the foremost in fame amongst the Vajji people” [§1.15.1]. Bhaggava, on account of his position was probably very famous and wealthy, too.

Thirdly, clearly Bhaggava has yet to experience **spiritual urgency** (*sarīvēga*), like the bodhisattva seeing the 4 sights of an old man, a sick man, a corpse and the renunciant. Hence, it could be his pride of status, his attachment to old beliefs or to his lifestyle of religious comfort—or all three reasons—that prevent him from taking that leap of faith into spiritual renunciation as a Dharma-spirited monk.

#### **4.4.5 Appreciating the Pāthika Sutta**

**4.4.5.1** The modern English translators of **the Pāthika Sutta**”, on the other hand, do not seem to be happy with it. They do not think very highly of the Sutta or have some reservations about it. **M Walshe** (1995), a recent Western translator of the Pāthika Sutta makes the following unflattering note on the Sutta’s ending [§2.21.5]:

Could it be that Bhaggava's allegedly dubious reaction is DA's coded way of expressing doubts about this Sutta? Not only is the main part inferior and contradictory, if humorous, but it concludes, first with an appendix (2.14 ff) on the beginning of things which is clumsily tacked on, doubtless in response to Sunakkhatta's remarks at 1.5 (which were adequately answered there), and then (2.21) with an even more irrelevant appendix to that appendix. Another curious feature is that it is probably the only Sutta in the Canon which consists almost entirely of a narrative (as opposed to a discourse) related by the Buddha to a third party (and, at that, an obscure character not owing him any allegiance). (D:W 599 n758)

Having worked on the present (re)translation of the Pāthika Sutta along with a modern commentary on it, I must admit that I’m simply surprised that Walsh failed to see **the Pāthika Sutta** as a Dīgha Nikāya text that is delightfully unique as **a narrative sutta** (as Walsh himself puts it). I suspect that an open-minded non-Buddhist reading this Sutta, even casually, will be delighted, if not impressed, with its humour and colourful characters (especially the 3 naked ascetics).

**4.4.5.2** An early modern translator of the Sutta, **T W Rhys Davids** (1921), in his introductory essay to the Pāthika Sutta gives a few helpful pointers, especially to the modern reader:

[From 4.1.1.1]

... And the supposed edification is of the same order. As an *argumentum ad hominem*, as propounded for the enlightenment of the very foolish Sunakkhatta (and this is just, after all, what it purports to be), it may pass muster. Whether it can have appealed to (or was even meant to appeal to) wiser folk is very questionable. One gets rather bored with the unwearied patience with which the Tathagata is here represented as suffering fools gladly.

And it is difficult to bear with an author who tells stories so foolishly merely to prove that the Tathagata is as good a magician as the best, and who has the bad taste to put them into the

mouth of the Tathagata himself. Not only in style and taste does this Suttanta differ from the others. In doctrine also it is opposed to them.

The wonders in which the peoples of India, in the sixth century BC, believed were not very different from those so easily, at the same period, believed in Europe. The mental attitude regarding them was, I venture to think, not at all the same. In the West, though the other view was also found, the prevailing belief was that such wonders were the result of the interference of some deity suspending, or changing, the general law, the sequence of things that generally happened.

In India, though this view was sometimes held by some, the prevailing belief was that such wonders (whether worked by humans, gods, or animals) were in accordance with law. In a word, they were not miracles. There is a tendency to make little of this distinction, but it is really of vital importance. (D:R 3:1 f)

Rhys Davids also makes a thoughtful note on Bhaggava's reaction at the Sutta's closing in a footnote, thus:

Buddhaghosa judges that this [Bhaggava's reaction] was merely affected appreciation. But we are not told anything of the later history of this man. (D:R 3:32 n2)<sup>158</sup>

The Sutta commentary does, however, add that the Buddha's words "made an impression on him as a spiritual support in the future."<sup>159</sup>

**4.4.5.3** One of the remarkably compassionate qualities of the Buddha is that he will still teach others as long as they are willing to listen. Despite the Buddha's foreknowledge of such listeners—that they seem to be simply unmoved by his words, much less to renounce for Dharma training—he still teaches them fully and wholeheartedly. The significance we must never fail to see here is that through such listeners, the Buddha is actually teaching us even today.

The best example of such an occasion—the Buddha teaching those willing to listen but unready to follow him—is **the Udumbarika Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 25).<sup>160</sup> The Buddha makes a comparison of his teachings with those of the wanderer Nigrodha. Although Nigrodha agrees with the Buddha's exposition on every point, Nigrodha and his followers are not moved to try out the Dharma for themselves; they lived contented in their comfortable worldly lives.

Then, the Blessed One thought:

"Every one of these hollow men is possessed by the evil one, so that *not even one of them* thinks:

'Let us now follow the holy life proclaimed by the recluse Gotama, that we may know it—for what do **7 days** matter?'" (D 25,24.2), SD 1.4

The Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta follows immediately after the Pāthika Sutta (D 24).

**4.4.5.4** Sunakkhatta was not the only one who gave up monastic training. There was young **Citta the elephant trainer's son** (*citta hatthi.sari,putta*), a very intelligent young man. Having joined the sangha (the first time), he studied under the Buddha and gained a special skill in distinguishing subtle differences in the meaning of words. On account of lust, he left the sangha six times, and six times returned. In his

<sup>158</sup> See §2.21.6 n.

<sup>159</sup> *Desanā pan'assa āyatim vāsanāya paccayo ahosi* (DA 3:831,10).

<sup>160</sup> D 25,24/3:56 (SD 1.4).

penultimate renunciation, he quarrelled with Mahā Koṭṭhita, who objected to his constant interruption of the elder's discussions on the Dharma (*abhidhamma,kathā*<sup>161</sup> with Mahā Moggallāna.<sup>162</sup>

After his quarrel with Mahā Koṭṭhita, Citta seeks the help of his friend, the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda, who, according to Buddhaghosa, brings him along to meet the Buddha [D 9,32] with the express purpose of reconciling him with the monks (DA 2:379). This last meeting is movingly recorded in **the Potṭha,pāda Sutta** (D 9), where the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda goes for refuge, and Citta rejoins the sangha for the last time, goes into retreat and gains arhathood.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> On the canonical usage of the prefix *abhi-*, see n on *abhisañña,nirodha* [6.1].

<sup>162</sup> **Citta Hatthi,sāri,putta S** (A 6.60/3:392-399); DA 2:378.

<sup>163</sup> D 9,54-56/1:202 f (SD 7.14).

# Pāthika Sutta

## The Pāthika Discourse

D 24

### THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CYCLE (paṭhama bhāṇavāra)

**1.1** At one time,<sup>164</sup> the Blessed One was staying amongst the Mallās.<sup>165</sup> There was a market town of the Mallās named **Anupiyā**.<sup>166</sup>

#### I. SUNAKKHATTA

##### The Buddha visits Bhaggava,gotta

2 Then, in the morning, the Blessed One, having dressed himself, taking robe and bowl, entered Anupiyā for alms. Then it occurred to the Blessed One:

“It is too early to go into Anupiyā for alms. What now if I were to visit the wanderer Bhaggava,gotta’s hermitage, and visit the wanderer **Bhaggava,gotta**? ”<sup>167</sup>

3 Then, the Blessed One visited the wanderer Bhaggava,gotta’s hermitage and approached the wanderer Bhaggava,gotta.

**[2] 1.2** Then the wanderer Bhaggava,gotta said this to the Blessed One:

“Please come, bhante Blessed One! Welcome, bhante Blessed One! It has been a long time since bhante Blessed One has made an occasion to come here,<sup>168</sup> that is, in coming here.<sup>169</sup> Let bhante Blessed One take a seat. Here is a seat that has been prepared.”<sup>170</sup>

<sup>164</sup> It seems that this sutta teaching was given by the Buddha during his last days (D:RD 3:10 n1). The spelling *pāthika* follows Be; this is the namesake of the Ājīvaka ascetic, Pāthika, of Savatthī, as related in **Pāṭhik’ājīvaka Vatthu** (DhA 4.6/1:376-380) [1.2.2]. Clearly, Pāthika,putta of **D 24** and Ājīvaka Pāthika of **DhA 4.6** are different persons.

<sup>165</sup> The **Mallās** were a tribe who formed one of the 16 great states of northern India during the Buddha’s time. Like the Licchavī, the Mallā also belonged to the Vasetṭha (Skt *vāsiṣṭha*) gotra. See B C Law, *The Kshatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, 1922:162-180. See DPPN sv Malla.

<sup>166</sup> **Anupiyā** was a market-town (*nigama*) in Malla country, and was also called Anūpiya or Anopiyā (DA 3:816), located to the east of Kapila, vatthu. Siddhattha renounced the world beside the river Anomā in the mango grove at Anupiyā (*anupiy’amba,vana*) and spent the 1<sup>st</sup> week there before going to Rājagaha, 30 yojanas away [337.5 km] (J 1:65 f). The Buddha visited Anupiyā again on his return from Kapila, vatthu, and where large numbers of Sākyā youths joined the sangha, incl Bhaddiya, Anuruddha, Ananda, Bhagu, Kimbila, Devadatta and their barber, Upāli (V 2:180 f; AA 1:191; Dha 1:133, 4:127). The Mallā rajahs built a vihara in the Anupiyā mango-grove for the Buddha.

<sup>167</sup> Bhaggava,gotta, “one of the Bhaggava (potter)” clan, a clothed wanderer: [2.1]. Addressed as “Bhaggava” in the Sutta.

<sup>168</sup> *Idh’āgamanāya pariyyam akāsi*. Comy explains: “Here, *pariyyam akāsi* means make it an occasion,” *tattha pariyyam akāsi* *ti vāram akāsi* (AA 3:363; UA 115). See also foll n.

<sup>169</sup> “Please come, ... to come here,” *etu kho bhante Bhagavā svagatāṁ bhante Bhagavato, cirassāṁ kho marisā imāṁ pariyyam akāsi yad idāṁ idh’āgamanāya*, using the 3<sup>rd</sup> imp sg *etu* (“Let ...come!”) as a polite formality (D 25,7a/3:39): so too in **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,5/1:179). In **pariyyam akāsi**, Comy glosses *pariyyā* as *vāra* (“occasion, opportunity”) (AA 3:63; UA 115). This is stock: **D 1:90** (DA 2:369), 179 (see D:RD 1:245 n2), **2:270**, **3:2**, **39**; **M 1:252** (MA 2:300 f), 326, 481, **2:2**, **30**, **3:7**; **S 1:142**; **A 3:332** (AA 3:363), **4:76**; **U 13** (UA 115); **J 3:359**. In **Brahma Niman-tanika S** (M 49), Baka Brahmā says: *ehi kho marisā, sāgatāṁ marisā, cirassāṁ kho marisā imāṁ pariyyam akāsi yad idāṁ idh’āgamanāya*, which is a formal gesture of courtesy.

<sup>170</sup> Bhaggava’s effusive nature is apparent again in his closing words [§2.21.3; 4.4.2].

### **Sunakkhatta gives up the training**

2 The Blessed One sat down on the prepared seat, and the wanderer Bhaggava, gotta taking a low seat, sat down at one side.<sup>171</sup> Seated thus at one side, the wanderer Bhaggava said this to the Blessed One:

“Some days ago, Blessed One, a good many days ago, **Sunakkhatta**,<sup>172</sup> the young Licchavī,<sup>173</sup> approached me, saluted, sat down at one side and said this to me:<sup>174</sup>

3 ‘I have now given up the Blessed One, Bhaggava. I no longer dwell dedicated to the Blessed One.’ Is what Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, said true, bhante?”

“What Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, said is true, Bhaggava.

**1.3** Some days ago, Bhaggava, a good many days ago, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, approached me, saluted, sat down at one side and said this to me:

‘Bhante, I now give up the Blessed One. I will no longer dwell dedicated to the Blessed One [as teacher].’

2 When Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, said this, I said to him:

‘But now, Sunakkhatta, have I ever said to you:

“Come, Sunakkhatta, live devoted to me?”

“No, bhante, you have not.”

3 Or have you ever said to me:

“Bhante, I would dwell devoted to the Blessed One?”

“No, bhante, I have not.”

4 “That being the case, hollow man,<sup>175</sup> **who is there to abandon what?**<sup>176</sup>

See, hollow man, how far the fault here is your own.”<sup>177</sup>

### **Superhuman psychic miracles**

**1.4** ‘But, bhante, the Blessed One does not show me any **superhuman psychic miracles**<sup>178</sup>!’

‘Why, now, Sunakkhatta, have I ever said to you:

“Come, Sunakkhatta, live devoted to me and I will show you **superhuman psychic miracles**?”

‘You have not, bhante.’

<sup>171</sup> The dialogue here is as at **Udumbarika Śīha, nāda S** (D 25,7.1/3:38), SD 1.4, but there it is the Buddha who starts the conversation after the greetings.

<sup>172</sup> *Sunakkhatta licchavi,putta*; I take *putta* as meaning “young” rather than “royalty” since the Licchavī were a republican tribe. [2.2].

<sup>173</sup> The Licchavī was a powerful kshatriya state (*janapada*) in N India in the Buddha’s time. Like the Mallā, the Licchavī also belonged to Vasetṭha (Skt *vāsiṣṭha*) gotra (Mvst 1:283). The Licchavī and the Videhā were the chief clans of Vajji country. See B C Law, *The Kshatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, 1922:1-140. See DPPN sv Licchavī.

<sup>174</sup> **Mahāli S** (D 6,5-11/1:152-155), Mahāli tells the Buddha that Sunakkhatta approached him, claiming that he was able to see divine forms but not hear any divine sounds (SD 53.4). [2.2.2.2]

<sup>175</sup> *Mogha, purisa*, lit, “empty person,” or “foolish one.” See **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,6/1:132), SD 3.13 n “hollow man.”

<sup>176</sup> *Ko santo karī paccācikkhasi*, lit, “being who, whom do you give up?” ie, considering your want of position in the matter, how can you so talk? This I think is Sutta’s crux or thesis, where the Buddha’s answer could be taken to be a hint at the higher purpose of the spiritual life, viz, the realization of nonself and dependent arising. See nn + refs at **Cūla Māluṇkyā S** (M 63,4/1:428), SD 5.8.

<sup>177</sup> *Yavañ ca te idam aparaddhām*. See also: **Tudū Brāhmā S** (S 6.9/1:149); (**Dasaka**) **Kokālika S** (A 10.89/5:171). Where another (one’s teacher) is blamed: **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,2.6/1:103), SD 21.3.

<sup>178</sup> *Uttari.manussa,dhammā iddhi,pātihāriyā* = *uttari*, “super”; *manussa*, “human”; *dhammā* (fem), “state” + *iddhi*, “psychic (power)” + *pātihāriya*, “wonder, miracle.” For the Buddha’s stand on **superhuman psychic miracles** (*iddhi,pātihāriya*), see **Kevaddha S** (D 11,1-8/1:211-214), SD 1.7.

2 'Or have you ever said to me:

"Bhante, I will live devoted to the Blessed One, for he will show me *superhuman psychic miracles*"?

'I have not, bhante.'

3 'That being the case, hollow man, who is there to abandon what?

4 What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Whether *superhuman psychic miracles* are shown, or whether they are not, is [not] the purpose that I teach Dharma thus:

that it leads the practitioner to **the full destruction of suffering?**

**[4]** 'Whether, bhante, *superhuman psychic miracles* are shown or not, the purpose that the Blessed One teaches Dharma is this: *that it leads the practitioner to the full destruction of suffering.*'

5 'That being the case, Sunakkhatta, it matters not to that purpose whether superhuman psychic miracles are shown or not; of what use to you then would be the working of them?

*See, hollow man, in how far the fault here is your own.*' [§1.3.4]

### Knowledge of the foremost

**1.5** 'But, bhante, the Blessed One does not reveal to me **the knowledge of the foremost.**'<sup>179</sup>

'Why, now, Sunakkhatta, have I ever said to you:

"Come, Sunakkhatta, live devoted to me and I will reveal to you the knowledge of the foremost?"

'You have not, bhante.'

2 'Or have you ever said to me:

"Bhante, I will live devoted to the Blessed One, for he will reveal to me the knowledge of the foremost?"

'I have not, bhante.'

3 'That being the case, hollow man, who is there to abandon what? [§1.4.3]

What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Whether the knowledge of the foremost is revealed, or whether it is not, is it the purpose that I teach Dharma thus:

*that it leads the practitioner to the full destruction of suffering?*

4 'Whether, bhante, the knowledge of the foremost is shown or not, the purpose that the Blessed One teaches Dharma is this: *that it leads the practitioner to the full destruction of suffering.*'

**[5]** 5 'That being the case, Sunakkhatta, it matters not to that purpose whether the knowledge of the foremost is revealed or not; of what use to you then would be the working of them?

*See, hollow man, in how far the fault here is your own.* [§1.3.4]

### Sunakkhatta's past faith in the 3 jewels

**1.6** In many ways have you, Sunakkhatta, spoken **my praises** before the Vajjī people,<sup>180</sup> saying:<sup>181</sup>

'So, too, is he the Blessed One.'<sup>182</sup> for, he is  
arhat,

*iti pi so bhagavā  
araham*

<sup>179</sup> Sunakkhatta uses *aggāñña* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (cosmological) sense, as "the beginning of things": [3.2].

<sup>180</sup> "The Vajjī people," *vajji,game*. *Gāme* usu means "village," but here Comy explains as "The people of the Vajjī rajahs, that is, Vesālī city dwellers" (*vajji,rājūnam gāme vesāli,nagare*, DA 3:818,23). The highlight here seems on the heart of the Vajjī nation, the capital city, Vesālī.

<sup>181</sup> The 9 virtues of the Buddha, comy at Vism 7.1-67/197-213. For further detailed analysis, see **Dhaj'agga S** (S 11.3), SD 15.5; **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7; see also **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 3.4), SD 15.7b.

<sup>182</sup> Alt tr: "For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord] ... , " or, simply, "The Blessed One is such ... ." On the meaning of *iti pi so*, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7 (2.2) & n.

fully self-awakened,  
accomplished in wisdom and conduct,  
well-farer,  
knower of worlds,  
peerless guide of persons to be tamed,  
teacher of gods and humans,  
awakened,  
blessed.'

*sammā,sambuddho  
vijjā,caraṇa,sampanno  
sugato  
loka,vidū  
anuttaro purisa,damma,sārathī  
satthā deva,manussānam  
buddho  
bhagavā ti*

Thus have you spoken my praises before the Vajjī people.

2 In many ways, too, have you, Sunakkhatta, spoken **the praises of the Dharma** before the Vajjī people, saying:<sup>183</sup>

'Well-taught<sup>184</sup> is the Blessed One's true teaching,  
seen for oneself,  
immediate [having nothing to do with time],  
inviting one to come and see,  
leading onward [to nirvana],  
to be personally known by the wise.'

*svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo  
sandīṭṭhiko  
akāliko  
ehi,passiko  
opanayiko  
paccattam veditabbo viññūhī ti*

Thus have you, Sunakkhatta, spoken the praises of the Dharma before the Vajjī people.

3 In many ways, too, have you, Sunakkhatta, spoken **the praises of the sangha** before the Vajjī people, saying:<sup>185</sup>

'The Blessed One's community of disciples  
keeps to the good way [is well-practised];<sup>186</sup>  
the Blessed One's community of disciples  
keeps to the straight [direct] way;  
the Blessed One's community of disciples  
keeps to the right way;  
the Blessed One's community of disciples  
keeps to the proper way.  
These are the 4 pairs of persons,  
the 8 individuals:  
this community of disciples of the Blessed One is  
worthy of offerings,  
worthy of hospitality,  
worthy of gifts,  
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,  
a supreme field of merit for the world.'

*supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho  
uju,paṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho  
ñāya,paṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho  
sāmīci,paṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho  
yad idam cattāri purisa,yugāni  
atṭha,purisa,puggalā  
esa bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho  
āhuneyyo  
pāhuneyyo  
dakkhiṇeyyo  
añjali,karaṇīyo  
anuttaram puñña-k,khettam lokassā ti*

<sup>183</sup> For detailed analysis of terms here, see **Dhammānussati**, SD 15.9.

<sup>184</sup> Here begins the 6 qualities of the Dharma (*cha dhamma,guṇa*) (M 1:37; A 3:285). The 6 virtues of the Dharma, commented on at Vism 7.68-88/213-218. See **Dhammānussati**, SD 15.9.

<sup>185</sup> For detailed analysis of terms here, see **Atṭha,puggala S** (A 8.59), SD 15.10a.

<sup>186</sup> Here begins the 9 virtues of the (noble) sangha (*nava saṅgha,guṇa*) (M 1:37; A 3:285), commented on at Vism 7.89-100/218-221. See **Atṭha,puggala S** (A 8.59), SD 15.10a.

Thus have you, Sunakkhatta, spoken the praises of the sangha before the Vajjī people.

4 I tell you, Sunakkhatta, I make known to you, Sunakkhatta, that there will be those who shall say about you thus:

‘Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, was not able to live the holy life under the recluse Gotama. And he, not being able to keep to it, has renounced the discipline and turned to the low life.’

[6] 5 Thus, Bhaggava, did Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, addressed by me, depart from this Dharma-Vinaya, as one **headed for the downfall and hell**. [§§1.10.3 f, 1.14.5; 2.13.f]

## II. Kora,khattiya the dog-ascetic

### Sunakkhatta admires Kora,khattiya

1.7 At one time, Bhaggava, I was staying among **the Bumus**.<sup>187</sup> Uttaraka is a village of the Bumus. Early in the morning, having dressed, taking robe and bowl, I went into Uttaraka for alms.

2 Now, Bhaggava, at that time, a naked ascetic, **Kora,khattiya**,<sup>188</sup> conducted himself like a dog, walking on all fours,<sup>189</sup> or sprawling on the ground, and taking food, hard or soft, with only his mouth.<sup>190</sup>

Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, seeing him *conducting himself like a dog, walking on all fours, or sprawling on the ground, and taking food, hard or soft, with only his mouth*, thought:

‘How truly admirable does he look, the holy man, the recluse *creeping on all fours, or sprawling on the ground, taking up food, hard or soft, with only his mouth!*’

3 Then I, Bhaggava, knowing the thoughts of Sunakkhatta the young Licchavī, said to him:

‘You, hollow man, profess to be the Sakyā’s son?’

### The Buddha predicts Kora,khattiya’s death and rebirth

4 ‘What does the Blessed One mean, bhante, in saying this to me?’<sup>191</sup>

[7] ‘You, hollow man, profess to be the Sakyā’s son.

Yet you, Sunakkhatta, as you looked at this naked ascetic Kora,khattiya, *conducting himself like a dog, walking on all fours, or sprawling on the ground, and taking food, hard or soft, with only his mouth*, thought:

“How truly admirable does he look, the holy man, the recluse *creeping on all fours, or sprawling on the ground, taking up food, hard or soft, with only his mouth!*”

<sup>187</sup> Be Se *thūlūsu*; Ce Comy *khulūsu*; Ee *bumūsu*. Comys: *khulū nāma janapado* (DA 3:819,11), glossed with “the name was received on account of country’s royal princes (*janapadīnām rāja,kumāram vasena tathā,laddha,nāmo*, DAT 3:5). This meant that they were of the kshatriya clan.

<sup>188</sup> Comy says that he was a kshatriya “with his feet turned in” (*kora*) (DA 3:819,16-27); cf *khora*, lame, limping. SED says that *kora* is “amphiarthrosis,” where the joints allow only limited movement, typically in areas of the body that experience moderate stress and require some degree of motion, like the back-bone and pelvis. Cf **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57/1:387-392) for the story of Puṇṇa, the young Koliya, as a dog-ascetic (*kukkura,vatika*). (SD 23.11).

<sup>189</sup> *Catu,kunḍiko* (A 3:188; Pv 411/49). Comy explains that he stands on all fours (*catu,sāṅgha,ṭhito*), and walks and rests with both knees and elbows, resting the knees and elbows on the ground (DA 3:819,20-23; PvA 181,9-13; MAT-Be 2:33).

<sup>190</sup> This episode is meant as a case of the Buddha’s wry humour for us to reflect on how the gullible can fall for the truly bizarre and unwholesome, misperceiving it as being something remarkable, even religious!

<sup>191</sup> Note that Sunakkhatta does not know the significance of the term “the Sakyā’s son” (*sakyā,putta*), suggesting that he lacks proper training as a monk.

5 'Yes, bhante, I did. What now, bhante, does the Blessed One begrudge arhathood in others?'<sup>192</sup>  
[§1.13.3]

'No, hollow man. I begrudge not arhathood in anyone. It is only in you that this evil view has arisen. Let it go; let it not become a lasting source of unhappiness and suffering to you.'

#### THE BUDDHA'S PREDICTION

6 This naked ascetic, **Kora,khattiya**, whom you, Sunakkhatta, fancy so admirably a recluse, an arhat, will die in 7 days of epilepsy. Upon dying, he will be reborn as one of the **Kāla,kañjikā**,<sup>193</sup> the very lowest of the asura hosts.

Dead, he will be cast aside on a heap of birana grass in the charnel ground. You may go up to him then, if you wish, and ask him:

7 "Do you know your own destiny, avuso Kora,khattiya?" Perhaps he may reply:<sup>194</sup>

"I know my own destiny, avuso Sunakkhatta. There are asuras called Kāla,kañjikā, the very lowest of the asura hosts—I am reborn amongst them."

#### Sunakkhatta warns Kora,khattiya

1.8 Then, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, went up to the naked ascetic, Kora,khattiya, and said this to him:

'Avuso Kora,khattiya, the recluse Gotama has declared that *in 7 days, the naked ascetic, Kora,khattiya, will die. [8] Upon dying, he will be reborn as one of the Kāla,kañjikā, the very lowest of the asura hosts. Dead, he will be cast aside on a heap of birana grass in the charnel ground.*

2 Therefore, avuso Kora,khattiya, you should take **food** in proper moderation; you should drink **fluids** in proper moderation—so that the word of the recluse Gotama is proven wrong.'<sup>195</sup>

3 Then, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, not believing<sup>196</sup> the Tathagata, counted up the 7 days one after another.

4 But, Bhaggava, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, **Kora,khattiya died of epilepsy**. Upon dying, he was reborn as one of the Kāla,kañjikā, the very lowest of the asura hosts.

Dead, he was cast aside on a heap of birana grass in the charnel ground.

#### Kora,khattiya confirms his destiny

1.9 Now, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, heard that Kora,khattiya lay dead on a heap of birana grass in the charnel ground.

2 Then, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, went to where the corpse was lying. Thrice he smote the naked ascetic, Kora,khattiya, with his hand, saying:

"Do you know, avuso Kora,khattiya, what is your destiny?"

<sup>192</sup> Comy paraphrases: "May no one else (except me and mine) be arhats!" (*mā aññassa arahattam hotū ti*). *Arahat* is a common term in Indian religions for "holy man" in general. See DHA 1:400; ThĀ 221.

<sup>193</sup> **Kālakañjikā** are prob a hybrid or cross between asura and preta; they appear in the great assembly of **Mahā-samaya S** (D 30,12/2:259), SD 54.4; J 1:389. They are "terribly fearsome" (*mahā,bhimsā*) (D 20,12/36\*/2:259) + n, SD 54.4. See Punnadhammo, *The Buddhist Cosmos*, 2023:236.

<sup>194</sup> We see here the Buddha inviting Sunakkhatta to verify the prophecy for himself, speaking in a manner that may motivate Sunakkhatta actually to do so.

<sup>195</sup> This shows that Sunakkhatta actually believed in the truth and efficacy of the Buddha's prediction.

<sup>196</sup> "Not believing," *asaddahamāno*. An ironic wordplay! Sunakkhatta actually fears (ie, believes) that Kora,khattiya would die, but hoping that this would not happen!

3 Then, Bhaggava, Kora,khattiya, rubbing his back with his hand,<sup>197</sup> sat up, and said:

*“I know my own destiny, avuso Sunakkhatta. There are asuras called Kālakañjikā, the very lowest of the asura hosts—amongst them I am reborn.”* [§1.7.6]

4 So saying, he fell right back supine.<sup>198</sup>

**1.10** Thereupon, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, came to me, and saluting me, sat down at one side. Then, Bhaggava, I said this to him:

‘What think you, Sunakkhatta? Has it happened to the naked ascetic, Kora,khattiya, even as I have declared to you, or is it otherwise?’

2 ‘It has happened to him even as the Blessed One declared to me, not otherwise.’

[9] ‘What think you, Sunakkhatta? This being so, has some superhuman psychic miracle been worked, or has it not?’

‘Surely, bhante, this being so, such a superhuman psychic miracle has been worked; not otherwise.’<sup>199</sup>

3 ‘And is it then to me, you hollow man, who have thus worked superhuman psychic miracles, that you say:

“Bhante, the Blessed One works me no *superhuman psychic miracles*?”

See, hollow man, the error of your way.”

4 *Thus, Bhaggava, did Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, addressed by me, depart from this Dharma, Vinaya, as one headed for the downfall and hell.* [§1.6.4 f]

### III. Kālara,maṭṭaka

#### Pretence to rituals and vows

**1.11** At one time, Bhaggava, I was staying in the **hall of the gabled house**<sup>200</sup> in the great wood at Vesālī. [§§1.15; 2.13]

Now at that time, there was a naked ascetic, named **Kālāra,maṭṭaka**,<sup>201</sup> residing at Vesālī, and great was his wealth and fame amongst the Vajjī people.

2 He had vowed and taken upon himself **7 rules of life**, that is:

“So long as I live, I will be of the naked ascetics; I will put on no garment.

So long as I live, I will be celibate, not indulging in the sexual act.

So long as I live, I will sustain myself with only liquor and meat, taking neither rice nor broth.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>197</sup> “Rubbing his back with his hand,” Be Se pāṇinā piṭṭhim paripuñchanto; Ce Ee pariūñjanto. Cf paṇinā gattāni paripuñchanto, “rubbing his limbs” (V 3:14,32).

<sup>198</sup> Comy: A dead body is incapable of sitting up and speaking. It spoke by the power of the Buddha, who either brought back Kora,khattiya from the asura realm, or he made the body speak. For the range of the Buddha is incalculable. (DA 3:822,11-14)

<sup>199</sup> Comy enumerates a total of 5 miracles: (1) that Kora,khattiya will die in 7 days; (2) the illness that is the cause of the death; (3) the rebirth; (4) the bier of birana grass; (5) the speaking corpse. (DA 3:822,19-27)

<sup>200</sup> “The hall of the gabled house” (kūṭāgāra,sālā), or “the pinnacled hall” or simply “the gabled house”: SD 45.2 (2); M 35,1 n, SD 26.5.

<sup>201</sup> Be *kalāra,maṭṭako*; Ce *kalāra,maṭṭhuko*’ Ee *kandara,masuko*; Se *kalāra,majjako*. For other readings: D:Ee 3:9 n2. This name seems to be found only here.

<sup>202</sup> Yāva,jīvarī surā,marīsen’eva yāpeyyam, na odana,kummāsām bhuñjeyyam.

I will never go beyond  
*I will never go beyond*  
*I will never go beyond*  
*I will never go beyond* the Udena shrine<sup>203</sup> on the east of Vesālī,  
 the Gotamaka shrine on the south of Vesālī,  
 the Satt’amba shrine on the west of Vesālī, [10] and  
 the Bahu,putta shrine on the north of Vesālī.”

3 On account of his taking up these rules of life, he became the foremost in wealth and the foremost in fame amongst the Vajjī people. [2.4]

### Kālara,maṭṭaka is unable to answer Sunakkhatta’s question

**1.12** Now, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, approached Kālara,maṭṭaka, and asked him a question.

Kālara,maṭṭaka did not understand the question, and not understanding, **showed resentment, anger, and dejection.**<sup>204</sup>

2 Then it occurred to Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī:

“Let me not come into conflict with<sup>205</sup> the admirable arhat recluse. Let nothing be that would bring us harm and ill for a long time!”

**1.13** Thereupon, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, approached me. Having saluted me, he sat down beside me. Then I said this to him:

2 “Do you, hollow man, still confess yourself as following the son of the Sakyas?”

“What does the Blessed One mean in saying:

‘Do you, hollow man, still confess yourself as following the son of the Sakyas?’?”

“Why, Sunakkhatta, did you not go up to the naked ascetic, Kālara,maṭṭaka and ask him a question which he *did not understand, and not understanding, showed resentment, anger, and dejection?* And did it not occur to you:

‘Let me not come into conflict with the admirable arhat recluse. Let nothing be that would bring us harm and ill for a long time!’?” [§1.12.2]

3 “Yes, bhante, I did. *What now, bhante, does the Blessed One begrudge arhathood in others?*”

[11] “No, hollow man, I begrudge in no one arhathood.

*It is only in you has this evil view arisen.* Let it go; let it not become a lasting source of unhappiness and suffering to you. [§1.7.5]

### THE BUDDHA’S PREDICTION

4 This naked ascetic, Kālara,maṭṭaka, whom you think so admirable an arhat recluse, will, before long, end his days clothed and married; his diet rice-broth and rice-gruel; his range past all shrines in Vesālī, and he will die fallen from his fame.

5 And before long, Bhaggava, Kālara,maṭṭaka ended his days *clothed and married; his diet rice-broth and rice-gruel; his range past all shrines in Vesālī, and died fallen from his fame.*”

<sup>203</sup> These were beautiful tree-shrines, among others, in and around Vesālī. See **Mahā,parinibbāna s** (D 16,3.1) n (SD 9).

<sup>204</sup> *Kopañ ca dosañ ca appaccayañ ca pātvākāsi*, D 3:10,9 (Comy: *domanassa,saṅkhātarāñ appaccayañ pākaṭañ akāsim*, “showed dejection by way of mental displeasure”) = 159,9 (Comy = *domanassam*, “mental displeasure”) = M 1:250,29 = 251,2 = 1131,12 ≈ J 2:277,10.

<sup>205</sup> Be Ce Ee āsādimhase; Se Comy āsādiyimhase. Med pl of āsādeti (Skt āsādayati) to attack, assail, disturb, behave disrespectfully (towards the Buddha, arhats, monks, ascetics, etc) (MA 3:351); see CPD 2:24, āsādeti.

**Kālara,mattaka lives and dies a worldly man**

**1.14** Now, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, heard that the naked ascetic Kaṭāra,maṭṭaka had ended his days *clothed and married; his diet rice-broth and rice-gruel; his range past all shrines in Vesālī, and died fallen from his fame.*

2 Thereupon, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta the young Licchavī, approached me, saluted and sat down at one side.<sup>206</sup> Then I said this to him:

“What think you, Sunakkhatta? Has the naked ascetic, Kaṭāra,maṭṭaka, *ended his days clothed and married; his diet rice-broth and rice-gruel; his range past all shrines in Vesālī, and died fallen from his fame*; or has it been otherwise?”

“Bhante, it has happened to him just as the Blessed One declared to me, not otherwise.”

3 “What think you, Sunakkhatta? This being the case, [12] has some *superhuman psychic miracle* been worked, or has it not?”<sup>207</sup> [§1.10.2]

‘Surely, bhante, this being so, such a *superhuman psychic miracle* has been worked; not otherwise.’

4 ‘And is it then to me, hollow man, who have thus worked *superhuman psychic miracles* that you say:

“Bhante, the Blessed One works me no *superhuman psychic miracle*?

See, hollow man, the error of your way.”

5 *Thus, Bhaggava, did Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, addressed by me, depart from this Dharma,-Vinaya, as one headed for the downfall and hell.* [§1.6.4 f, 10.3 f]

**IV. Pāthika,putta****Pāthika,putta slanders the Buddha**

**1.15** There was this one time, Bhaggava, I was staying in **the hall of the gabled house**, in the great wood at Vesālī. [§§1.11; 2.13]

Now at that time, the naked ascetic, **Pāthika,putta** [young Pāthika],<sup>208</sup> was residing at Vesālī, too, and was the foremost in wealth, the foremost in fame amongst the Vajji people.

2 He said thus to the Vesālī assemblies:

‘The recluse Gotama is a **speaker of wisdom** (*ñāṇa,vāda*); so am I. A wisdom-speaker is worthy by way of speaking wisdom on account of showing **superhuman psychic miracles**.

If the recluse Gotama would come, I would meet him half-way, then we could both work superhuman psychic miracles.

If the recluse Gotama works one such *superhuman psychic miracles*, I will work two.

If he works two, I will work four [13]. If he works four, I will work eight.

Thus, to whatever extent he may work *superhuman psychic miracles*, I will perform double of them! [§§1.16.2, 20.4, 21.2; 2.1.3, 4.4]

<sup>206</sup> It's interesting that after the fulfillment of the Buddha's predictions regarding Kora,khattiya [§1.10] and of Kālara,maṭṭaka [§1.14], Sunakkhatta returned to the Buddha, perhaps, by way of acknowledging, but nothing beyond that.

<sup>207</sup> Comy lists a total of 7 *miracles*, viz, of prophecy: one for each of the 7 rules broken by Kaṭāra,maṭṭaka, as predicted by the Buddha (DA 3:823,32-34).

<sup>208</sup> Be Ce *pāthika,putto*; Ee Se *pāṭika,putto*. In **Loma,harīsa J** (J 4/1:389), the Buddha is said to have been staying in Pāthika's park during the Kora,khattiya episode.

**1.16** Then, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, approached and saluted me. Then he sat down at one side and said this to me:

*'Bhante, the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, is residing at Vesālī, and is the foremost in wealth, the foremost in fame amongst the Vajjī people.'*

2 He said thus to the Vesālī assemblies:

*"The recluse Gotama is a speaker of wisdom, so am I. A wisdom-speaker is worthy by way of speaking wisdom on account of showing superhuman psychic miracles.*

*If the recluse Gotama would come, I would meet him half-way, then we could both work superhuman psychic miracles.*

*If the recluse Gotama works one such superhuman psychic miracle, I will work two.*

*If he works two, I will work four. If he works four, I will work eight.*

*Thus, to whatever extent he may work superhuman psychic miracles, I will perform double of them."*

[§1.152.2]

### **The Buddha's act of truth**

3 When Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, had spoken thus, Bhaggava, I said this to him:

*"Incapable, Sunakkhatta, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,*

*that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder."*<sup>209</sup>

**1.17** "Let the Blessed One take heed of what he says! Let the well-farer take heed of what he says!"

[14] "What do you mean, Sunakkhatta, that you say this to me?"

2 "It seems, bhante, that the Blessed One's words are a one-sided statement thus:

*'Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,*

*that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.'* [1.16.3]

3 In any case, bhante, the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta, may come to meet the recluse Gotama in **an altered shape**,<sup>210</sup> and that would render the Blessed One's words false.'

### **Double confirmation of what the Buddha knows**

**1.18** 'Now, Sunakkhatta, would the tathagata utter any speech that was ambiguous?'<sup>211</sup>

2 'Well now, bhante, is it by the Blessed One's own mind-reading that he knows thus:

*"Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,*

*that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder"?* [1.16.3]

3 Or has some deva announced to the Tathagata thus:

*"Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting you face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,*

*that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder"?* [1.16.3]

<sup>209</sup> "His head would split asunder" (muddhā'pi tassa vipateyya). [2.5.2.3]

<sup>210</sup> Comy: He may assume an invisible body, or the form of a lion, or a tiger, and so on. (DA 3:325,6-8)

<sup>211</sup> *Api nu kho sunakkhatta tathāgato tam vacan bhaseyya, yā sā vācā dvāya, gāminī ti.*

4 Sunakkhatta, it is by my own **mind-reading**<sup>212</sup> I know thus:

*"Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder?"* [§1.16.3]

5 And also a **deva** announced to me thus:

**[15]** *"Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting you face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder."*

### Pāthika,putta's false prophecy regarding Ajita

6 For **Ajita**, general of the Licchavīs, who died the other day, has been reborn in the host of the 33.

He came to me and said thus to me:

"Shameless, bhante, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta; a liar, bhante, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,-putta.

He made this statement concerning me before the Vajjī people:

*'Ajita, the general of the Licchavis, is reborn in the great hell.'*

But I am not reborn there, bhante. I am reborn in the host of the 33.

Shameless is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, bhante; a liar, bhante, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,-putta.

7 Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting the recluse Gotama face to face.

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.'* [§1.16.3]

8 Thus, Sunakkhatta, too has a **deva** told this matter to me, thus:

"Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting the recluse Gotama face to face.

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.*

9 Now Sunakkhatta, when I have gone into Vesālī on alms-round, having taken my meal, after the alms-round, I will go to **Pāthika,putta's park** for the day-rest.

Tell him, then, Sunakkhatta, whatever you think right."

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<sup>212</sup> Clearly, the "mind-reading" here means that the Buddha read the minds both of Pāthika,putta (that he was wrong) and of the deva Ajita (that he was reborn in Tāvatiṁsa).

## V. Superhuman psychic miracles

### The Buddha visits Pāthika,putta's hermitage

[16] **1.19<sup>213</sup>** Then I, Bhaggava, having dressed early in the morning, and taken bowl and robe, entered **Vesālī** for alms. And after my meal, on my return, I went into Pāthika,putta's park for the day-rest.

2 Then, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, in a great hurry, went into Vesālī, approached **various eminent Licchavīs** and said this to those eminent Licchavīs:

3 'Avuso, that Blessed One, *having gone on alms round, after his meal, on his return, went into Pāthika,putta's park for the day-rest.*

4 Come forth, sirs, come forth, sirs! There's going to be superhuman psychic miracles worked by admirable recluses!'

5 Then those eminent Licchavīs thought:

'*There's going to be superhuman psychic miracles worked by admirable recluses!*

*Come then, sirs, let's go!*'

6 And wherever there were **eminent Licchavīs, eminent brahmins of great halls and householders of means,<sup>214</sup> and recluses and brahmins of other sects**, there Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, went and said this to them:

7 'Avuso, that Blessed One, *having gone on alms round, after his meal, on his return, went into Pāthika,putta's park for the day-rest.*

8 *Come forth, sirs, come forth, sirs! There's going to be superhuman wonder-working by admirable recluses!*'

9 Then those *eminent brahmins of great halls and householders of means, and recluses and brahmins of other sects* thought:

'*There's going to be superhuman psychic miracles worked by admirable recluses! Come then, sirs, let's go!*'

**[17]**

10 So, Bhaggava, those *eminent Licchavīs, eminent brahmins of great halls and householders of means, and recluses and brahmins of other sects*, all went to the park of the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta.

And they were an assembly of several hundred, even, of several thousand persons.

### Pāthika,putta flees to the tinduka-stump wanderers' park

**1.20** Now, Bhaggava, the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta heard thus:

'All those *eminent Licchavīs, eminent brahmins of great halls and householders of means, and recluses and brahmins of other sects*, have come to my park, and that the recluse Gotama himself was sitting in the venerable's park for his day-rest.'

<sup>213</sup> I have in this section [§1.19] relied mostly on Ce which gives a fuller reading.

<sup>214</sup> "Householders of means," *gahapati, necayikā* (D 3:16, 17x3, 18, 20, 22); also at **Kūta,danta S** (D 1:136, 137, 139, 140, 142). *Necayikā*, from *nicaya*, "storing up"; here meaning "of great material wealth, propertied"). Comy says that *necayike* is synonymous with *mahā,sālā*, "of great halls," ie, "very wealthy" on account of "having accumulated much grain and wealth" (*mahā,dhana,dhañña,nicayo*, DA 3:82,28 f).

2 Hearing this, **fear, trembling and hair standing**<sup>215</sup> arose in him.

And thus *fearful, shaken, and hair-standing*,<sup>216</sup> he fled to the **tinduka-stump**<sup>217</sup> **wanderers' park**.

3 Then, that company, Bhaggava, having heard that Pāthika,putta, *fearful, shaken, and hair standing*, *had fled to the tinduka-stump* **wanderers' park**, addressed a **certain man** thus:

'Come, my man, go to the tinduka-stump **wanderers' park** and find the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, and say to him thus:

"We have come together, avuso Pāthika,putta, *various eminent Licchavīs, eminent brahmins of great halls, householders of means and recluses, and brahmins of other sects*. And the recluse Gotama himself is sitting in the venerable's park.

4 Now, you, avuso Pāthika,putta, have spoken before assemblies of Vesālī people, thus:

'The recluse Gotama is a speaker of wisdom, so am I. A wisdom-speaker is worthy by way of speaking wisdom on account of showing superhuman psychic miracles. [18]

If the recluse Gotama would come, I would meet him half-way, then we could both work a superhuman psychic miracle.

If the recluse Gotama works one such superhuman psychic miracle, I will work two. If he works two, I will work four. If he works four, I will work eight.

Thus, to whatever extent he may work superhuman psychic miracles, I will perform double of them.'"  
[§1.15.2]

5 Come forth then half-way, avuso Pāthika,putta; the recluse Gotama has come all the first half and is seated in the venerable's park for day-rest."

### **Pāthika,putta remains stuck to his seat**

1.21 'Very good,' replied **that man**, Bhaggava, and he went to the tinduka-stump **wanderers' park**, approached the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta, and said this to the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta:

"We have come together, avuso Pāthika,putta, *various eminent Licchavīs, brahmins of great halls and householders of means, recluses and brahmins of other sects*. And the recluse Gotama himself is sitting in the venerable's park for day-rest.

2 Now, you, avuso Pāthika,putta, have spoken before assemblies of Vesālī people, thus:

'The recluse Gotama is a speaker of wisdom, so am I. A wisdom-speaker is worthy by way of speaking wisdom on account of showing superhuman psychic miracles.

If the recluse Gotama would come, I would meet him half-way, then we could both work a superhuman psychic miracle.

If the recluse Gotama works one such superhuman psychic miracle, I will work two. If he works two, I will work four. If he works four, I will work eight.

<sup>215</sup> Bhayaṁ chambhitattāṁ loma,hamso udapādi.

<sup>216</sup> Bhīto sarīvaggo lomas,haṭṭha,jāto.

<sup>217</sup> "Tinduka-stump," Be Ce Se *tinduka, khāṇu*; Ee *tiṇḍuk, khāṇu*; also *tindukhāṇu* by way of haplology). **Tinduka** is *Diospyros malabrica*, "the false mangosteen" (DP): its fruit yields a kind of resin used as pitch for caulking vessels, etc; cf VvA:M 219 n56. **Khāṇu**, "tree-stump, trunk or bole" (M 1:78,25) explained by JA as: (the tree) having lost some of its branches here and there (*khāṇu ti tattha tattha patitāṁ rukkha, kalingaram*, J 4:93,7); so called because it has branches but lost most of them (*sākhāhi rukkho labhate samaññāṁ pahina, sākhāṁ pana khānum öhu*, J 4:483,25\*). The latter explanation prob (mis)led D:RD to render *tinduka, khānu* as "Tinduka Pollards." To "pollard" is to cut off the branches at the top of the tree so that the lower branches will grow more thickly.

*Thus, to whatever extent he may work superhuman psychic miracles, I will perform double of them.'*  
[§1.15.2]

3 Come forth then half-way, avuso Pāthika,putta; the recluse Gotama has come all the first half and is sitting in the venerable's park for day-rest."

4 When this was said, Bhaggava, the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, replied:  
'I'm coming, [19] avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' and writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat.

5 Then said the man to him:  
'How now, avuso Pāthika,putta? Is your rump stuck to the seat, or is the seat stuck to your rump?'<sup>218</sup>  
[§1.21.5, 2.2.2, 2.5.2]. You say "*I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, yet you writhe about right there, unable to rise from your seat.*'

6 And though this was said to him, the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, repeated:  
'I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' but only writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat.<sup>219</sup>

**1.22** Now, Bhaggava, when the man recognized that the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta was **discomfited**,<sup>220</sup> saying, '*I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!*' but only writhing about right there, unable to rise from his seat, he went back to the assembly and said this to them:

'The naked ascetic Pāthika,putta seems discomfited. He says: "*I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!*" but only writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat!"

2 When this was said, Bhaggava, I said to the assembly:  
"Incapable, avuso, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.  
If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder." [1.16.3]

## THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CYCLE (*dutiya bhāṇavāra*)

### A Licchavī chief minister invites Pāthika,putta

**2.1** Thereupon, Bhaggava, a certain **Licchavī chief minister**<sup>221</sup> rose from his seat and said this to the assembly:

'Well then, sirs, please wait [20] while I go and see whether I am able to bring the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, to this assembly.'

2 Then, Bhaggava, the chief minister went to the tinduka-stump wanderers' park, approached Pāthika,putta and said this to the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta:

'Come along, avuso Pāthika,putta, you better come along.'

<sup>218</sup> *Kiṁsu nāma te āvuso pāthika,putta, pāvaṭā su nāma te pīṭhakasmīṁ allīna pīṭhakamī su nāma te pāvaṭāsu allīnamī. Pāvaṭa*, "the rump, buttocks": Comy explains as *anisād'aṭṭhikā*, "where one sits on" (DA 3:826,29).

<sup>219</sup> This passage is another humorous highlight, subtly bawdy, hinting at the fears and incapacity of the blind or boastful believer.

<sup>220</sup> "Discomfited," *parābhūta,rūpa* = *parābhūta* (past part of *parābhavati* (to come to ruin) + *rūpa* (a prefix referring to a state or condition); to feel confused or embarrassed.

<sup>221</sup> *Aññataro licchavī mahā,matto* (Skt *mahā amātya*, royal household member, a king's companion).

We have come together, avuso Pāthika,putta, various eminent Licchavīs, brahmins of great halls and householders of means, recluses and brahmins of other sects. And the recluse Gotama himself is sitting in the venerable's park. [§1.21]

3 Now, avuso Pāthika,putta, you have said thus to the assemblies of Licchavī people:

'The recluse Gotama is a speaker of wisdom, so am I. A wisdom-speaker is worthy by way of speaking wisdom on account of showing superhuman psychic miracles.'

If the recluse Gotama would come, I would meet him half-way, then we could both work a superhuman psychic miracle.

If the recluse Gotama works one such superhuman psychic miracles, I will work two. If he works two, I will work four. If he works four, I will work eight.

Thus, to whatever extent he may work superhuman psychic miracles, I will perform double of them.' [§1.15.2]

4 Come forth then half-way, avuso Pāthika,putta; the recluse Gotama has come all the first half and is sitting in the venerable's park for day-rest. [§1.21.3]

5 Now, avuso Pāthika,putta, the recluse Gotama, too, has said this to the assembly:

"Incapable, avuso, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.

If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder." [1.16.3]

6 Come forth, avuso Pāthika,putta. If you come, we will make you the victor, and cause the recluse Gotama to lose.'

**2.2** And, Bhaggava, the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta repeated:

'I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' but only writhed about right there, [21] unable to rise from his seat.

2 Then, Bhaggava, the Licchavī chief minister said this to the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta:

'How now, avuso Pāthika,putta? Is your rump stuck to the seat, or is the seat stuck to your rump? You say "I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming," yet you writhe about right there, unable to rise from your seat.' [§1.21.5]

3 And, Bhaggava, though this was said to him, the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, (again) said:

'I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' but only writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat. [§1.21.6]

**2.3** Now, Bhaggava, when the Licchavī chief minister recognized that the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta was **discomfited**, saying, 'I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' but only writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat,

he returned to the assembly and said this to them:

'The naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, seems discomfited. He says: "I am coming, avuso, I am coming, avuso!" but he writhes about right there, unable to rise from his seat.'

2 When he had spoken thus, Bhaggava, I said this to the assembly (again):

'Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.

If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, [22]

that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.' [§1.16.3]

3 Even if it occurred to the venerable Licchavīs thus:

**'Let us bind the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta with thongs, and drag him here with ox-yokes,'**<sup>222</sup>

Pāthika,putta would break those thongs.<sup>223</sup>

*'Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,*

*that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.'* [§1.16.3]

### Jāliya invites Pāthika,putta

2.4 Then, Bhaggava, Jāliya, the resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher,<sup>224</sup> rose from his seat and said this to the assembly:

'Well then, sirs, please wait while I go and see whether I'm able to bring the naked ascetic, Pāthika,-putta, to this assembly.'

2 Then Bhaggava, Jāliya, the resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher, went to the tinduka-stump wanderers' park, approached the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, and said this to him:

'3 'Come along, avuso Pāthika,putta, you better come along.

We have come together, avuso Pāthika,putta, various eminent Licchavīs, brahmins of great halls and householders of means, recluses and brahmins of other sects. And the recluse Gotama himself is sitting in the venerable's park. [§1.21]

4 Now, avuso Pāthika,putta, you have said thus to the assemblies of Licchavī people:

*'The recluse Gotama is a speaker of wisdom, so am I. A wisdom-speaker is worthy by way of speaking wisdom on account of showing superhuman psychic miracles.*

*If the recluse Gotama would come, I would meet him half-way, then we could both work a superhuman psychic miracle.*

*If the recluse Gotama works one such superhuman psychic miracle, I will work two. If he works two, I will work four. If he works four, I will work eight.*

*Thus, to whatever extent he may work superhuman psychic miracles, I will perform double of them.'* [§1.15.2]

5 Come forth then half-way, avuso Pāthika,putta; the recluse Gotama has come all the first half and is sitting in the venerable's park for day-rest. [§1.21.3]

6 Now, avuso Pāthika,putta, the recluse Gotama, too, has said this to the assembly:

*"Incapable, avuso, is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view, that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder."* [§1.16.3]

7 Come forth, avuso Pāthika,putta. If you come, we will make you the victor, and cause the recluse Gotama to lose.' [§2.1.6]

**[23]**

<sup>222</sup> Evam assa mayaṁ acelāṁ pātika,puttaṁ yāhi vasrattāhi bandhitvā go,yuttehi āvinjeyyāmā ti,

<sup>223</sup> "Would break," Be chijjeyum; Ce Ee chijjeram; Se chijjerum. Comy glosses with chindeyyum, "would break" (DA 3:826,34). See DP 2:190 chijjati<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>224</sup> "The resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher," dāru,pattik'antevāsī. Jāliya appears in **Mahāli S** (D 6,15/-1:157) and **Jaliya S** (D 7) where he and Maṇḍissa ask the Buddha whether the soul and the body are identical (SD 53.4).

2.5 When this was said, Bhaggava, the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta, repeated:

*'I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' but only writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat.*

2 Then, Bhaggava, the Licchavī chief minister said this to the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta:

*'How now, avuso Pāthika,putta? Is your rump stuck to the seat, or is the seat stuck to your rump? You say "I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming," yet you writhe about right there, unable to rise from your seat.'*  
[§1.21.5]

3 And, Bhaggava, though this was said to him, the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, repeated:

*'I'm coming, avuso; I'm coming, avuso!' but only writhed about right there, unable to rise from his seat.* [§1.21.6]

### Jāliya's Jātaka story<sup>225</sup>

2.6 Now, Bhaggava, when Jāliya, the resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher, recognized that the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta was **discomfited**, he said this to the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta:

2 'Long ago, avuso Pāthika,putta, this idea occurred to the lion, king of the beasts:<sup>226</sup>

*"What if I were to make my lair near a certain jungle, so that in the evening I could emerge from my lair, stretch myself, survey the 4 quarters, and thrice roar a lion-roar, and go forth towards the cattle pastures.*

*I could slay the pick of the beast herd, feast on various tender flesh, and return to that same lair.*

3 And so the lion, king of the beasts made his lair near a certain jungle, and in the evening he emerged from his lair, stretched himself, surveyed the 4 quarters, and thrice roared a lion-roar, and went forth towards the cattle pastures.

*He slayed the pick of the beast herd, feasted on various tender flesh, and returned to that same lair.*

**[24]**

2.7 Now, avuso Pāthika,putta, there was **an old jackal** who had continually thrived on the remains of that lion's meal, and was stout and strong, and it occurred to him:<sup>227</sup>

2 "Who am I, and who is the lion, king of the beasts?"<sup>228</sup>

*What if I were to make my lair near a certain jungle, so that in the evening I could emerge from my lair, stretch myself, survey the 4 quarters, and thrice roar a lion-roar, and go forth towards the cattle pastures.*

*I could slay the pick of the beast herd, feast on various tender flesh, and then return to that same lair."*

3 Now, avuso, that old jackal *chose his lair near a certain jungle, and in the evening emerged from his lair, stretched himself, surveyed the 4 quarters, and thought:*

<sup>225</sup> This is **Loma,harīṣa J** (J 94/1:389-391).

<sup>226</sup> Comys says that there are 4 kinds of lions: the grass lion (*tīṇa,sīha*), the black (*kāla,sīha*), the tawny (*paṇḍu,sīha*) and the maned (*kesara,sīha*). The last is the foremost and is the kind meant here (DA 3:827,8-10; SnA 1:125; ApA 198; J 2:8; NCA 148). Comys to **(Khandha) Sīha S** (S 22.78/3:84 f) = **(Catukka) Sīha S** (A 4.33/2:33) give details: the grass lion is a dove-coloured cow-like grass-eater; the black lion looks like a black cow but is carnivorous; the tawny lion, looks like a sear-leaf-coloured cow and is carnivorous; the maned lion has a face as if painted with essence of lac. It has a prominent toe and 4 claws as nails. From its crown, as if drawn with a lac-brush, 3 lines run down the middle of its back, and curls rightwise on its rump. Its mane is like a woollen blanket worth 100,000, and the rest of its body looks pure and radiant like rice paste mixed with saffron. [ThaA 2:270] (SA 2:283; AA 3:65).

<sup>227</sup> Comy: Because of his fault of "I am" conceit (*asmī,māna,dosā*). (DA 3:828,25)

<sup>228</sup> *Ko cāham ko sīho migā,rājā*. Here a self-gratifying statement. This is *ko* correlative framing (*ko sambandho*, DA 3:828,18). Cf *ko cāham bho, bho samaṇām gotamām pasāṁsissāmi pasattha,pasattha ca*, (M 99,30.2/2:209,6), SD 38.6; *ke ca ... ke ca ...* (M 136,6.4/3:209,10-12), SD 4.16. See foll n for a similar sentence.

"Thrice will I roar a lion's roar," and made a jackal sound, howled a jackal's howl.  
Now what is a vile jackal's howl, and what is a lion's roar?<sup>229</sup>

4 Even so, you, avuso Pāthika,putta, **living on the harvests of the well-farer**,<sup>230</sup> feeding on food left over after the well-farer has been served, fancy you can reach up to those who are<sup>231</sup> tathagatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas!

Now, what are vile Pāthika,puttas, and what are tathagatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas?<sup>232</sup>

### **Pāthika remains stuck to his seat**

**2.8** Now, Bhaggava, since Jāliya, the wooden-bowl teacher's pupil, was unable, even by this parable, to dislodge the ascetic from his seat, he said this to him:

**[25]**

2 Fancying himself a lion,  
The jackal thinks 'I'm the king of beasts!'<sup>233</sup>  
And so he roars—a mere jackal's whine.  
For what is there in common between the two—  
the vile jackal and the lion's roar?

3 Even so do you, avuso Pāthika,putta, living on the well-farer's gains, feeding on the well-farer's left-overs, fancy things that are to be set up against tathagatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas.

Now, what are vile Pāthika,puttas, and what are tathagatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas?  
[§2.7.4]

**2.9** Now, Bhaggava, since Jāliya, the resident pupil of the wooden-bowl teacher, was unable, even by this parable, to dislodge the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, from his seat, he said this him:

2 Wandering about, following another,  
he seeks scraps for himself.<sup>234</sup>  
In not seeing himself a jackal, he thinks of himself as "a tiger"!<sup>235</sup>  
but he only makes a mere jackal's howl.  
For, what is there in common between the two—  
the vile jackal and the lion-roarer?

*3 Even so, do you, avuso Pāthika,putta, living on the well-farer's gains, feeding on the well-farer's left-overs, fancy things that are to be set up against tathagatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas.*

<sup>229</sup> *Ke ca chave sigāle, ke pana sīha, nādā ti.* Comy glosses with *ko ca ... ko pana* (DA 3:828,16 f). See prec n.

<sup>230</sup> "Harvests of the well-farer," *sugatāpadānesu*. Comy says this refers to "the marks (of a great man)" (*lakkhaṇesu*) (ie, the Buddha's charisma), and "the 3 trainings rooted in the teaching" (*sāsana,sambhūtāsu tīsu sikkhāsu*). Comy suggests that the 4 supports that Pāthika,putta got were due to the Buddha's influence on popular religion in terms of encouraging the giving of alms to renunciants. (DA 3:828,19-24)

<sup>231</sup> On the plural tone here, see foll n.

<sup>232</sup> *Ke ca chave pāthika,putte* (pl), *kā ca tathāgatānam arahantānam sammā.sambuddhānam āsādanā ti.* Comy notes that there is only the Buddha (singular) but he and his disciples are spoken of in the plural (to show the Buddha's influence). (DA 3:828,20-32)

<sup>233</sup> *Miga, rājā'ham asmi.*

<sup>234</sup> *Attānam vighāse samekkhiya.*

<sup>235</sup> *Yāv'attānam na passati kotthu tāva vyaggho ti maññati.* An irony is clear here; the jackal does not even know the word *sīha*!

*Now, what are vile Pāthika,puttas, and what are tathāgatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas?*  
[§2.7.4]

**2.10** Now, Bhaggava, since Jāliya was [26] unable, even by this parable, to dislodge the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta from his seat, he said thus to him:

3 Feeding on frogs, on mice on the threshing-floor,  
And on corpses laid aside in the charnel-field,  
in the great forest, in the lonely wood,  
the jackal thrived and fancied himself  
'The lion, lord of all the beasts, am I!'  
But when he roared, it was a mere jackal's whine.  
For what is there in common between the two—  
the vile jackal and the lion's roar?

4 *Even so, do you, avuso Pāthika,putta, living on the well-farer's gains, feeding on the well-farer's leftovers, fancy things that are to be set up against tathāgatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas.*

*Now, what are vile Pāthika,puttas, and what are tathāgatas, arhats, fully self-awakened buddhas?*  
[§§2.7.4, 9.3]

**2.11** Now, Bhaggava, since Jāliya, the wooden-bowl teacher's pupil, was unable, even by this parable, to dislodge the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, from his seat, he went back to the assembly and said this to them:

2 'The naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, seems discomfited.

*He says: I'm coming, avuso! I'm coming, avuso! but he writhes about right there, unable to rise from his seat.'*

**2.12** When this was said, Bhaggava, I said this to the assembly (as before):

*'Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,  
that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.'* [§1.16.3]

2 Even if the venerable Licchavīs were to think:

"Let us bind the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, with thongs [27] and drag him here with ox-yokes,"  
Pāthika,putta would break those thongs. [§2.3.3]

*Incapable is the naked ascetic, Pāthika,putta, of meeting me face to face.*

*If he does not withdraw those words, if he does not put aside that idea, if he does not renounce that view; if he thinks that, holding to those words, to that idea, keeping that view,  
that he would come to meet the recluse Gotama, his head would split asunder.'* [§1.16.3]

### The Buddha's fire dhyanā

**2.13** Thereupon, Bhaggava, I instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened the assembly with a **Dharma talk**.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>236</sup> *Dhammiyā kathāya sandessesim̄ samādapesim̄ samuttejesim̄ sampahar̄sesim̄*. See **Cūla Hatthi, padopama S** (M 27,4.3), SD 40a.5; **Cela, pattiikā V** (Cv 5.21.3) (§27), SD 55.3; SD 11.4 (4.3).

2 When I had done so, and liberated them from great bondage,<sup>237</sup> and uplifted 84,000 beings from the deep waters of suffering,<sup>238</sup>

3 I entered into **the fire dhyana**, rose into the air to the height of 7 palm trees, projected a flame the height of another 7 palm trees, so that it blazed and glowed.<sup>239</sup>

4 Then I reappeared in the hall of the gabled house in the great wood. [§§1.11, 15; 2.13]

### Sunakkhatta's fate

5 Then, Bhaggava, Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, approached me, saluted and sat down at one side. As he sat there I said this to him:

‘What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Has it fared with the naked ascetic Pāthika,putta as I have stated to you, and not otherwise?’

‘It has, bhante, fared with him even as the Blessed One stated to me, and not otherwise.’

6 ‘What do you think, Sunakkhatta? If it be even so, has a superhuman psychic miracle been made, or has none been made?’ [§§1.10.2 + 1.14.2 + 2.24.4]

‘Indeed, bhante, as it is, a superhuman psychic miracle been made indeed.’ [§§1.10.2 + 14.2]

7 ‘Even so, do you, hollow man, still say of me [28] regarding superhuman psychic miracles:

“Bhante, the Blessed One, works no superhuman psychic miracles”?<sup>240</sup>

See, hollow man, how far you have committed yourself!’

8 Thus, Bhaggava, did Sunakkhatta, the young Licchavī, addressed by me, departed from this Dharma-Vinaya as **one headed for the downfall and hell**. [§1.6.4 f; 2.13.f, 10.3 f, 1.14.5]

## VI. Knowledge of the foremost (*aggañña*)

### The creator-god idea

**2.14 Knowledge of the foremost**,<sup>241</sup> Bhaggava, have I, and I know not only that, but beyond that.<sup>242</sup> While I know that, I do not pervert it.<sup>243</sup>

<sup>237</sup> “The great bondage,” *mahā,bandhanām* of great mental defilements (*mahatā kilesa*. DA 3:829,23).

<sup>238</sup> “The deep waters of suffering,” *mahā,viduggā*, “extensive deep waters without any ford or ferry.” Comy says this refers to the “4 floods” (*cattaro oghā*), ie, the influxes (*āsava*) of sensual desire, of existence, of views and of ignorance. On the floods, see **Ogha Pañha S** (S 38.11), SD 30.3(1.4) + (1.4.2); **Cūla Gopālaka S** (M 34,6) n, SD 61.3.

<sup>239</sup> The Jātaka Intro states that the miracles the Buddha performed while seated under the Bodhi-tree (to dispel the devas' doubt), the one before his relatives at Kapila, vatthu, and the one before “Pāthika,putta gathering” (*pāthika,putta,samāgama*) are all of the nature of the twin-wonder as performed under the Gaṇḍ’amba tree (J 1:77,23-26). These were the most wondrous psychic wonders shown by the Buddha. Clearly, **Sunakkhatta** was present in the assembly. Despite this display of fire dhyana being a superhuman psychic miracle, Sunakkhatta failed or refused to see it as a miracle. On the other hand, “Then” (*atha kho*) in the foll para seems to be a marker for another occasion, suggesting that Sunakkhatta might not have been present.

<sup>240</sup> Note that Sunakkhatta remains silent here, implicitly denying the truth.

<sup>241</sup> **Aggañña** (*agga + ñāṇa*), which Comy explains as “arising and course of the world” (*lok’uppati,catiya.caṁsa*, DA 3:829,30). See **Aggañña S** (D 27), SD 2.19 (2). See foll n.

<sup>242</sup> ‘But beyond that,’ *uttaritara*, ie, starting with moral virtue and concentration to “omniscience” (*sabbaññūta,-ñāṇa*), ie, awakening (DA 3:829,29-33). See SD 57.10 (4.3.1).

<sup>243</sup> “Does not pervert it,” ie, by way of craving, view and conceit (*tanhā,ditthi,māna*, DA 3:829,34-36).

From not perverting it, I have myself understood **quenching** (*nibbuti*),<sup>244</sup> realizing which, a tathagata does not go the wrong way [does not fall into error].<sup>245</sup>

2 There are, Bhaggava, certain recluses and brahmins who declare it as their traditional doctrine, that the knowledge of the foremost [beginning of things] is that of **the work of God, the work of Brahmā**.<sup>246</sup>

3 I approached them and asked:

‘Is it true that the venerable teachers declare their traditional doctrine to be that the knowledge of the foremost as that of the work of God, the work of Brahma?’

And they, so questioned, answered: ‘Yes.’

4 And then I asked:

‘But how do the venerable teachers declare in their traditional doctrine that the knowledge of the foremost as the work of God, the work of Brahma as made known?’

They, so asked by me, were unable to go any further into that matter, and, in their confusion, they questioned me in return.

5 Being asked, I answered them thus:<sup>247</sup>

### Devas of streaming radiance (ābhassara)

**2.15** [D 1.2.2] There comes a time, avuso, sooner or later, after a long period of time, when this world contracts [collapses]. When the world is contracting [collapsing], beings mostly arise in **the Ābhassara**<sup>248</sup> Brahmā world. There they dwell, mind-made,<sup>249</sup> feeding on zest [joy],<sup>250</sup> self-luminous,<sup>251</sup> moving about through space, glorious—and they stay like that for a very long time.

2 [D 1.2.3] There comes a time, sooner or later, after a long period of time, when this world expands [re-evolves].<sup>252</sup> When the world is expanding,<sup>253</sup> an empty brahmā-mansion<sup>254</sup> appears.

Then, [29] a certain heavenly being, due to the exhaustion of his life-span, or due to the exhaustion of his merit, passes away from the Ābhassara realm and arises in the empty brahma-mansion.

There he dwells mind-made, feeding on zest, self-luminous, moving about through space, glorious—and he stays like that for a very long time.

<sup>244</sup> “Quenching,” **nibbuti**, cooling, quenching, extinguishment (of the fires of greed, hate, delusion); a synonym of *nibbana*; here, specifically, “nirvana of defilements” (*kilesa,nibbāna*), ie, awakening to liberating wisdom and living to teach it (DA 3:830,1 f). See SD 50.13 (1.3.1.2).

<sup>245</sup> *Yad'abhijānām tathāgato no anayām āpajjati*.

<sup>246</sup> “The work of God, ... Brahmā,” *issara,kuttaṁ brahma,kuttaṁ*. *Kutta* (der from *kattā* (Skt *kṛttra* as *kṛttra*, P *kutta*)). *Kutta* suggests easy, even playful, almost effortless “grace.” Cf **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.1.30-36), SD 25.

<sup>247</sup> §§2.15-17 = **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.2.2-2.6), SD 25.

<sup>248</sup> *Ābhassara*, “streaming radiance”: [3.2.2.1 (1)].

<sup>249</sup> They are said to be “mind-made” (*mano,mayo*) because they are reborn by way of the dhyana-mind (*jhāna,-manena*) (DA 1:110).

<sup>250</sup> “Zest,” *pīti*, alt tr “rapture, joy”; this term refers to a factor of the first 2 dhyana. It is not a sensation and hence does not belong to the feeling aggregate (*vedanā-k,khandha*) but a mental factor (*cetasika*) belonging to the formation aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*), and it may be described as “joyful interest.”

<sup>251</sup> On the Ābhassara devas’ self-luminosity and *pabhassara*, see SD 2.19 (7.3).

<sup>252</sup> “Expands,” *vivāṭṭati*, lit “rolls open” or evolves.

<sup>253</sup> From here up to the end of this para, **Aggañña S** (D 27) reads: “beings, having fallen from the Ābhassara world, come to this world. And there they dwell mind-made, feeding on zest, self-luminous, moving about through space, glorious—and they stay like that for a very long time” and then goes on to describe the re-evolution of the earth (D 27,10.2/3:84 f), SD 2.19.

<sup>254</sup> *Brahmā,vimānam*, ie Brahmā’s divine abode, his celestial realm.

3 [D 1,2.4] Then, as a result of dwelling there all alone for so long, unrest, discontent, agitation arise in him, thus:

‘O that other beings might come here, too!’

Just then, other beings, due to the exhaustion of their life-span, or due to the exhaustion of their merit, pass away from the Ābhassara realm and arise in the empty brahma-mansion in companionship with that being.

There they dwell, *mind-made, feeding on zest, self-luminous, moving about through space, glorious —and they stay like that for a very long time.*

### **Mahā Brahmā and the creator-God idea**

**2.16** [D 1,2.5] Thereupon, avuso, the being who first arose there thought thus:

‘**I am Brahmā**, Great God [*mahā, brahmā*], the Vanquisher, the Unvanquished, the Supreme Seer of All, the Lord God [Overlord], the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be. By me have these creatures been created.’

What is the reason for that?

Because first I thought: ‘O that other beings might come here, too! And on account of this mental resolution of mine, these beings have come here.’

2 And this thought, too, arose in the beings who arose after him, thus:

‘**He must be Brahmā**, Great God, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be. By this Lord Brahmā have we been created.

What is the reason for that?

Because we see that he arose here first, and we arose after him.’

**[30]**

**2.17** [D 1,2.6] Avuso, the being who first arose there had longer life, and greater beauty, and greater power. Those beings that arose later had shorter life, and lesser beauty, and lesser power.

### **Origin of the creator-God idea**

2 Now, avuso, there is the case that a certain being, having fallen from that celestial host, comes here.<sup>255</sup>

Having come to this world, he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. When he has gone forth into homelessness, by means of exertion, by means of striving, by means of devotion, by means of diligence, by means of right attention,<sup>256</sup> he touches [attains] mental concentration, such that he recollects that past life, but recollects not what is before that.

3 He says thus:

‘We are created by Lord<sup>257</sup> Brahmā, Great God, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be.

He is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change: he will remain so just as eternity itself.

<sup>255</sup> *Thānām kho pan'etam, bhikkhave, vijjati yam aññataro satto tamhā kāyā cavitvā itthattam āgacchati.* That is, that Brahmā dies and is reborn on earth.

<sup>256</sup> “Right attention,” *sammā, manasikāram*, a rare cpd of 2 common terms.

<sup>257</sup> *Bhavānī*.

But we have been created by that Lord Brahmā and have come here [to this world]. We are impermanent, unstable, short-lived, subject to dying.'

4 Thus it was how you taught the knowledge of the foremost, venerables, as declared in your traditional doctrine, that is, it has been created by God, created by Brahmā.

5 And they said:

'Even so have we heard, avuso Gotama, as the venerable Gotama has told us.'

6 *Knowledge of the foremost, Bhaggava, have I, and I know not only that, but beyond that. While I know that, I do not pervert it.*

*From not perverting it, I have myself understood quenching, realizing which, a tathagata falls not into error [the wrong way].* [§2.14.1]

### Devas "defiled by play" (*khiddā,padosikā*)<sup>258</sup>

**2.18** There are, Bhaggava, certain recluses and brahmins who declare it as their traditional doctrine, that the knowledge of the foremost was on those (devas) "defiled by play" (*khiddā,padosikā*).<sup>259</sup>

2 I approached them and asked:

'Is it true that you venerable teachers declare your traditional doctrine to be the knowledge of the foremost was that of the (devas) defiled by play?'

And they, so questioned, answered: 'Yes.' [31]

3 Then I approached them and asked:

'But how do you venerable teachers declare in your traditional doctrine that the knowledge of the foremost as that of the (devas) "defiled by play"?'

They, so asked by me, were unable to go any further into that matter, and, in their confusion, they questioned me in return.

Being asked, I answered them thus:

4 [D 1.2.7] There are, avuso, certain devas called "defiled by play."

For long ages they pass their time immersed in the delights of laughter and play.

From dwelling an excessive time immersed in the delights of laughter and play, they become forgetful, and on account of their bewildered mind,<sup>260</sup> these devas fall from that celestial host.

### Limits of past-life recall (1)

5 [D 1.2.8] Now, avuso, there is the case that a certain being, having fallen from that celestial host, comes here [to this world].

*When he has gone forth into homelessness, by means of exertion, by means of striving, by means of devotion, by means of diligence, by means of right attention, he touches [attains] mental concentration, such that he recollects that past life, but not what is before that.* [§2.17.2]

<sup>258</sup> Cf See **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.2.8 f), SD 25. See D 1.47 (SD 25.3); SD 62.14 (1.2.2). The view laid out here is said to result from the view that the world is partly eternal and partly non-eternal (*ekacca,sassatikā ekacca,asassatikā*), ie, partial eternalism.

<sup>259</sup> *Khiddā,padosikā* (vl *khiḍḍā, padūsikā*): [3.2.2.1 (2)].

<sup>260</sup> I have rendered *satiyā sammosā* as "on account of their bewildered mind," rather than "mindfulness," which fits the context better.

6 [D 1,2.9] He says thus:

‘Those good<sup>261</sup> devas who are not defiled by play do not dwell much of the time immersed in the delights of laughter and play.

Not dwelling much of the time immersed in the delights of laughter and play, these devas do *not* fall from their realm: they are *permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change*: they will remain so just as eternity itself.

7 But we were those defiled by play. Dwelling much of the time immersed in *the delights of laughter and play*, we became forgetful, and on account of our forgetfulness, we fell from that celestial host. We have come here (to this world). We are *impermanent, unstable, short-lived, subject to dying*.’

8 Thus it was how you taught [32] the knowledge of the foremost, venerables, as declared in your traditional doctrine that is that of the (devas) “defiled by play.”

And they said:

‘Even so have we heard, avuso Gotama, as the venerable Gotama has told us.’

9 *Knowledge of the foremost, Bhaggava, have I, and I know not only that, but beyond that. While I know that, I do not pervert it.*

*From not perverting it, I have myself understood quenching, realizing which, a tathagata falls not into error [the wrong way].* [§2.14.1]

### Devas “defiled by mind” (*mano,padosika*)<sup>262</sup>

2.19 There are, Bhaggava, certain recluses and brahmins, who declare as their traditional doctrine that the knowledge of the foremost was that of the (devas) “**defiled by mind**” (*mano,padosikā*).<sup>263</sup>

2 I approached them and asked:

‘Is it true that you venerable teachers declare your traditional doctrine to be the knowledge of the foremost that is that of the (devas) “defiled by mind”?

And they, so questioned, answered: ‘Yes.’

3 Then I approached them and asked:

‘But how do you venerable teachers declare in your traditional doctrine that the knowledge of the foremost that is as that of the (devas) “defiled by mind”?’

They, so asked by me, were unable to go any further into that matter, and, in their confusion, they questioned me in return.

Being asked, I answered them thus:

### Limits of past-life recall (2)

4 [D 1,2.11] Now, avuso, there is the case that a certain being, having fallen from that celestial host, comes here.

Having come here [to this world], *he goes forth from home life into homelessness. When he has gone forth into homelessness, by means of exertion, by means of striving, by means of devotion, by means of*

<sup>261</sup> *Bhonto*, an honorific.

<sup>262</sup> *Mano,padosikā* devas [3.2.2.1 (3)].

<sup>263</sup> See **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,2.8 f), SD 25. See D 1,47 (SD 25.3); SD 62.14 (1.2.2). The view laid out here is said to result from the view that the world is partly eternal and partly non-eternal (*ekacca,sassatikā ekacca,asassatikā*), ie, partial eternalism.

*diligence, by means of right attention, he touches [attains] mental concentration, such that he recollects that past life, but recollects not what is before that. [§2.17.2 + 5]*

5 [D 2.12] He says thus:

‘Those good devas who are not defiled by mind do not dwell much of the time contemplating one another covetously. Not dwelling much of the time contemplating one another covetously, these devas [33] do not fall from their celestial host: they are permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change: they will remain so just as eternity itself.

6 But we were those defiled by mind. Dwelling much of the time contemplating one another covetously, we defiled our minds. On account of our defiled minds, our bodies weakened, our minds weakened. We fell from that celestial host.

We have come here [to this world]. We are *impermanent, unstable, short-lived, subject to dying.*’

7 Thus it was how you taught knowledge of the foremost, venerables, as declared in your traditional doctrine that is as that of the (devas) “*defiled by mind.*”

And they said:

‘Even so have we heard, avuso Gotama, as the venerable Gotama has told us.’

8 *Knowledge of the foremost, Bhaggava, have I, and I know not only that, but beyond that. While I know that, I do not pervert it.*

*From not perverting it, I have myself understood quenching, realizing which, a tathagata falls not into error [the wrong way]. [§2.14.1]*

### Doctrines of fortuitous arising<sup>264</sup>

2.20 There are, Bhaggava, certain recluses and brahmins, who declare it as their doctrine, that the knowledge of the foremost was that of **fortuitous arising** (*adhicca,samuppanna*).<sup>265</sup>

2 I approached them and asked:

‘Is it true that you venerable teachers declare your traditional doctrine to be the knowledge of the foremost as that of fortuitous arising?’

And they, so questioned, answered, ‘Yes.’

3 Then I approached them and asked:

‘But how do you venerable teachers declare your traditional doctrine to be the knowledge of the foremost as that of fortuitous arising?’

And they, so asked by me, were unable to go any further into that matter, and in their confusion, they questioned me instead in return.

Being asked, I answered thus:

### The non-percipient beings<sup>266</sup>

4 [D 1,2.31] ‘There are, avuso, certain devas called **non-percipient beings** (*asañña,satta*),<sup>267</sup> who as soon as perception arises in them, they fall from that celestial host.

<sup>264</sup> Cf **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,2.30 f), SD 25.

<sup>265</sup> On fortuitous arising: [3.2.2.1 (4)].

<sup>266</sup> Cf **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,2.31), SD 25.

<sup>267</sup> They are located in the 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana heavens just below the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*). Their life-span is 500 aeons (Vbh 1028/425). For further details, see SD 25.3 ad loc. For the 31 realms of existence, see SD 1.7 (Table 1.7).

Now, avuso, there is the case where a certain being, having fallen from that celestial host, comes here [arises in this world].

5 *Having come to this world, he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. When he has gone forth into homelessness, by means of exertion, by means of striving, by means of devotion, by means of diligence, by means of right attention, he touches [attains] mental concentration, such that he recollects that past life, but not what was before that.* [§2.17.2 + 5, 2.19.4]

6 He says thus:

'The self and the world have arisen fortuitously [by chance].'

What is the reason for this? [34]

'(Because) I did not exist before, but now I am. Not having existed, I have sprung into being.'

7 Thus was appointed the knowledge of the foremost as being due to chance, which you venerable teachers declare as your doctrine.

And they said :

Even so have we heard, friend Gotama, as the venerable Gotama has told us.

8 *Knowledge of the foremost, Bhaggava, have I, and I know not only that, but beyond that. While I know that, I do not pervert it.*

*From not perverting it, I have myself understood quenching (nibbuti),<sup>269</sup> realizing which, a tathagata falls not into error [the wrong way].* [§2.14.1]

### **The liberation that is beautiful**

**2.21** Now I, Bhaggava, having spoken thus, having taught thus, certain recluses and brahmins without basis, emptily, falsely and unfairly accused [misrepresented] me, thus:<sup>270</sup>

'The recluse Gotama is perverse,<sup>271</sup> and so are his monks. He said:

"Whenever one has attained to **the liberation that is beautiful**,<sup>272</sup> one then perceives<sup>273</sup> all things as foul (*asubha*)."

But this, Bhaggava, I have not said.

2 What I do say is that:

"Whenever one attains **the liberation that is beautiful**, at that time one clearly knows it as beautiful."<sup>274</sup>

<sup>268</sup> Be Ce Se *aharñ hi pubbe nāhosiñ, so'mhi etarahi ahutvā santatāya\** [Ee sattatāya] pariṇato ti.

<sup>269</sup> "Quenching," **nibbuti**, cooling, quenching, extinguishment (of the fires of greed, hate, delusion); a synonym of *nibbana*. See SD 50.13 (1.3.1.2).

<sup>270</sup> *Evarñ.vādirñ kho marñ bhaggava evarñ-akkhāyirñ eke samañña,brāhmañā asatā tucchā musā abhūtena abbhā-cikkhānti.*

<sup>271</sup> "Perverse," *viparīto*.

<sup>272</sup> "The liberation that is beautiful" (*subha vimokkha*), also known as "the beauty element" (*subha,dhātu*): **Satta Dhātu S** (S 14.11/2:150 f), SD 74.14. It is a form dhyana with its object, viz, a dhyana arisen based on a beautiful kasina (SA 2:134; DhsA 77; Vism 15.26/486), which Pāthika S **comy** says is a colour kasina (*vaṇṇa,ksaiṇa*, DA 3:830,-27).

<sup>273</sup> Be Ce *pajānāti*, "he knows (that)"; Ee *sañjānāti*, "he perceives (that)"; Se *sampajānāti*, "he is clearly aware (that)."

<sup>274</sup> Se ... *sampajānāti* (pref); Be Ce *Yasmirñ samaye subhañ vimokkharñ upasampajja viharati sabbañ tasmirñ samaye subhant'eva tasmirñ samaye pajānāti*; Ee ... *sañjānāti*. See prec n.

### **Conclusion: Bhaggava's faith**

3 'But, bhante, it is they that are perverted, who on account of that perversion blame the Blessed One and the monks!

Inspired am I by the Blessed One [35] that he may teach me such Dharma in which I may attain and dwell in the liberation that is beautiful.'

4 'Hard it is, **Bhaggava**, for you, holding, as you do,  
holding a different view,  
keeping different priorities,  
having different likes,  
following a different practice,  
following a different teaching,<sup>276</sup>

*añña,diṭṭhikena*  
*añña,khantikena*  
*añña,rucikena*  
*aññatr'āyogena*<sup>275</sup>  
*aññatr'ācariyakena*

to attain to and abide in the liberation that is beautiful.

Come now then, Bhaggava, **this faith of yours in me—guard it well!**

5 'If, bhante, it be hard for me, *holding a different view, keeping different priorities, having different likes, following a different practice, following a different teaching*, to attain to and abide in the liberation that is beautiful, then, I will at least keep well my faith in the Blessed One.''<sup>277</sup>

6 The Blessed One said this.

And the wanderer Bhaggava,gotta, satisfied, rejoiced in the Blessed One's word.<sup>278</sup>

The Pāthika Sutta is ended.

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<sup>275</sup> Be Ce *aññatr'āyogena*; Ee Se *aññatra āyogena*; as in D 25,7/3:40.9, (SD 1.4) etc [foll n].

<sup>276</sup> "Holding a different view ... , " **D 9,24/1:187,17** (SD 7.14), **D 24,2.21/3:35,3**; **D 25,7/3:40** (SD 1.4); **M 72,18/-1:487,8** (SD 6.15), **M 80,13/2:43,11** (SD 40a.15).

<sup>277</sup> Colloquially, the Buddha is saying: "Keep an open mind and stay in touch. The right time will come for you to take up the Dharma. Meantime keep this in mind."

<sup>278</sup> Comy says that the wanderer only showed outward appreciation of the Blessed One. Despite hearing such a great discourse, he was unable to destroy his defilements. However, on account of the teaching, he gains good "karmic impressions" (*vāsanā*) for future support (for spiritual development) for himself. (*Iti bhagavā pasādaṁ attānurukkhaṇe paribbājakarṇ niyyojesi. Evaṁ mahantāṁ suttaṁ sutvā pi nāsakkhi kilesa-k, khayaṁ kātum. Desanā pan'-assa āyatirī vāsanāya paccayyo ahosi*, DA 3:831,7-10). On *vāsanā*, see SD 60.3 (3.1).