

SD 63.7**Sukhumāla Sutta**The Discourse on the Delicate | **A 3.38** [A:Be 3.39]

Theme: The Bodhisattva's sense-pleasures and epiphany

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2009, 2025

1 Sutta summary and related suttas**1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY**

The **Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) records Siddhattha's youth flooded with physical ease and sensual pleasures in his 3 mansions, one for each of the northern Indian seasons: the cold, the warm and the rainy. As a precocious youth, he sees through these passing frivolities of the intoxication with youth, health and life, and has an epiphany of the 3 root realities of life, that is, *decay, disease and death*. [3.2.1.1]

1.2 COMPONENT SUTTAS

The Pali Text Society (Ee) manuscript treats **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) and **the Mada Sutta** (A 3.39)¹ as separate consecutive suttas. The Burmese (Be), Sinhala (Ce) and Siamese (Se) editions, however, treat the Mada Sutta as a continuation of the preceding **Sukhumāla Sutta** (SD 63.7).² The important point is that the 2 suttas are closely related: While **the Sukhumāla Sutta** records a personal testimony of the Buddha, **the Mada Sutta** presents the 3 intoxications [1.1] as a teaching for us to reflect on and practise on a regular basis. In other words, the 2 suttas are closely connected.

1.3 AN EVOLUTIONARY LIST OF RELATED SUTTAS [SD 48.10 (2.4.2)]

Here is a list of suttas with teachings, texts and stories listed according to what is likely to be their place in the sequence of their historical development in the early Buddhist tradition:³

(1) The 3 evils, the 3 prides; Siddhattha's samvega	Sukhumāla Sutta	(A 3.38) SD 63.7
(2) The 3 intoxications (<i>mada</i>)	Mada Sutta	(A 3.39) ⁴ SD 42.13
(3) The 3 divine messengers (<i>deva,dūta</i>)	(Yama) Deva,dūta Sutta	(A 3.35) SD 48.10
(4) The 4 sights (<i>nimitta</i>)	Mahā'padāna Sutta	(D 14) SD 49.8 ⁵
(5) The 5 divine messengers	(Majjhima) Deva,dūta Sutta	(M 130) SD 2.23

¹ See also SD 42.13 & SD 1.11 (3.2).

² For nn: **A 3.38**/1:145 f @ SD 5.16(19.4.2) (abr), SD 63.7 (full). On the term **mada**, see SD 42.22 (2.2.2).

³ For a similar **chronology** of the development of the teachings on the signs and portents, see SD 50.9 (2.2.3).

⁴ See App below.

⁵ On the 4 sights, see SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4 f).

2 Narrative background of the Sukhumāla Sutta

2.1 SIDDHATTHA'S YOUTH

2.1.1 Birth of the bodhisattva⁶

2.1.1.1 Suddhodana, lord⁷ of the Sakyas, dearly wanted a son from his queen Mahā Māyā.⁸ A son was born to them. The wise ascetic, **Kāla Devala** (Asita),⁹ on his visit to Tāvatimsa, saw the devas there rejoicing at the birth of the child who would be buddha. He at once hastened to Suddhodana's abode in Kapila, vatthu to see the blessed infant.

When the child was brought before Devala to pay him homage, a miracle occurred: The feet of **the great man** (*mahā, purisa*),¹⁰ "turned around like lightning flashing free from the clouds, came to rest on the ascetic's matted hair"¹¹! Then the ascetic, Devala, rising from his seat, held up his clasped hands to **the bodhisattva** (*bodhisatta*) in deep reverence. When Suddhodana saw this wonder, he too reverenced his own son (for the first time).¹²

Devala then examined the bodhisattva's bodily marks, and by his own knowledge of the future, knew for certain that the bodhisattva would become buddha—Devala smiled. However, Devala, on learning that he would not have the opportunity to see the buddha—Devala would be reborn in the formless sphere—Devala wept.

The people around Devala, confused by his contradicting reactions, were troubled, fearing that the bodhisattva would face some mishap in the future. Devala then consoled them by explaining why he smiled and then wept. This famous incident is known as **Asita's smiling and weeping incident**. (BA 276 f)

⁶ In my works, I have, as a rule, used "**bodhisattva**" to refer to Siddhattha before his awakening, and before that from the time of the confirmation of his buddha aspiration by Dīpañkara Buddha [2.2.1.1]. On the terms bodhisatta and Bodhisattva, see SD 11.3 (1.4.2.2); SD 15.7 (2.4) (1) n.

⁷ **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14) mentions *suddhodano nāma rājā*, "the rajah named Suddhodana" (D 14/2:7, 52); B 65; Miln 236. BA uses "maharajah Suddhodana" (*suddhodana, mahā, rāja*, BA 23,1, 274,19, 276,15+18, 277,23, 280,27). Otherwise "rajah Suddhodana" is only mentioned in Comys. *Rāja* here does not mean "king" in the Western or modern sense. The Saka elite males were generically known as *rāja*, "kshatriya noble."

⁸ Tha 534; ThaA 225 f. On Mahā Māyā, see SD 36.2 (4.2.1).

⁹ **Kāla Devala** was a sage and the chaplain of Siha, hanu, father of Suddhodana, of whom he was later teacher and then chaplain. He saw Suddhodana daily, morning and evening. Saka lords characteristically deeply respected such sages. In due course, Devala renounced the world and lived in Suddhodana's pleasance. He developed various powers, and would often spend the day in the deva worlds. One day, while in Tāvatimsa, he saw the whole city decked in splendour and the devas greatly rejoicing. On learning that the bodhisattva was born in Kapilavatthu, he hastened there and asked to see the child. On learning about Siddhattha's destiny as the buddha, Devala then sought his sister's son, **Nalaka** (Sn 3.11, Sn 49.18), and ordained him so that Nalaka might be ready to benefit from the Buddha's teaching when the time came. (SnA 2:483-501; J 1:54 f; SnA:B 979-998).

Kāla Devala (J 1:54) was also called **Asita** (SnA 2:483), "black" = *kāla* (Thī 480 (ThīA); UA 412,23; J 5:302,5*; J 6:86,-16*); and also Kañha Siri (Sn 689), Siri Kañha (SnA.487), Kañha Devala (SnA 2:487).

¹⁰ The term ***mahā, purisa*** refers to the tradition that Siddhattha was endowed with the 32 marks of the great man (*mahā, purisa, lakkhaṇa*), and to the prophecy that Siddhattha would become either a world-ruler or buddha. See **Maha, purisa S** (S 47.11) + SD 19.6 (1.1.2); **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30), SD 36.9 (2.1.1.2).

¹¹ *Mahā, purisassa pādā parivattitvā vijullatā viya asita, jaladharataṭesu tāpasassa jaṭāsu patiṭṭhahim̄su* (BA 276,31-32).

¹² The 2nd time Suddhodana saluted his own son was when he saw him meditating in the 1st dhyana [2.1.3.1].

2.1.1.2 For the naming ceremony (*nāma,gahana*), on the 5th day, 108 brahmins¹³ were invited, 8 of whom were soothsayers, readers of bodily signs—7 of them held up 2 fingers prophesying that the child would, as a householder, become a wheel-turning world-ruler (*cakka,vatti*), or, as a renunciant, become an awakened one (*buddha*). The youngest of them (*sabba,daharo*, “a boy among them all”), Konḍañña, raised only 1 finger, declaring:

“There is no reason for him to stay in a house; he will certainly be buddha who will draw back the veil (of ignorance).”¹⁴

And so they gave him the name of **Siddh’attha** on account of his “accomplishment for the welfare of all the world” (*sabba,lok’attha,siddhi,karattā*).¹⁵ The 2nd name that Suddhodana gave him was Aṅgīrasa, “one whose body is radiant with rays (like the sun).”¹⁶

2.1.1.3 Suddhodana then asked them: “Having seen what will my son go forth?”

“When he has seen **the 4 signs** (*pubba,nimitta*).”

“And what are they?”

“An old man, a sick man, a dead man and a renunciant.” (*jiṇṇam vyādhitarā matā pabbajitan ti*)

Then, these brahmins returned to their respective homes and instructed their sons to renounce after the Buddha should Siddhattha attain awakening. The old brahmins died in due course, leaving only the youth Konḍañña.¹⁷

2.1.1.4 Mahā Māya and Mahā Pajā,patī Gotamī were sisters. Soothsayers predicted that their children would become world-rulers (*cakka,vatti*). On account of this, Suddhodāna married both of them in his youth. However, it was not until Māya was in her forties that Siddhattha was born.¹⁸ When Siddhattha was a week old, his mother, **Mahā Māyā**¹⁹ passed away. After her death, Māyā’s younger sister Pajā,patī (fully, Mahā Pajā,patī Gotamī), was raised to the position of queen consort.²⁰

Pajāpatī had her own son, Nandā, but she handed him over to nurses to be cared for. She herself nursed Siddhattha as her own. This would be the natural thing to do considering that Siddhattha was the first son of Suddhodāna, and thus the heir to the leadership of the Sakyas. Out of gratitude to this devotion to him, the Buddha later, upon Pajāpatī’s repeated and determined requests, admitted her into the sangha. She was then already a streamwinner.²¹

¹³ *Aṭṭha,satām brāhmaṇe* (J 1:55); *aṭṭha,sate brāhmaṇe* (BA 277; BA:M 396). **Aṭṭha,sata** means either “108” (Sn 4:231,28, 232,20 vedanā ≈ Miln 46,1 (cf M 1:398,1); J 1:55,32, BA 277,11 *brāhmaṇe*) or “800” (J 1:57,24; BA 214,-23). See CPD: attha-sata [sic], DP 1:53.

¹⁴ *Etassa agāra,majjhe thāna,kāraṇam n’atthi, ekanten’eva vivatta-c, chado buddho bhavissatī ti* (BA 277,18 f).

¹⁵ BA 277,21; cf MA 3:333,14-17.

¹⁶ Th 536 (ThA 2:226,26-28); V 1:25,32* (-i-); D 3:196,7* (*sakya,putta*); S 1:196,3* = Tha 1252; S 1:81,15* (= *samā,sambuddha*, SA). AN = 3:239,25* (AA: *Bhagavato aṅgam-aṅgehi rasmiyo niccharanti, tasmā ~o ti vuccati*; cf PvA 122,12), qu J 1:116,14* = Dha 1:244,5* = AA 1:230,16* = Vism 388,3*; cf Ap 104,19.

¹⁷ On Siddhattha’s infancy, see BA 276-279 (tr BA:H 395-397); H Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, Tokyo, 2000:72-85. See also SD 52.1 (4.4) Prediction: The 4 sights.

¹⁸ On Siddhattha’s birth in Lumbinī, see BA 274 f (tr BA:H 392 f). Also DPPN: Mahā Māyā.

¹⁹ D 14,3.30/2:52; Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*, 1927, 3rd ed 1949:24-26.

²⁰ J 1:15; Mahv 2.15 f; Dīpv 3.45.

²¹ On Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, see SD 46.15 (1.2); SD 10.6 (3.4).

2.1.2 Suddhodana's hope in Siddhattha

2.1.2.1 On the naming day [2.1.1.2], 80,000²² related families assembled, and each dedicated a son, saying:

“Let him be either buddha or ruler (*rāja*), we are each giving a son. If he becomes buddha he will go about surrounded only by recluses who are kshatriyas; if he becomes a wheel-turning king he will go about surrounded only by young men who are kshatriyas.” (BA 277,33-37)

Suddhodana appointed nurses, unblemished and endowed with the utmost beauty, to care for great man. The bodhisattva grew up in great splendour and luxury (*siri,samudaya*)²³ with an ever-present retinue. (BA 277,38-40)

2.1.2.2 During the Buddha's time, Sakya country was absorbed into **Kosala** under rajah Pasenadi. Around or just before the Buddha's time, a process of integration was slowly gathering momentum amongst the larger great kingdoms or states, as is evident in the pairing of their names in Buddhist sources, for example, Kuru-Pañcāla, Kāsi-Kosala, Malla-Vajjī, Aṅga-Magadha, Cedi-Vārṣa and Maccha-Sūrasena.²⁴

Suddhodana, lord of the Sakyas, hoped that his son and heir, Siddhattha, would become a **world-ruler**, that is, a mighty warrior who could in due course free the Sakyas from the hegemony of Kosala to become a great republic or mighty kingdom itself. To that vision, Suddhodana raised his eldest son by his first chief queen, Māhā Māyā to be his successor and bring glory to the Sakya nation.

2.1.2.3 The Jātaka Commentary recounts Suddhodana's concern and the elaborate precautions he took to ensure that Siddhattha would not see the 4 sights [1.3.1.2]. Suddhodana declared:

“From now on, do not allow any such thing to come near my son! My son has no need of buddhahood. I wish to see him ruling with sovereign powers over the 4 continents, each surrounded by their 2000 islands, and holding sway over the regions, attended by a retinue crowding a circle of 36 yojanas!” (J 1:57,7-10)

He placed a guard at every 3 gavutas²⁶ in all the 4 quarters around Siddhattha to prevent any **old man, sick man, dead man or renunciant** coming within sight of the boy (BA 277). Driven by paternal and political urgency, Suddhodana clearly had no choice but to take this course of action. As a father and clan leader, he could only desire his son to wear his shoes after him. This is perhaps even more so—in view of the declining power of the Sakyas (they were not even listed amongst the 16 great states).²⁷ Suddhodana must have not only hoped that Siddhattha would free the Sakyas from Kosala's yoke, but lead the Sakyas to rule over the whole central Gangetic plain, that is, over all ancient civilized India.²⁸

2.1.3 Siddhattha's personality

2.1.3.1 From the ancient texts, we know that Siddhattha was **spiritually precocious**; he was by nature not only capable of deep introspection but also of active compassion. By **deep introspection** is

²² “80,000,” *asītiyāñāti,kula,sahassesu*. In ancient Indian texts such an astronomical number simply suggests a relative plenty, as we would say “a thousand thanks.” The real number might be in the mere thousands.

²³ BA 277,39, 281,8, 283,13+19. On *samudaya* as “luxury,” see eg D 1:227); *siri,samudaya,sobha* (BA 201,31).

²⁴ See **Kosala Sutta 1** (A 10.29) + SD 16.15. For the 16 states, see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), SD 9 (16).

²⁵ This is a circumference of 435 km (270 mi). This seems to suggest the size of the world-monarch's palace or royal city.

²⁶ A *gāvuta* is a quarter *yojana*; in other words, 4 *gāvutas* = 1 *yojana*. 1 *gāvuta* = 2.6 km (1.6 mi).

²⁷ See SD 52.1 (2.2.1.18).

²⁸ On ancient civilized India, see SD 52.1 (2.2.1.11).

meant that he was able to see through the surface of things and see the significance of his own experiences. This is obvious from **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38); he realized the frivolities of sensual pleasures from first-hand experience [2.2.1.4].

This is not surprising, even for a youth held in a cage of sense-pleasures, surrounded by women even before his marriage. Even early in his childhood, at merely 7, during the sowing festival (*vappa,maṅgala*), he attained the **1st dhyana** under the jambul tree.²⁹ Siddhattha was naturally capable of freeing his mind from the senses when he wished to. In fact, when he recalled this remarkable meditation experience, he returned to his spiritual struggle that finally brought him awakening.³⁰

2.1.3.2 Even as bodhisattva—from birth to his renunciation—Siddhattha lived with divinity latent in him. When left on his own, he was moved by this inner goodness to sit in meditation and enjoy dhyana. When he saw pain or suffering, he was moved to heal or at least relieve it. A story, probably apocryphal, tells us that when he found a **swan** or goose hurt by an arrow shot by his cousin, Devadatta, he nursed it back to life. When Devadatta claimed that the swan was his because he shot it, the bodhisattva replied that since it was alive, it belonged to him—he wanted the swan to live on.³¹

2.1.4 Siddhattha's education and training

2.1.4.1 When the bodhisattva was 16, his father, Suddhodana, built for him **3 pleasure mansions**—called Ramma (9 stories), Suramma (7 stories) and Subha (5 stories), all equal in height³²—one for each of the 3 Indian seasons: the cool (November-March), the hot (March-July) and the rainy (July-November). Suddhodana provided him with 40,000 dancing girls. Surrounded by such gaily dressed beauties, Siddhattha was like a god surrounded by bevy of celestial nymphs, entertained with the music of an ensemble “without any men” (*nippurisa*).³³ He lived in these 3 mansions in rotation in keeping with the seasons, enjoying great luxury.

2.1.4.2 Although we often read about Siddhattha's youth of sensual luxury, we must also understand that as a **kshatriya elite**, Siddhattha would have received proper traditional education under the guidance of renowned teachers. However, we have no such records in the suttas and commentarial texts. From **the Lalita,vistara**, a late Sanskrit poem, we have a mostly mythical and exuberantly told account of the Buddha's last life.³⁴ From this account we are told that his teacher was Viśvāmitra.³⁵ It is said that

²⁹ On Siddhattha's age when he attained the 1st dhyana, see SD 52.1 (5.2.1.1).

³⁰ On the significance of Siddhattha's 1st dhyana experience, see SD 52.1 (5.2.2).

³¹ This section is similar in spirit with SD 52.1 (18.3.2.5).

³² “All equal in height” (*ubbedhena sama-p,paṁāṇā ahesum*) (only in BA 278,18 f). This is understandable: the hot-season mansion with less levels had higher ceilings for better ventilation to keep the mansion cool during the hot-season; the cold-season mansion, with more levels, had lower ceilings to keep in the heat; the 7-storey rainy-season mansion had medium-height ceilings to keep out the rain and moderate the temperature.

³³ *Nippurisa* seems to be a wordplay suggesting divinity. It means “without men” or “without humans,” ie, “divine.” See n below ad loc at (**Paribbājaka**) **Māgandiya S** (M 75,10.2, SD 31.5) passage on “the 3 mansions.”

³⁴ **Lalita,Vistara** (“elaborate play”), prob 3rd-4th cent CE, Sanskrit account, in prose and verse, of the Buddha's last life, very much influenced by Mahāyāna doctrines (such as the Buddha's many bodies and *tathagata,garbha*). See Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, sv.

³⁵ Viśvāmitra was prob named after the well-known but mythical Rgvedic rishi, Viśvāmitra Gāthina, who was the chief author of Maṇḍala 3 of the Rgveda (S Jamison & J Brereton, Joel, *The Rigveda: 3-Volume Set*, OUP, 2014:464).

children of elite families in ancient India learned as many as 64 different subjects, such as grammar, arithmetic, music, sports, massage, hygiene, chess, perfume-combination, sports, strategy, and so on.³⁶

This list describes traditional Indian schooling during the 3rd-4th centuries CE. This is probably the most ancient description we have that was closest in time to that of the Buddha. It should give us some idea of the kind of education that preceded in the early centuries.³⁷

The Buddha, var̄ma Commentary gives us details of Siddhattha's fabulous skill with archery. He was said to be able to let his arrow pierce a piece of asana-wood³⁸ 4 finger-breadths thick; pierce a sheet of iron 8 finger-breadths thick; pierce a plank of fig-wood 12 finger-breadths thick; pierce a wagon of sand; pierce a wagon of sand and a wagon of straw; enter into water as far as 1 cubit (*usabha*);³⁹ enter the dry ground for a depth of 8 cubits; and shoot into a horse-hair or an egg-plant placed a *yojana* away, which he did under a storm-cloud in the dark of night! (BA 278 f)

2.2 EVENTS LEADING TO THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

2.2.1 The roots of Siddhattha's renunciation

2.2.1.1 The roots of Siddhattha's renunciation go back into his fabulously long ancient past. To become a **fully self-awakened buddha** (*sammā, sambuddha*), Siddhattha must have consistently and wisely felt suffering in its various forms and learned from it all. Having fully tasted life in these ways through countless lives, he awakens as the Buddha, the wisest and most compassionate of beings in the universe, with its humans, gods and beings.

In other words, the true reality realized by the Buddha applies to the whole universe with all its billions of galaxies. This reality covers well beyond any geocentric God-religion caught between earth, heaven, and hell. The Buddha's teaching is a galactic dharma, a reality that covers well beyond the dogmas of a world created and capriciously destroyed by God in a single cycle.

2.2.1.2 Traditionally, the term “**bodhisattva**” (*bodhisatta*)⁴⁰—the buddha-to-be—refers to one from the time of his aspiration to buddhahood before another buddha many world-cycles ago. Once that buddha confirms the aspirant's future buddhahood, the aspirant is called “the bodhisattva.” The lower case “bodhisattva” here means that this is *the bodhisattva* who will become **the historical buddha**.

The term “**Bodhisattva**” (with the initial capital B), on the other hand, refers to the sectarian Buddhist ideological notions of an Enlightenment Being or Beings, who are regarded as being superior even to the historical Buddha! Neither the suttas nor the commentaries speak of such an innovative and wrong view.

2.2.1.3 The Jātaka commentary divides the complete lives of the bodhisattva-buddha—from the time of the confirmation of the aspirant for awakening down to the “present time,” that is, the Buddha's very last life, into 3 broad periods, called thus:

³⁶ See *The Play in Full, Lalitavistara*. Toh 95, Dege Kangyur 46 (mdo sde, kha) folios 1b-216b. Dharmachakra Tr Committee, <https://84000.co/translation/toh95>, 2013: ch 10. See also Piyasilo, *Life of the Buddha*, 1987d:88 f.

³⁷ For legends regarding Siddhattha's education, see Gnoli pt 1 1957:57; Buc 2.18-19; 普曜經 *Pǔ yào jīng* (P'u yao ching, T186 fasc 2, T3.495a-b); 過去現在因果經 *Guòqù xiànzài yīngguǒ jīng* (Kuo ch'ü hsien tsai yin kuo ching, T189 fasc 1, T3.627c-628a); 方廣大莊嚴經 *Fāng guǎngdà zhuāngyán jīng* (Fang kuang ta chuang yen ching, T187 fasc 3, T3.556a-b); 佛所行讚經 *Fó suǒ xíng zàn jīng* (Fo suo hsing tsan ching, T192 fasc 1, T4.4b); 太子瑞應本起經 *Tàizǐ ruì yìng běn qǐ jīng* (T'ai tsu juei ying pen ching, T185 fasc 1, T3.474b-c).

³⁸ *Asana* is the wood of a large tree, *Terminalia tomentosa* (or *glabra*) or Indian Laurel.

³⁹ 1 *usabha* = 140 cubits. A “cubit” (*hattha*, “hand”) is the forearm length from the tip of the middle finger to the bottom of the elbow, about 45 cm (18 ins): SD 4.17 (1.3.2); SD 30.9 (3.1). See n on cubit at SD 52.1 (8.2.3).

⁴⁰ On the technical usage of the term “bodhisattva,” see SD 36.2 (7.3).

- (1) “the account of the remote past” (*dūre,nidāna*), which recounts the bodhisattva from his existence as the ascetic **Sumedha** from Amaravatī during the time of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara down to his rebirth in Tusita heaven (J 1:2-47);
- (2) “the account of the not-too-distant past” (*avidūre,nidāna*), starting with the descent from Tusita, and ending in the great awakening (J 1:47-77); and
- (3) “the account of the present” (*santike,nidāna*), from the awakening down to the donation of the Jeta,vana by the seth Anātha,piṇḍika (J 1:77-94).⁴¹

2.2.1.4 Practically every human on earth around us has seen or known **the 4 sights**—an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a renunciant—but we are never moved by them to renounce the world. Seeing the rise of an aging population, we are likely to work at some social project to help seniors age gracefully, some kind of “active aging” project. We would start hospitals, clinics or nursing homes, and work to heal the sick and prevent diseases. We would start profitable undertaking enterprises for the proper disposal of the dead of all kinds of religion or none. We would invent or peddle some life-enhancing product to enjoy youth, or preach some therapeutic philosophy of life-centred or secular meditation and mind-control psychology for physical and mental health, or to enjoy youth in every way that wealth and power can provide. Or even vainly promise the world with hope of a franchise in some comfortable heaven and eternal life.

The Buddha saw through such false ideas and pretentious claims. True reality is much simpler and beyond our existential or religious control. **To exist is to change; to suffer change** means whatever we think we *have* will change and cease to exist; even what we *are* has no abiding essence. We rise like the sun, we set like the sun. We grow like plants, and like plants, we plant our seeds and rise again and again, flowering in the same way and bearing the same fruits. This is the universal reality of *impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself*.

2.2.1.5 Siddhattha might have been confronted with some kind of **emotional crisis** [2.1.3] upon the realization that all the comforts, luxuries and pleasures he enjoyed were subject to *decay, disease and death*; all these *changes*, they are *unsatisfactory* and they have *no essence*. Most worldly or ignorant people would have simply dismissed such thoughts, or they would be in some kind of self-denial, singing that everything is beautiful, that eternal life awaits all who believe; that such solace or solution they hope for would be given to them by some external agency, some Almighty God.

The religions of India in Siddhattha’s time had many gods, even the conception of Supreme Deities, such as Brahmā, Pajāpatī (Skt *prajā,pati*), and Issara (*īsvāra*), and there was a rich array of religious philosophies. The brahmins used the idea of their Supreme Deity or Primal Man from whose mouth, they claimed, the brahmins were born; so, they were God’s ordained spokesmen and priests amongst humans. The other classes were said to be born respectively from God’s arms (the kshatriyas or warrior-noble class), from God’s hips (the vaishyas or merchant class), and God’s feet (the Shudras or artisan class); others, the dark-skinned natives, who were not of any part of God’s anatomy: they were “outcastes.” Such an ideology must have been seen as atrociously exploitative in the eye of the wiser and mentally mature amongst the ancient Indians who knew that this **caste (*jāti*) system** was a brahminical, thus human, invention to exploit others.

2.2.1.6 The kshatriyas, the class to which Siddhattha and the Sakyas belonged, were warriors and nobles. They were the true elite and defenders of the nation, and thus should be the best class. They needed no God to favour them; they were naturally proud fighters and able leaders. Hence, they had no need for any idea of a race or tribe favoured by some Supreme Deity. Siddhattha was clearly amongst

⁴¹ See SD 36.2 (1.2).

those who were certainly wiser and spiritually more mature than seeing themselves as mere appendages of some unseen Deity.

Moreover, **meditation and philosophy** were quite advanced and common in Siddhattha's India. He was himself a born meditator, attaining the 1st dhyana as the tender age of 7 [2.1.3.1]. Siddhattha thus had the best tool for the spiritual quest: *his own developed mind, the means to know its own nature*, meditation, and the spiritual ideal of nonself that frees one from the physical senses and the mind, bringing freedom beyond time and space.

2.2.2 The triggers of Siddhattha's renunciation

2.2.2.1 The prophecies of Siddhattha's future renunciation urgently prompted his father Suddhodana to spare no effort in keeping his heir-apparent within the walls of worldly pleasures so that Siddhattha would become a world-ruler. Ironically, these very measures of supreme comfort and unbridled pleasures meant that Siddhattha did not have to seek or wonder about the pleasures of life as any ordinary youth would. Siddhattha's life was not only protected from *decay, disease and death* (the 3 great evils), from seeing the old, the infirm, and the dead, and from renunciants (the 4 sights)—he was "flooded" with the pleasures of *youth, health and life* [2.1.2.3, 2.1.4].

2.2.2.2 In the Buddha story, Suddhodana made every effort to protect Siddhattha from seeing any signs or suggestions of *aging, sickness and death* [2.1.2.3]. We can call this Suddhodana's **existential flooding**⁴² of Siddhattha's youth with *physical comfort* and *sensual pleasures*. Hence, it may be said that other adolescents and youths often sought, struggled, even despaired with emotions related to the desire for physical comfort and sensual pleasures; but not Siddhattha.

In fact, Siddhattha had such a steady daily dosage of comfort and pleasures, they flooded and numbed his senses. Such **over-protectiveness** in family-life is likely to prevent any adolescent or youth from facing social or emotional problems and traumas so that they are likely to remain socially immature or narcissistic, and know and learn nothing about the slings and arrows, the lack and failure, of a normal life.

2.2.2.3 As for Siddhattha, thanks to his emotional maturity and spiritual precocity [2.1.3], he noticed the clear hints of *decay, disease and death* amongst those providing him with his physical comfort and sensual pleasures. The existential flooding of physical comfort and sensual pleasures were then repressed into his unconscious. This clearly explains his dramatic reaction to **the 4 sights of an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a renunciant** [2.1.2.3].

The first 3 sights exploded the myths of sensual pleasures—their fleeting permanence, their numbing presence, their false promise—they were there, then they are gone; we desire them again and again; they cannot really satisfy us. Siddhattha realized that *comfort* only seems real when we know discomfort; *pleasure* is simply the absence of displeasure. He understood how comfort and displeasure are the bases for **suffering**, the lack of comfort and pleasure!

The 4th sight—that of the renunciant or recluse—is that of one who has given up the comfort and pleasures of household life, free from the *impermanence, suffering and nonself* of the senses, even of the mind that falsely projects the permanence, presence and promise of pleasure. Siddhattha noticed that the renunciant was truly happy. It is this **true happiness** that he now sought. To do this he had to flee from the prison-walls of pleasure, and face reality; hence, he renounced the world.

⁴² Cf **cognitive flooding**, "a method used in psychotherapy, mainly to treat phobias, in which the client is encouraged to focus on negative or aversive mental images to generate emotional states similar to those experienced when faced with a feared object or situation. The simulated fear is then seen to be manageable and associated with images that will reduce the original fear" (APA *Dictionary of Psychology*, 2nd ed, 2015:204).

2.2.2.4 Suddhodana not only flooded Siddhattha's life with comfort and pleasure, Suddhodana also saw Siddhattha as the biological and political perpetuation of Suddhodana and the Sakyas. Siddhattha was married to **Yasodharā**, who became "the first lady" (*agga,mahesi*)⁴³ amongst the women retinue surrounding young Siddhattha. Their marriage was consummated when Siddhattha was 29, which led to the birth of their only son, **Rāhula**. Ironically, Rāhula ("fetter") was born on the very day that Siddhattha was leaving home to live as a renunciant.⁴⁴

With the birth of Rāhula,⁴⁵ Yasodharā was given an honorific teknonym—referring to a parent by the name of their child—**Rāhula,mātā**, "mother of Rāhula," like *Sigāla,mātā* and *Sigāla,pitā*,⁴⁶ the parents of the young householder *Sigāla* of Rājagaha.⁴⁷ The birth of Rāhula not only highlights the consummation of the marriage between Siddhattha and Yasodharā, but also marks the end of Siddhattha's life as a householder. On the night after Rāhula's birth, Siddhattha departs from his palatial home to seek awakening, and become buddha.

2.2.2.5 People who see vital significance
in our human drive of keeping samsara populated,
or in fulfilling our sacred animal instinct to regenerate our own kind,
or in embracing some God-ordained fiat to increase and multiply and fill the earth with sinners,
would dourly censure Siddhattha for abandoning his wife and new-born child in renouncing the world.
They simply fear the idea of having to leave their beloved, things and ideas that they dearly hold.

However, **Siddhattha did not abandon his wife and child**. They were left in the capable care and comfort of his noble-warrior family. Indeed, he was not the first or only Indian to have left his *biological* family for a greater spiritual family or sangha. He was following an ancient Indian religious practice of seeking a happiness greater than the worldly. Unlike many other wanderers, Siddhattha did not abandon a lesser happiness for greater ease and escapism of living by a religious parasiting on the faithful support of the pious.

In renouncing the world, Siddhattha did not love his family less; he loved humanity and the world more. His awakening benefitted and still benefits more than just humans, but also the gods and all beings caught in and crushed by the turning wheel of rebirths and redeaths. Furthermore, while some renunciants would *die* for their faith, regarding such suicide as sacred, the Buddha did not *die* for the world; the Buddha lived for us in Dharma so that we even today can see our way in the life and light of awakening. No greater love has a man than this, that he forsakes his own beloved so that the world with its gods may be free from suffering.

3 Related teachings

3.1 DEPENDENT ARISING AND THE INTOXICATIONS

3.1.1 Religious fiction

3.1.1.1 The teaching of **the Mada Sutta** (A 3.39) is neither a dogmatic tenet nor a religious trope, but simple facts of true reality that are universal. It describes human existence—by extension, all senti-

⁴³ **Agga,mahesi**, the principal queen or wife: S 2:260,14; AA 1:189,11; J 1:262,5, 3:187,17; DhA 1:384,17; CPD sv. On **Rāhula,mātā**, see SD 52.1 (6.3). For further nn and significance of **§1.3.1.2**, see SD 52.1 (6.1.1).

⁴⁴ **Mahā,parinibbāna** S (D 9,5.27.4), SD 9.

⁴⁵ See SD 52.1 (6.1).

⁴⁶ On *Sigāla,mātā*, see A 1:25; Ap 2:603f); on *Sigāla,pitā*, see Tha 118; ThaA 1:74-77. On both see SD 4.1 (5).

⁴⁷ **Sigāl'ovāda** S (D 31/3:180-193), SD 4.1.

ent existence—and consists of concern with one's *youth, health and life*. Most humans tend to be greatly concerned with **youth** and looking or acting young, with **health** and acting healthy or showing off stamina, and delaying **death**, even hoping or pretending to prevent death.

3.1.1.2 Religion often misleads and deludes us with claims and tropes of exuberant youth, boundless health and eternal life, said to result from a mere belief in a particular religion. Such false views keep believers deludedly happy and hopeful, but blind them from understanding their own mind; so, they fail to cultivate self-reliance and self-effort. They fail to gain self-awakening and true liberation.

Religions often preach that *all* beings or “creatures” have failed some Supreme Being or God, and are thus “evil.” Religions often do not teach responsible action—that it is not “us” but our acts that are good or bad—we are labelled and relegated as “sinners,” redeemable only by an “other-power” imagined by that religion.

Such an insidious view tends to make believers dependent on some external agency for succour, that at best heals or hides only the symptoms while the roots of suffering continue to relentlessly feed on blind faith and religious fiction. Religion tends to see beings as utterly helpless; but Buddhism keeps reminding us to assert ourselves spiritually with a calm and clear mind of wholesome words and deeds. Above all, we are warned: **our mind, use it or lose it!**

3.1.2 Wise attention

3.1.2.1 Self-reliance (*atta,sarana*) means that we are capable of directing our mind to see into the true reality of things. Self-effort consists of training our mind to see conditionality, the network of causes and effects that produce what we call experience: what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think*. Every experience arises with the conjunction of the *sense-faculty, the sense-object and sense-consciousness*.

By “conjunction” here is meant **sense-contact** (*phassa*) or what we scientifically term as “sense stimulus.” For example, when the eye sees a *visual object* and attends to the object, there is “eye-contact.” With this contact there is feeling—pleasant or unpleasant—depending on the memory with which we recall or recognize the object. When that memory is a pleasant one (seeing the past in the *now*), we perceive the object as pleasant; when that memory is an unpleasant one, we perceive the object as unpleasant. As creatures of habit, we tend to instinctively react to our experiences in this manner.

This however is mostly **wrong attention** (*ayoniso manasikāra*). When we see and accept wrong attention as wrong, to that extent it is right effort. We then direct our mind to wise attention.

3.1.2.2 Wise attention (*yosino manasikāra*) literally means “working with the mind back to the source,” or more figuratively, “skilful consideration” or “wise attention,” that is, thinking in terms of specific conditionality (causes and effects) and applying the 3 universal characteristics (*impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself*).⁴⁸ Wise attention fends off mental influxes (*āsava*): *sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance*, which flood (*ogha*) our lives, yoke (*yoga*) us to suffering, and are the bases for rebirth in the various kinds of samsaric worlds.⁴⁹

Wise attention is basically seeing all things as *impermanent*, letting them come, letting them go. In this way, wise attention is a condition for the arising of right view (M 43), and for the arising of the awakening-factors⁵⁰ which in turn lead to streamwinning.⁵¹ Unwise attention (*ayoniso,manasikāra*), on the other hand, leads to the arising of the mental influxes⁵² [3.1.2.2] and of the mental hindrances.⁵³

⁴⁸ **Wise attention** is the subject of the first 5 sections of **Magga Samyutta** (S 45,1-48/5:2-30); **A 66+67/1:13; It 1.2.6/9.** See SD 5.16 (19.4.2).

⁴⁹ **M 2,5-10/1:7-9** (SD 30.3).

⁵⁰ **S 46.2/5:65-67, 46.49/5:101, 46.51/5:105 f.**

When we truly see youth, health and life as things which are *impermanent, becoming other and ending*, we mindfully enjoy them while they last. We thus see beyond them, into the true nature of everything. In that way, we grow in wisdom, and will in time reach the path of awakening.

3.2 THE 3 INTOXICATIONS AND THE 4 SIGHTS

3.2.1 The teaching as Dharma

3.2.1.1 The Sukhumāla Sutta (A 3.38) is a statement on the nature of *youth, health and life* as a direct or plain teaching of true reality, that is, as a personal testimony by the Buddha on his experiences of worldly comfort and pleasures in his youth as the bodhisattva. Siddhattha as bodhisattva reflected on the uncertainties of worldliness as follows (paraphrased):

Although in his youth he was surrounded by “splendour” (*iddhi*) [§§1 f], and experienced “such an exceedingly delicate life” [§2.1], these thoughts arose in him, resulting in the vanishing of all his **mental intoxications** (*mada*):

- (1) We all, by nature, **age** and cannot escape from *aging*;
but, on seeing an old person, we feel “distressed, ashamed, disgusted”—
we forget that we too cannot escape *ageing*.
“When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with youth** vanished.” [§2.1(1)]
- (2) We all, by nature, **fall ill**, and cannot escape from *bodily and mental illness and pain*;
but, on seeing a sick person, we feel “distressed, ashamed, disgusted”—
we forget that we too cannot escape *sickness*.
“When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with health** vanished.” [§2.1(2)]
- (3) We all, by nature, **die**, and cannot escape *death*;
but, on seeing a corpse, we feel “distressed, ashamed, disgusted”—
we forget that we too cannot escape *death*.
“When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with life** vanished.” [§2.1(3)]

3.2.1.2 Carefully reading the above reflections of the bodhisattva Siddhattha, we may also conclude that despite all of Suddhodana’s efforts to encapsulate Siddhattha in comfort and pleasure in order to prevent him from seeing any signs of old age, disease or death, Siddhattha was keenly observant and spiritually precocious so that he saw through all the worldliness. These painful realities contrasted starkly with his life of comfort and pleasure. Siddhattha was profoundly “distressed, ashamed, disgusted” by this epiphany, which led to his renunciation.

3.2.2 Dharma as teaching and as metaphor

3.2.2.1 The reality of **the 3 great evils**—those of *decay, disease and death*—are profoundly true since the bodhisattva has experienced them for himself [2.2.2], and we can and must experience for ourselves. The Dharma teachings of **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) serve as a clear mirror for the wise who have experienced them for themselves and understood their significance.

⁵¹ D 33,1.11(13)/3:227.

⁵² M 2,5-10/1:7-9.

⁵³ S 46.2/5:64 f; S 46.51/5:102 f.

However, those who are intoxicated with youth, with health or with life would be too inebriated to see their reality, much less understand their significance.

The aged are often mentally dimmed or demented, and so have difficulty reading, hearing or understanding the suttas or teachings. In their sunset years, they are often shadowed by memories of their lost youth and vitality, and loss of loved ones. **The very young** may cling to other elders when their parents are busy with themselves and the world; aged relatives find momentary joy and comfort in the cloy and play of children basking in the fading warmth and glow.

The young and healthy tend to flaunt their body *senselessly*, without wise restraint of their senses. They tend to mindlessly pursue pleasures unprepared for the costs when pleasures fade. In **sickness**, their bodies suffer pain; their minds elusively and mysteriously exaggerate suffering, blurred beyond description.

Those who **fear death** are easy prey for the religious delusions of eternal life of unending joy, as if it is meaningful or sensible without pain. Some welcome death deluded by the idea that there is nothing beyond death.

It is the nature of life to regenerate itself. Even plants regenerate themselves; so do sentient beings, even more so. We see only the death of the body; the mind that seeks a suitable body to begin life anew.

3.2.2.2 For the benefit of the busy, the flighty, the distractible, the suttas often contain stories, figures, and metaphors⁵⁴ that put across Dharma teachings in interesting and arresting ways. The Dharma succinctly stated in **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) is presented in a more elaborate and graphic way in **the (Yama) Deva,dūta Sutta** (A 3.35).⁵⁵

The 4 sights (*pubba,nimitta*) were said to be mentioned in a prophecy by the ascetic Kāla Devala during Siddhattha's birth [2.1.1.1]. As a canonical set, these 4 sights or signs are given in some detail in **the Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14) [3.2.3]. It is said that if Siddhattha were to see *an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a recluse*, he would renounce the home life as a renunciant and become Buddha [2.1.1.2]. The first 3 sights—those of *an old man, a sick man, and a corpse*—are presented as teachings in **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) and **the Mada Sutta** (A 3.339). The fullest canonical list of these sights are **the 5 sights**, defined in **the (Majjhima) Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130) [3.2.4].

3.2.3 Significance of the 4 sights or signs

3.2.3.1 **The 4 sights** or signs (*pubba,nimitta*) play 2 important roles in early Buddhism, thus:

- (1) as portents for Siddhattha's renunciation of worldly life [2.1.1.2];
- (2) as reflections for us (monastics and lay Buddhists) so that we do not fall into suffering [3.2.3.2].

We have already spoken at length about the 4 sights as portents for Siddhattha's renunciation. We will thus here only look at the 4 sights as **reflections** for our personal practice, and as extensions of the perception of impermanence (*anicca saññā*).⁵⁶

We shall briefly examine the significance of **the 4 sights** as given in **the Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14) [3.2.3]. The Sutta relates the 4 sights—or the 4 signs—in connection with the past buddha **Vipassī**, the

⁵⁴ See SD 48.10 (3.1).

⁵⁵ A 3.35/1:138-142 (SD 48.10).

⁵⁶ (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) & SD 16.7 (5); **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,22), SD 3.11.

19th of the 24 buddhas.⁵⁷ This is to highlight the fact that the 4 signs are not unique to Siddhattha, but are manifestations of true reality; hence, they apply to all buddhas.

3.2.3.2 The Mahā'padāna Sutta (D 14) gives canonical details of the bodhisattva's descent from Tusita into Mahā Māyā's womb, Siddhattha's birth, the brahmin soothsayers' prophecy, the great man's 32 marks, the 4 signs and the great renunciation, but these are of the past buddha **Vipassī**, thus:

D 14,1.16-1.42 (2) The bodhisattva chapter

§§1.16-1.32	Vipassī's attributes
§§1.17-2.17	THE NATURE OF THE BODHISATTVA
§§1.17-1.32	The Bodhisattva's advent

D 14,1.33-1.42 (3) The 2 destinies

§1.33	The wheel-turning king
§§1.34-1.36	The 32 marks of the great man (full list)
§§1.37-1.42	Raising prince Vipassī

D 14,2.1-2.17 (4) The quest chapter

§§2.1-2.14	The 4 signs	[Below 3.2.4.1-3.2.4.4]
§§2.15-2.17	The great renunciation	[Below 3.2.4.5]
§2.15	Vipassī's renunciation	
§2.16	The renunciation of the 84,000 (1)	

These accounts are very closely retold in **the Buddha, varṇa Commentary** (BA 270-284) only with changes in some incidental details, such as the names and clans of his parents, the bodhi tree, the number of the first disciples, and so on. The key events of the bodhisattva's life, such as rebirth in Tusita and the 4 sights, remain stock.

The accounts of the 4 signs—those of *an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a renunciant*, elaborated in **the Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14)—are dramatic depictions of the 3 great evils (decay, disease and death) and the way to transcend them, that is, the renunciation (letting go) of attachment to the senses and freeing the mind. The 3 great evils are presented in **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38) as underlying the 3 intoxications (mada), those with *youth, health and life* [3.2].

3.2.3.3 Of special interest to us in this study is the accounts of the bodhisattva Vipassī's encounters with the 4 signs as related in **the Mahā'padāna Sutta** [3.2.3.2]. Vipassī lived 91 aeons ago,⁵⁸ when the average human lifespan was 80,000 years. Vipassī saw each of the 4 signs with “many hundreds and many thousands of years” intervening in between.⁵⁹

Each of the sections on the 4 signs follows a template, that is, a standard format, as follows:

- (1) Vipassī decides to visit the pleasure garden and his unnamed charioteer prepares “some fine carriages.”
- (2) Vipassī then saw an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a recluse on different occasions. The highlights of each sign follows [3.2.4].
- (3) Vipassī does not seem to recognize old age, sickness, death, and the charioteer was his commentator.

⁵⁷ On the 7 buddhas, see **D 14,3.34-3.45** below. On the 24 buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3.3.1).

⁵⁸ D 14,1.4/2:2 (SD 49.8a).

⁵⁹ We could reckon that the time is factored by 10, ie, 1,000 years of Vipassī's is 1 of ours. When this story is later retold in **Nidāna, kathā**, Gotama is said to have reached maturity at 16 years, when he ventured out into the gardens, and saw the 4 sights, apparently, one after another or on 4 different occasions within a relatively short time.

- (4) When Vipassī learns about the true nature of *old age, disease and death*, he is traumatized with samvega.
- (5) On his return to the palace, his father, king Bandhuma, asked about Vipassī's outing, and the charioteer recounts each of Vipassī's encounters, including Vipassī's samvega.
- (6) King Bandhuma, hoping that Vipassī would not give up his future kingship and renounce (as predicted by soothsayers), furnished Vipassī with "even more" cords of sense-pleasures each.
- (7) Vipassī continued to enjoy the cords of sense-pleasures for "many hundreds and many thousands of years" until he saw the 4th sight, that of the recluse.
- (8) Of these 4 accounts, that of Vipassī's encounter with the 4th sign is the shortest, since he renounced right there (apparently before the recluse he met, which makes good narrative sense).

3.2.4 The 4 signs in the Mahā'padāna Sutta

3.2.4.0 The **Mahā'padāna Sutta** teachings [3.2.3] will be summarized and paraphrased as necessary to highlight the significance of **the 4 signs**. §§2.1-2.14 of **D 14** form 4 sections describing the 4 signs, while §2.15-2.17 form the 5th section describing the great renunciation of the bodhisattva Vipassī.

3.2.4.1 THE 1ST SIGN: THE OLD MAN (D 14,2.1-2.4)

The **Mahā'padāna Sutta** narrator describes the sign of **the old man** as follows:

"... he saw **an old man** (*purisa jiṇṇa*),⁶⁰
crooked as a curved rafter,⁶¹ bent double,
leaning on a stick,
trembling as he went,
wretched, youth long gone."

Upon Vipassī's asking, the charioteer explains:

"'He is called "**old**," sire, because in no long time he will live no more.'
'What now, good charioteer, **am I, too**, subject to **decay** (*jarā*), not gone beyond *decay*?'
'You, sire, and I, and everyone else, too, are subject to *decay*, not gone beyond *decay*.' ...
Prince Vipassī, bhikshus, returned to the royal mansion, consumed by sorrow, depressed, thinking:
'Shame indeed on this thing called "birth," since **to one born, decay must show itself!**'"

REFRAIN:

King Bandhuma is informed of Vipassī's seeing of the sign.

Bandhuma furnishes Vipassī "with even more of **the 5 cords of sense-pleasures**—so that prince Vipassī would not forsake kingship, so that he would not go forth from the house into homelessness, so that the brahmin soothsayers' word would not come true.

And so, bhikshus, prince Vipassī continued to enjoy the 5 cords of sensual pleasures, attended by them, fully endowed and engrossed with them."

Thousands of years later, Vipassī decides to visit the pleasure garden again.

3.2.4.2 THE 2ND SIGN: THE SICK MAN (D 14,2.5-2.8)

The **Mahā'padāna Sutta** describes the sign of **the sick man** as follows:

⁶⁰ For a longer description of the old man here, see **Deva,dūta S** (M 130,5.2), SD 2.23.

⁶¹ "Curved rafter," *gopānasī* (BHS id). We usu know rafters as being straight. The curved rafter is peculiar to Indian architecture, in ancient buildings (very likely wooden), such as depicted in the early Chaitya caves, such as Bhaja (or Bhaje, Pune, nr Lonavala, Maharashtra) or Karli (or Karla, btw Pune and Mumbai in southern Maharashtra, India). The beams were connected by "butt joints" (the simplest of joints) at the rafters forming great arches without either metal fittings or bonding agents. See Takeo Kamiya, "Lycian influence on Indian cave temples," http://www.kamit.jp/07_lycia/liki_eng.htm, accessed 10 Feb 2016.

“ ... he saw a **sick man** (*purisa ābādhika*)⁶²
afflicted, suffering and gravely ill,
lying fouled in his own excrement and urine,
lifted up by some and set down by others.”

Upon Vipassī’s asking, the charioteer explains:

“ ‘He, sire, is called “sick” (*vyādhita*).’

‘But, why, good charioteer, is he called “sick”? ’

‘He is called “sick,” sire. Perhaps, he may not recover from that sickness (*vyādhī*).’

‘What now, good charioteer, **am I, too**, subject to **sickness**, not gone beyond **sickness**? ’

‘You, sire, and I, and everyone else, too, are subject to *sickness*, not gone beyond *sickness*.’ ...

‘Shame indeed on this thing called “**birth**” (*jāti*) since

to one born, decay must show itself, disease must show itself!”

[**Refrain**] King Bandhuma is informed of Vipassī’s seeing of the sign.

Vipassī drowns himself in the 5 cords of sensual pleasures.

Thousands of years later, Vipassī decides to visit the pleasure garden again.

3.2.4.3 THE 3RD SIGN: THE CORPSE (D 14,2.9-2.12)

The Mahā’padāna Sutta narrator describes the sign of **the corpse** as follows:

“ ... he saw a great gathering of people, dressed in cloths dyed in various hues, constructing a **bier** (*vilāta*).”

Upon Vipassī’s asking, the charioteer explains:

“ ‘He, sire, is said to be “dead” (*kāla,kata*).’

‘But, what, good charioteer, is “dead”? ’

‘He is called “**dead**,” sire,

because now neither mother nor father nor relatives nor anyone else will see him ever again.

He, too, would not see mother or father or relatives or anyone else ever again.⁶³

‘What now, good charioteer, **am I, too**, subject to **death** (*maraṇa*), not gone beyond **death**? ’

‘You, sire, and I, and everyone else, too, are subject to *death*, not gone beyond *death*.’ ...

‘Shame indeed on this thing called “*death*,” since

to one born, decay must show itself, disease must show itself, death must show itself!”

[**Refrain**] King Bandhuma is informed of Vipassī’s seeing of the sign.

Vipassī drowns himself in the 5 cords of sensual pleasures.

Thousands of years later, Vipassī decides to visit the pleasure garden again.

3.2.4.4 THE 4TH SIGN: THE RENUNCIANT (D 14,2.13 f)

The Mahā’padāna Sutta narrator describes the sign of **the renunciant** (*pabbajita*) as follows:

“ ... he saw a shaven-headed man, a **renunciant** (*pabbajita*) wearing the saffron robe.

Seeing him, bhikshus, prince Vipassī addressed the charioteer:

‘This man, good charioteer, what has he done? His head is unlike those of others; his clothing is unlike those of others!

‘He, sire, is called a “**renunciant**”.’”

Upon Vipassī’s asking, the charioteer explains:

‘He is called a renunciant, sire, good in living in truth [Dharma-faring], good in living in harmony, good in the wholesome, good in being non-violent, good in being compassionate to all beings.’⁶⁴

⁶² On the description of the sick man here, see **Deva,dūta S** (M 130,6.2), SD 2.23.

⁶³ On the description of the dead man here, see also **Deva,dūta S** (M 130,8.2), SD 2.23.

⁶⁴ Note here that the act of renunciation is addressed, not the person.

‘Good indeed, good charioteer, is this one called renunciant! *Good is living in truth! Good is living in harmony! Good is living doing the wholesome! Good is being non-violent! Good is being compassionate to all beings!*’

Vipassī then instructed the charioteer to bring the carriage closer to the renunciant.

“Then, bhikshus, prince Vipassī said this to **the renunciant**:

‘Now, good sir, what have you done? *Your head is unlike those of others; your clothing is unlike those of others!*’

‘I, sire, am called a “**renunciant**”.’

‘But, good sir, *what makes you a “renunciant”?*’

‘I am called a renunciant, sire, because *good is living in truth [Dharma-faring], good is living in harmony, good is doing what is wholesome, good is being non-violent, good is being compassionate to all beings.*’

‘Good indeed, good sir, that you are a renunciant! *Good is living in truth! Good is living in harmony! Good is living in doing what is wholesome! Good is being non-violent! Good is being compassionate to all beings!*’

3.2.4.5 VIPASSĪ’S RENUNCIATION (D 14.2.15)

“Then, bhikshus, prince Vipassī addressed the charioteer:

‘Now, then, good charioteer, take this chariot from here right back to the royal palace.

I will right *here* shave off hair and beard, and don the saffron robe, and will go forth from the house into homelessness!’

‘Yes, sire,’ replied the charioteer, bhikshus, assenting to prince Vipassī.

He took the chariot from there and returned to the royal mansion.

Prince Vipassī, having shaven off hair and beard, and donning the saffron robe, went forth right there from the house into homelessness.”⁶⁵

RENUNCIATION OF THE 84,000 (D 14.2.16 f)

Hearing of Vipassī’s renunciation, 84,000 from the city of Bandhu,matī, renounced, too.

In due course, the bodhisattva, reflected thus:

“It is not proper that I should dwell with such a crowd. Why don’t I go alone, living a **solitary life?**”

So the bodhisattva and the 84,000 renunciants parted ways, and the bodhisattva went into solitary pursuit of awakening.

3.2.5 The 5 divine messengers

3.2.5.1 The 4 sights or signs are also known as “divine messengers” (*deva,dūta*) especially in the **(Majjhima) Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130) and the **(Yama) Deva,dūta Sutta** (A 3.35).⁶⁶ They are called “**divine messengers**” because, in these two suttas, Yama, lord of the hells, sends these messengers as a warning to the world of its true nature, and not to be fooled by worldliness into doing evil. Being intoxicated with *youth, health and life*, we are driven to become unmindful and commit evil. The 4 signs thus serve as warnings to the world against doing evil. In committing evil, we fall into Yama’s realm, the hells.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ In the case of **Gotama**, after the 4th sign, he goes back to his chambers, deeply troubled, and he quietly steals out of the palace in the dead of night. On the drama of Gotama’s renunciant night, see **Nidāna,kathā** of the Jātaka (J 61-65), tr in Jayawickrama, *The Story of Gotama Buddha*, Oxford, 1990:82-87.

⁶⁶ **M 130**/3:178-187 (SD 2.23); **A 3.35**/1:138-142 (SD 48.10).

⁶⁷ See Yama in this role, see SD 2.23 (2).

It is thus also possible to interpret the 4 signs or sights—*the old man, the sick man, the corpse and the renunciant*—as devas or even as hell-robots⁶⁸ sent by Yama in the guise of the 4 kinds of persons, or Yama could have himself conjured up the 4 signs, especially for the case of the bodhisattva's epiphany.

Such teachings are said to be “implicit” (*neyy’attha*), that is, their sense or significance has to be teased out.⁶⁹ This is a metaphorical teaching so that we can see and understand the true nature of the world. In understanding the *impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself* of the world, we will be inspired and empowered not to commit evil.

3.2.5.2 Although there are more accounts of **the 5 sights**⁷⁰ than there are accounts of the 4 sights, it is likely that the former is older. The evidence for this is clear enough: the account of the 5 sights is found in a canonical text, **the (Majjhima) Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130), while the account of the 4 sights is found in the late **Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14), not in connection with our Buddha, but in connection with a past buddha, Vipassī [2.2.2]. It is only in the commentarial accounts of the 4 sights that we see them attributed to our Buddha himself [2.2.3].

The (Majjhima) Deva,dūta Sutta (M 130) has a dramatic account of the 5 divine messengers—a tender infant, an old person, a sick person, a criminal being punished for his crimes, and a corpse—and king Yama, the lord of the dead, admonishes one newly fallen into his hell-realm, thus:

Did it never occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, that "I too am subject to birth ... subject to decay [old age] ... subject to disease ... subject to suffering [punishments] ... subject to death ... surely, I had better do good through body, speech and mind"?

(Abridged, **M 130**, 3-8, SD 2.23; **A 3.36**, SD 48.10)⁷¹

The rationale for the 5 sights is obvious enough. While the basic 3 sights point to *the existential realities of life*, the 5 sights give a more comprehensive vision of the social and personal realities that we all must face when we are not diligent in doing good, that is, cultivating moral virtue and mental calm and clarity. Immoral conduct and a defiled mind would surely bring upon us hellish pains and sufferings that are graphically described in the Deva,dūta Suttas [3.2.5.1] and related discourses, such as **the Bāla Pandita Sutta** (M 129).

The descriptions of **hellish sufferings** are an ancient trope for depicting the sufferings we will face and feel for the bad karma we have done. The point is not whether these hells exist or not; rather, the sufferings we feel are very real indeed. What we feel in our minds is more real than any trope or reality! Yama is warning us not to be morally negligent or immorally arrogant until we face our own psychological downfall. When the mind suffers, the body suffers, too.

The divine messengers are addressing us here and now—that we should heed them before it is too late! This is the power of Buddhist spiritual myth.

⁶⁸ On hell-robots, see KvU 20.3/596. See also MA 3:388,1 f, 4:231,5 f; AA 2:227,24-29; NmA 2:424,14-19. Also SD 62.11 (2.3.13.1 n).

⁶⁹ By **implicit** (*neyy'attha*) is meant “whose meaning is to be drawn out,” and its related term is **the explicit** (*nīt'-attha*), “whose meaning has been drawn out.” See **Neyy'attha Nīt'attha S** (A 2.3.5+6), SD 2.6b; SD 47.20 (1.3); SD 89.10 (1).

⁷⁰ This section is also found in SD 48.10 (2.3.2).

⁷¹ See SD 2.23, esp (2). Cf Makha,deva J (J 9); DhA 1:107; AA 1:36,

3.3 SAṂVEGA AND PASĀDA [SD 52.1 (7.1.3)]

3.3.1 Saṁvega as a loss of sense of self

3.3.1.1 Siddhattha, **29 years 10 months old**,⁷² was traumatized by the first 3 sights—those of an old person, a sick person and a corpse [3.2.2.2]—because he suddenly realized that he would lose everything that he *had* (his loved ones, his women, his wealth, his realm), even all that he was: *his youth, his health, his life*.

Recalling this earth-shaking event, the Buddha, in **the (Dasaka) Sa,citta Sutta** (A 10.51), describes himself as desiring to flee from worldly life like a man “whose clothes or head are on fire,” and to seek to put out this fire.⁷³ The great renunciation was thus a dramatic result of a sudden “loss of a sense of identity” (*atammayatā*).

This sense of *identity loss* arises when we identify with what we **have** (such as wealth, power and things) and with what we **are** (youth, health and life). We fear losing any of them, or are confronted with the reality that we really have no control over them, or that they are not what we have thought them to be.

We could of course use religious ideas or some kind of belief to delude ourselves that we have some kind of “innate purity” (like in the brahminical caste ideology); or that there must be “something” (*kiñ-cana*) created or given by some God (like an eternal heaven); or that there is really “nothing,” so that everything ends with this life.⁷⁴ The true reality is that all that exists can only do so in impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and without any abiding essence (nonself).

3.3.1.2 The trigger for Siddhattha’s renunciation was a profound experience of **atam,mayatā** (“not-that-ness”)⁷⁵—his sudden realization that he could not identify with anything in this world—but not understanding this powerful truth, he was deeply shaken; there was, it seems, no more ground to stand on. This spiritual shock or existential trauma is called **saṁvega**, a sense of religious urgency.⁷⁶

The usual sense of **atammayatā** is that of having nothing to do with the world—Siddhattha had seen through the deceit and dangers of worldliness—of *decay, disease and death*. He found himself having

⁷² Traditional dates of the Buddha are 624-544 BCE (Sri Lanka) or 623-543 (SE Asia); Western scholars’ dates: 566-466 or 563-463. The general consensus amongst scholars is that the Buddha died between 410 and 400 BCE. (see Oxford Dict of Buddhism, 2003 sv Date of the Buddha). The bodhisattva departed from Kapilavatthu on the full-moon of Āsālha (June-July), when he was 30, ie, 594 BCE (traditional date). See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16.5.-27.4), SD 9; Skt **Mahā,parinirvāṇa Sūtra** 40, 49 (ed E Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1950-51:376). For Chin sources, see Nakamura 2000:418 n68. On Siddhattha’s age, see SD 52.1 (8.2.1.1).

⁷³ Seyyathā’pi āvuso āditta’celo vā āditta,sīso vā tass’eva celassa vā sīsassa vā nibbāpanāya adhimattam: see **(Dasaka) Sa,citta S** (A 10.51,4.2), SD 5.13. This is a popular parable in the Aṅguttara, evoking the urgency of self-review and meditation: **Samādhi S 2** (A 4.93/2:93), SD 95.8; **Marañā-s-sati S 2** (A 6.20/3:307, 308); **Marañā-s-sati S 2** (A 8.74/3:320 f), SD 48.6; (**Satthā**) **Sa,citta S** (A 10.51,4.2/5:93), SD 5.13; (**Sa,citta**) **Sariputta S** (A 10.51/5:95) = A 10.51; **Samatha S** (A 10.54/5:99 f), SD 83.8; **Parihāna S** (A 10.5,7.2/5:103+8.2/5:105), SD 43.5. The blazing head (*āditta,sīsa*) parable is mentioned in connection with working at the *goal of renunciation*, in Comys (MA 1:95; SA 1:48; ThaA 1:112; PmA 1:261). **Jātaka Nidāna** records a related simile parable of the burning house, as the bodhisattva reflects on his life, “The threefold existence (the sense-world, the form world, and the formless world) appeared to be like a burning house” (*tayo bhavā āditta,geha,sadisā khāyim̄su*) (J 1:61) [8.1.4.1].

⁷⁴The 1st is a case of self-view (*attānuditthi*): **Attā’nuditthi Pahāna S** (S 35.166), SD 53.13; the 2nd a case of eternalism (*sassata,diṭṭhi*): **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,9.12), SD 1.1; SD 19.3 (2.2); the 3rd annihilationism (*ucceda,diṭṭhi*): (**Vaccha,gotta**) **Ānanda S** (S 44.10), SD 2.16(5); SD 40a.1 (7.2.2.2).

⁷⁵ See **Atam,mayatā**, SD 19.13.

⁷⁶ On **saṁvega**, see SD 9 (7.6).

nothing to do with the world but he simply could neither understand nor accept it. He had to go forth to seek this realization and freedom from worldliness.⁷⁷

3.3.2 Pasāda as joyful faith and hope

3.3.2.1 Siddhattha's desire to go forth, to renounce the world, in quest of understanding this troubling world, is motivated by **the 4th sight**—that of the renunciant (*pabbajita*) or recluse (a monk). At first sight, he could not understand what this person was, except to sense that he soothingly exuded “joyful faith and hope” (*pasāda*). This is a word that reflects the wholesome effects, especially joy, of a profoundly liberating faith or vision in what is seen as an “opening” or “spaciousness” (*okāsa*) in a “crowded” and “confined” situation, a way out of the suffering world.⁷⁸ Clearly, this is the opposite of spiritual trauma, *saṁvega*.

3.3.2.2 We are told by the Commentators that Siddhattha had his charioteer—called **Channa**—to explain to him what these sights were and their significance. As for **the 4th sight**, Channa apparently did not really know who or what a “renunciant” was. After all, he, as Siddhattha's groom and charioteer, was surely a man of the world, too. This is where the observant devas—said to be non-returners from Suddh-āvāsa (the pure abodes)—who had been following the bodhisattva's progress in the world, informed Channa about the renunciant. Channa thus acted as the commentator to the bodhisattva, and to us.

The Buddha, *varṇsa* Commentary reports this when the bodhisattva asked Channa about the renunciant:

“The charioteer, owing to the absence of any trace whatever of being a buddha, neither knew a renunciant nor the special qualities of a renunciant. Nevertheless, through the power of the devas, Channa said: ‘My lord, this is called one who has gone forth,’ and praised the special qualities of renunciation.” (BA 1:280,9-11)

In this sense, too, the 4 signs are said to be “divine messengers” [3.2.5].

— — —

⁷⁷ See SD 52.1 (16.3.4.2).

⁷⁸ See, eg, **Sambadh'okāsa S** (A 6.26), SD 15.6.

Sukhumāla Sutta

The Discourse on the Delicate

A 3.38

A life of pleasure

1 “I was delicate,⁷⁹ bhikshus, extremely delicate, excessively delicate.⁸⁰

In my father’s dwelling, bhikshus, **lotus-pools** were made, in one blue lotuses (*uppalā*) flowered,⁸¹ in another red lotuses (*paduma*), in another white lotuses (*pundarīka*),⁸² just for my pleasure.

Furthermore, bhikshus, I used no sandalwood that was not of Kāsī [Benares].⁸³

My turban, too, bhikshus, was of Kāsī cloth, as were my tunic, my under-robe, my cloak.

Night and day, bhikshus, a white parasol was held over me⁸⁴ so that I could not be touched by cold or heat, by dust or grass or dew.⁸⁵

The 3 mansions

2 I had **3 mansions**:⁸⁶ one for the hot season, one for the cold season, one for the rains.

In the rains mansion, during the 4 months of the rains, I was entertained by only female musicians.⁸⁷ I did not come down to the ground floor of the mansion⁸⁸ during those months.⁸⁹

The 3 realities of life and samvega

2.1 Bhikshus, amidst such splendour,⁹⁰ and because of such an exceedingly delicate life, this thought arose in me:⁹¹

⁷⁹ *Sukhumālo*: A 3.38.1/1:145,8 (glossed as “without suffering,” *niddukho*, AA 2:235); Tha 475 (ThaA 1:200); Ap 1:122*, 313*; C 19/2.9/2*; J 544/152,7*; V 1:15,2, 86,11+12, 179,5, 185,14, 2:180,6+19. *Sukhumāla* has an unetymological aspiration (-*kh*-) in its middle (Skt *sukumāra*, (mf), “very tender,” or (n) “tender youth”). Prob an influence of *sukhuma* < *sūkṣmā* (“minute, fine, trifling”). See H Berger, *Zwei Probleme der mittelindischen Lautlehre*, Munich, 1955:14 n4. See Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1994 §40 (1b).

⁸⁰ *Sukhumāla*, delicate in luxuriously refined style.

⁸¹ *Pupphati*, Ce Ee so; Be Se *vappati*, “are sown.”

⁸² On the 3 kinds of lotuses, see *Ariya Pariyesanā S* (M 26,21) SD 1.11.

⁸³ Be Ce Se *Na kho panassāhaṁ bhikkhave akāsikāṁ* candanāṁ dhāremi*. Se reads **kāsikāṁ*.

⁸⁴ (Phrase) Be *Rattin,divam kho pana me su tam* bhikkhave *seta-c, chattam* *dhāriyati*. Be Se *panasu me tam*; Ce *panassu*.

⁸⁵ *Ratt’indivam kho pana me su tam* bhikkhave *seta-c, chattam* *dhāriyati*.

⁸⁶ “Entertained,” Be Comy *paricārayamāno* (*modamāno*, “being pleased by,” AA 2:241,4); Ce Se *paricāriyamāno*; Ee *parivāriyamāno*, “surrounded by.”

⁸⁷ “By only female musicians,” *nippurisehi turiyehi*, lit, “unmanned music,” possibly “divine music.” The Thai trs give it as ໜ້ມືບຈະເຈື້ອປັນ, lit, “not mixed with humans,” “with no humans involved” (BUDSIR, Dhammadāna). However, from the context of the following para [§2], it is clear that women (*itthī*) are meant: so Comy (AA 2:240,29-241,3). See D:R 2:18 n1.

⁸⁸ “Did not come down to the ground floor of the mansion,” *na hetṭhā ... pāsādaṁ orohati*: see DPL: *hetṭhā*. Alt tr “did not come down from the mansion.”

⁸⁹ This passage on the 3 mansions is also found in **Mahā’pādāna S** (D 14,1.42/2:21), SD 49.8; see also SD 52.1 (6.1.2). As for Yasa at Mv 1.7.1 = V 1:15 (SD 11.2 (7)).

⁹⁰ “Splendour,” *iddhi*, here in a mundane sense of “prosperity” or “success”

(1) “An untutored worldling, by nature **ages** [decays] and is unable to escape ageing [decay], but seeing *an old or aged person*,

he feels distressed, ashamed, disgusted,⁹² being forgetful of himself [of his own situation].

Now I, too, by nature, will age and cannot escape ageing.

If, bhikshus, when seeing *an old or aged person*, I were to feel distressed, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be right⁹³ for one like myself.”⁹⁴

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with youth** vanished.

(2) (Again I reflected:)

“An untutored worldling, by nature suffers **disease** and *is unable to escape disease*, but *on seeing a sick person*, he feels distressed, ashamed, disgusted, being forgetful of himself.

Now I, too, by nature, will suffer disease and cannot escape disease.

If, bhikshus, when seeing *an ill person*, I were to feel distressed, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be right for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with health** vanished.

(3) (Again I reflected:)

“An untutored worldling, by nature dies and *is unable to escape dying*, but *on seeing a dead person*,

he feels distressed, ashamed, disgusted, being forgetful of himself.

Now I, too, by nature will die and cannot escape dying.

If, bhikshus, when seeing a dead person, I were to feel distressed, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be right for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with life** vanished.

— — —

APPENDIX

Mada Sutta (A 3.39/3:146 f), SD 42.13

The 3 kinds of intoxication

The **Mada Sutta** (A 3.39) presents the 3 intoxications (*mada*)—those *with youth, with health and with life*—as the underlying conditions for our committing unwholesome deeds through the 3 karmic doors (*dvāra*) of *body, speech and mind*. These three are the psychological conditions rooted in the fear of *decay, disease and death*, the “3 Ds” of existence.

The Burmese (Be), Sinhala (Ce) and Siamese (Se) editions treat the Mada Sutta as a continuation of the preceding **Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38, SD 63.7).⁹⁵ According to the Pali Text Society (Ee) manuscript, however, **the Mada Sutta** (A 3.39) forms a separate sutta (SD 42.13).

The Mada Sutta points to the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala, mūla*) of *greed, hate and delusion* as basic conditions why we commit bad deeds and for their painful karmic fruits. The unwholesome roots

⁹¹ Psychologically, this is a result of or reaction to “existential flooding” [2.2.2.2]: SD 43.2 (2); SD 52.1 (7.2.2.1).

⁹² “Would feel pained, ashamed, disgusted,” *atṭiyeyyām harāyeyyām jeguccheyyām*. For fuller analyses of these terms, see **Kevaddha S** (D 11,5/1:213), SD 1.7 n sv.

⁹³ Throughout: Be Ee Se *atisitvā* (pref); Ce *atiyitvā*. **Ati-sitvā** is absol of *ati-sarati*. (a) to go too far or beyond; (b) to pass over, overlook, ignore; (c) to transgress, to commit evil. See CPD: *ati-sarati*. **Atiyitvā** is prob absol of *ati-yāti*, 1. to pass by, 2. to reenter a town (said of a king) (A 1:68,23 f).

⁹⁴ This reflection is that of a renunciant, ie, the Buddha before his awakening.

⁹⁵ A 3.38/1:145 f, SD 5.16(19.4.2) (abr), SD 63.7 (full). On the term **mada**, see SD 42.22 (2.2.2).

go even deeper, lurking in our unconscious as latent tendencies (*anusaya*), basically as *lust, aversion and ignorance*. [1.2]

— — —

Mada Sutta

The Discourse on Intoxication

A 3.39

(The numberings here do not follow PTS)

1 Bhikshus, there are **these 3 kinds of intoxication**. What are the three?

- 2** (1) The intoxication with **youth**. *yobbana,mada*
 (2) The intoxication with **health**. *ārogya,mada*
 (3) The intoxication with **life**. *jīvita,mada*

(1) Intoxication with youth

- 3** Intoxicated with youth, bhikshus,
 does a bad deed with
 does a bad deed with
 does a bad deed with
an untutored worldling
 the body,
 speech,
 thought.

- 4** Having done a bad deed with *the body*,
 having done a bad deed with *speech*,
 having done a bad deed with *thought*,

when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell.

(2) Intoxication with health

- 5** (2) Or, intoxicated with health, bhikshus,
 does a bad deed with
 does a bad deed with
 does a bad deed with
an untutored worldling
 the body,
 speech,
 thought.

- 6** *Having done a bad deed with the body*,
having done a bad deed with speech,
having done a bad deed with thought,

when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell.

(3) Intoxication with life

- 7** (3) Or, intoxicated with life, bhikshus,
 does a bad deed with
 does a bad deed with
 does a bad deed with
an untutored worldling
 the body,
 speech,
 thought.

- 8** *Having done a bad deed with the body*,
having done a bad deed with speech,
having done a bad deed with thought,

when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell.

- 9 Intoxicated with youth,
Intoxicated with health,
Intoxicated with life,
bhikshus, a monk gives up the training and reverts to what is low.⁹⁶
bhikshus, a monk gives up the training and reverts to what is low.
bhikshus, a monk gives up the training and reverts to what is low.

The decay-disease-death verses

- 10 *Vyādhi,dhammā jarā,dhammā
atho maraṇa,dhammino,
yathā,dhammā⁹⁷ tathā,santā
jigucchanti puthujjanā.*
Subject to disease, subject to decay,
subject to death, too,
that's the way they are according to the nature of things:
worldlings feel disgust⁹⁸ (at this).
- 11 *Ahañ ce tam jiguccheyyam
evaṁ,dhammesu pāṇisu.
Na m'etam patirūpassa
mama evaṁ vihārino.*
If I were to feel disgust at this,
in beings of such a nature—
that would not be proper for me,
for I, too, dwell in the same way.
- 12 *Sōham evaṁ viharanto
ñātvā dhammarā nirūpadhim⁹⁹
ārogye yobbanasmiñ ca
jīvitasmīñ ca ye madā*
While I'm dwelling so,
having known the acquisition-free state—
whether an intoxication with health, or with youth,
or with life—
- 13 *sabbe made abhibhōsmi.¹⁰⁰
nekkhamme daṭṭhu khematarā
tassa me ahu ussāho
nibbānam abhipassato.*
all intoxications have I overcome.
Having seen security in renunciation,
there is zeal for me,
on account of directly seeing nirvana.
- 14 *Nāham bhabbo etarahi
kāmāni paṭisevitum.
anivatti bhavissāmi
brahma.cariya,parāyaṇo ti.*
Now, no more am I capable
of partaking sensual pleasures:
never will I turn back,
supported by¹⁰¹ the holy life.

— evaṁ —

250826 250909 250914 260119

⁹⁶ *Yobbanā,mada,matto vā bhikkhave bhikkhu sikkham paccakkhāya hīnāyā,vattati.* The phrase “to what is low” (*hīnāya*) refers to the lay life, alluding the lack of any spiritual pursuits.

⁹⁷ *Ke Byādhi,dhammo jarā,dhammo / atho maraṇa,dhammiko // Yathā dhammo.*

⁹⁸ Note that here “disgust” (*jigucchanti*, pl 3) is used in the worldly sense. For higher levels of meditative experience, “disgust” is also used, but it is *nibbidati*, the noun of which is *nibbidā*, in Pali. See **Nibbidā**, SD 20.1.

⁹⁹ On verses 12-13 esp this line, see SD 54.3b (2.3.2.2).

¹⁰⁰ *Ke atīto'smi*, “I have crossed over.”

¹⁰¹ *Parāyana* (neut) [from *parā* (prefix signifying mastery) + √i, “to go”; cf Vedic *parāyana*, the highest instance; also BHS *parāyana*, eg Divy 57, 327] 1. (n) final end, ie, support, rest, relief, S 1:38; A 1:155, 156 (*tāṇa lena dīpa* etc); J 5:501 = 6:375 (*dīpañ ca* ~). 2. (adj, usu as suffix ~) (2a) going through to, ending in, aiming at, given to, attached to, having one's end or goal in; also: finding one's support in (the holy life), as **brahma.cariya,parāyano** here, and at S 1:234 (also *danḍa*~, “leaning on a stick,” M 1:88; A 1:138), common in foll phrases: *amata*~ S 5:217 f; *tama*~ Pug 51; *nibbāna*~ S 4:373, 5:218; *maccu*~ S 5:217; *sambodhi*~ D 1:156, 2:155; Pug 16; cf Sn 1114 (*tap*~ = *tad*~, see Nc 411); Miln 148 (*ekanta,soka*~); DhA 1:28 (*rodana*, “constantly weeping”). (2b) destined to, having one's next birth in, eg *avīci*~ J 3:454, 4:159; *duggati*~ PvA 32; *devaloka*~ J 1:218; *brahmaloka*~ J 3:396; Miln 234; *sagga*~ J 6:329 = PvA 42 = 160; *nīla,mañca*~ Pv 2.2.5/18; *sugati*~ PvA 89. See also DP: *parāyana* & *pārāyana* (1); PED: *pārāyana*.