

“The tamed”

Source: SD 61.4 (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta¹ © Piya Tan 2024.

2.6.1 *Danta*

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

In simple terms, *danto* describes the Buddha as appearing to the world (that is, the wise) and the divine, who appreciates the good. It is here a shorthand for the visible qualities of an awakened being (*buddha*). **The (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta** (S 1.38) recounts an exemplary instance of the Buddha himself attesting to this wholesome state in the face of a challenging worldly situation caused by a physical accident (a splinter cutting into his foot), and that splinter flying off from a huge boulder pushed down from the top of Mount Vulture Peak by his ambitious and jealous cousin, Devadatta, in an attempt to kill the Buddha. The boulder was abruptly caught between two rocks, causing a splinter to fly off and hurt the Buddha.²

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

2.6.2 Usages of *danta*

2.6.2.1 *Danta*⁴ [Sanskrit *dānta*], “tamed, controlled, restrained,” is the past participle of *dammati* (to tame) or *dameti* (to be tamed) [Skt *dāmyati*]. The *taming* is both that of the body, that is, physically (such as the taming of an elephant),⁵ and more often *mentally*. It often occurs in the Vinaya and the suttas, for example:

(1) <i>daṇḍen’eke damayanti</i> <i>aṅkusehi kasāhi ca</i> <i>adaṇḍena asatthena</i> <i>nāgo danto mahesinā ti</i>	Some are tamed by the rod, by goads and by whips. With neither rod nor sword was <u>tamed</u> the naga who is the great seer. (V 2:195)
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This verse is also spoken by Aṅgulimāla on the occasion of his conversion by the Buddha and attainment of streamwinning in **the Aṅguli,māla Sutta** (M 86), except that the last line, which runs thus:

(2) <i>daṇḍen’eke damayanti</i> <i>aṅkusehi kasāhi ca</i> <i>adaṇḍena asatthena</i> <i>ahaṃ danto’mhi tadinā</i>	Some are tamed by the rod, by goads and by whips; but I was <u>tamed</u> by that one <i>d</i> with neither rod nor sword. <i>c</i> (M 86,25/2:105), 5.11 = Tha 878
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¹ The (Deities) Discourse on the Stone Splinter, S 1.38 (SD 61.4).

² SD 54.7 (2.3) n.

³ SD 15.5 (11), 15.7 (2.2) + n.

⁴ As a noun, *danta* mean “tooth,” which does not apply here. See PED: *danta* (3); DP *danta* (2).

⁵ As in the case of Nāḷāgiri, the royal elephant used by Devadatta in his attempt to kill the Buddha: SD 52.1 (9.2.1.5).

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

(3) <i>viseni,bhūto upsanta,citto</i>	Aloof from the crowd, ⁶ with peaceful mind,
<i>nāgo'va danto carati anejo</i>	he fares like a <u>tamed</u> elephant, unperturbed.
<i>bhikkhu susīlo suvimutta,citto</i>	A monk of pure virtue, well freed in mind—
<i>so ty āhutim̄ bhuñjatu agga,piṇḍam̄</i>	let him eat your offering, the foremost alms.

(S 56.3/*569ab/1:141), SD 12.4

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

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

The tamed mind is often valued and praised. In the Aṅguttara, the Buddha declares that there is nothing better than our tamed mind. “The mind, when tamed, guarded, kept safe and restrained, brings about good” (*cittam̄ bhikkhave dantam̄ guttam̄ rakkhitam̄ samvuttam̄ aṭṭhāya samvattanti*, A 1.40/1:7).

The Dhammapada explains:

(5) <i>dunnigghassa lahuno</i>	Difficult to hold down, flighty,
<i>yattha kāmanipātino</i>	alighting where it will—
<i>cittassa damatho sādhu</i>	good is the taming of the mind.
<i>cittam̄ dantam̄ sukhāvaham̄</i>	A tamed mind brings happiness. (Dh 35)

(6) <i>danto dama,yatam̄ seṭṭho</i>	Tamed , he is the best of tamers.
<i>santo sama,yatam̄ isi</i>	At peace, he is the seer amongst peace-bringers.
<i>mutto moca,yatam̄ aggo</i>	Freed, he is the foremost of liberators.
<i>tiṇṇo tāra,yatam̄ varo</i>	Crossed over, he is the best of guides across.

(A 4.23/2:24 = It 112/121-123)

This verse is found in **the Loka Sutta** (A 4.23 = It 112) on the Buddha as the supreme being in the world (*loka*) on account of his awakening. This verse is a reflective explanation of the 3rd of the Buddha’s 9 virtues, that is, *vijjā,carāṇa,sampanno*, “accomplished in wisdom and conduct.” He is not only liberated in body (this is his “last body”) and mind (no more new karma); he is also the most wholesome and liberated in terms of both what he knows and teaches (wisdom) and his actions (compassion). Moreover, as he speaks so he acts (*yathā,vādī tathā,kārī*), as he acts so he speaks (*yathā,kārī tathā,vādī*): his body and mind fully reflect his full awakening. (ItA 191 f)

2.6.2.2 Danta also occurs in compounds, such as:

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

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

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⁶ “Aloof from the crowd,” *viseni,bhūto*. See SD 12.4 (6.8).