

Sutta Nipāta

Translated by Laurence Khantipalo Mills

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The Sutta Nipāta

A poetic translation by

LAURENCE KHANTIPALO MILLS

Published by

SUTTACENTRAL

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Preface

How this translation came about

In writing this introduction, I had thought to write just a little about how the translation came to be. In doing so, I found myself telling the recent life history of Laurence Khantipalo Mills. I had not intended to do so, but the two are inextricably linked.

As a Theravāda monk, Phra Khantipalo traveled widely throughout Australia teaching and proclaiming the Dhamma in the mid-1970's and early 1980's. Many people became students and many made the trek to Wat Buddhadhamma, the monastery and lay community he established with Ayya Khemā. Those interested in these details of Laurence's life will find material online so there is no need to say more here.

In the mid-1990's, while still a monk, Phra Khantipalo's life changed profoundly as a result of meeting his Dzogchen Master Chogyal Namkhai Norbu in the USA. Practising the Dzogchen teachings became a catalyst for disrobing and becoming a non monastic practitioner for Laurence. He moved to far north Queensland, married and established the Bodhicitta Buddhist Centre.

Jump then to the summer of 2009. Laurence had been invited down to the Victorian countryside by a student but a bushfire nearby had forced an evacuation to the safety of Melbourne. He found a temporary home with a fellow Dzogchen practitioner where he resided for a short time until he left again for far north Queensland.

We were aware that Laurence had suffered a stroke in 2005 and on this trip there were clear signs that it had affected his cognition. He still spoke eloquently of the Dharma, but there were gaps in his talks, when he lost words, lost the thread, only to pick it up again. He murmured of taking robes again. The dissolution of his ten year marriage and the subsequent demise of the Bodhicitta Buddhist Centre, had led him to consider where he belonged. He became aware of his lack of practical living skills, fragility and most importantly the isolation from his wider Sangha friends in NSW and Victoria.

Even though I doubt Laurence had ever thought of Melbourne as home, he reappeared again early the next year and began the monastic journey one more time, taking robes as a novice in the Mahāyāna tradition under Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan—once a student of his, but now the abbot of Quang Minh temple. He was ordained Ven. Minh An, meaning Peace with Wisdom, and was supported with much care and respect. However by this time the effects of his stroke and an associated vascular dementia were starting to take hold. Laurence was unable to sustain his practice and unable to remain at Quang Minh.

Things immediately looked a bit grim. A few old students, including Gary and myself, had been providing some small support. None of us could envisage Laurence living happily in an aged care facility even if that was what was being recommended.

Again an old student, now also a Dzogchen practitioner, stepped forth and offered Laurence a temporary home. Those two weeks of respite in January 2011 became 20 months of care. It wasn't an easy time because Laurence could not be left for any length of time in case he should wander off. Various people materialised to fill in gaps and offer support.

When Laurence did go out, with friends, he carried in his shoulder bag a small red book. In it were his handwritten notes of a new translation of the Sutta Nipāta started many years before, but still incomplete. This was obviously precious to him because he carried it everywhere

he went. Gary remembers him saying that he felt the previous translations had failed to capture the subtlety of the Pali language. It was Laurence's aim to draw this out in a readable fashion. I didn't get as much detail, but over a cup of tea one day Laurence said that what he aimed to achieve was a poetic translation. I understood this to mean that his translation would have life and vitality. It would not be just a dry rendition of an ancient text.

Still the text was unfinished. Laurence, although he sat at his desk, could no longer organise his thoughts. Important though it clearly was to him, there was no more progress on the Sutta Nipāta. Laurence's health deteriorated and, in late 2012 he finally had to go into an aged care facility. Things languished at this point, and those around Laurence were simply concerned to establish his well being and comfort as best they could in the new setting.

Then sometime in 2013, among a collection of books and effects shipped from Queensland, Gary discovered a typewritten—but incomplete—copy of the text. Efforts to locate who may have typed the document failed. We did not have a digital copy but Gary conceived the idea of completing and publishing the Sutta Nipāta in tribute to Laurence and in appreciation of the importance the project had held for him. In order to achieve this, two things needed to occur: firstly, the text had to be transferred into a digital format so that it could be manipulated, corrected and the missing sections completed. Secondly, there needed to be a suitably qualified person who was willing to look at the text, correct inconsistencies and minor errors of the parts which were illegible and then, hopefully, to provide a translation of the missing text. Somehow this came together.

Here are the acknowledgements to those who made it happen: To Bhante Sujato, who kindly offered to read and complete the text and who has provided energy and enthusiasm in abundance. Only in looking at what he has done do I realize what a task this has been. To Gary Dellora, whose vision and dedication drove the process; to Sean Read

who painstakingly scanned and corrected the text into a format from which it could be edited; to Dammika Pereira who provided support and advice; and Michael Wells who assisted with proofing. Nothing that follows could have been achieved without their efforts and we are indebted to them for their commitment and generosity of spirit.

Just a closing word on Laurence, whose health continues its long slow decline. In the final stage of his life's journey two things have stood out. The first is that—despite occasional outbursts—he maintains a remarkable and largely unswerving good humour, seeming to find joy in the simplest of things. The second is his continued devotion to the Dharma. Even in his current state of what is now advanced dementia, the visit by a Sangha member always produces a visible and profound sense of respect and joy in him. This is always inspiring to observe.

There remain a number of dedicated people who surround Laurence. Some are staff, some are friends. All contribute to his well being. Whatever merit may accrue from this publication, we offer it to all beings, but especially to all those who have assisted in his journey over the last few years. This book could not have arisen without them.

Michael Wells and Gary Dellora
Melbourne Australia, 2015.

Foreword

In mid-2015 Michael Wells and Gary Dellora contacted Ven Brahmali and I at Bodhinyana Monastery, with the exciting news that they had discovered an unpublished and nearly complete translation of the Sutta Nipāta by Laurence Khantipalo Mills. Laurence was one of the founding teachers of Buddhism in Australia, and his contributions to the study and practice of Buddhism are incalculable. In recent years, sadly, his health has been in serious decline, and he was unable to finish the work. While I have never met Laurence, I have lived and taught for many years in the Sydney region, where his main teaching activity was also located, and am well aware of the lasting effects of his legacy.

In honour of this founding father of Australian Buddhism, I agreed to undertake this project. This also gave me the opportunity to work with one of my favourite texts, and to develop the first freely available complete translation of this important work of early Buddhism.

On this project

First, a few words on the scope of this project are in order. I was presented with a very much unfinished text, which had been lovingly transcribed by Laurence's students from photocopied sheets. This consisted of translations of about 85% of the Sutta Nipāta, together with notes of varying detail on some of the Suttas.

It seems that it was Laurence's plan to create a complete translation. The verses were not all his own, as he had included a few poems or isolated verses translated by other authors: Snp 1.2 by Ven Silācāra,¹ Verses 57 and 669–684 by E.M. Hare,² and Snp 2.4³ and Snp 3.2⁴ by Ven Ñāṇamoḷi. He also acknowledges his debt to David Maurice for his translation of Snp 1.8. In his notes Laurence gave reasons for including these, also noting that various changes had been made. Snp 3.2 is an exception to this; presumably Laurence would have acknowledged this translation in the same way had he finished his notes. It is not hard to see why he would have included it: it's a brilliant translation, and not easy to better.

Since there was already work by a number of translators, it seemed that it would be acceptable to finish the text by making my own translations. My translation style is quite different to Laurence's, but apart from using some of his renderings for technical terms, I made no attempt to imitate his style. Hopefully the effect is not too jarring; perhaps some justification could be sought in the fact that the style of the Pali verses is also quite disparate.

Here are the portions translated by myself: verses 46, 78, 232, 465, 500, Snp 3.6, much of Snp 3.7 (prose from 7th paragraph on and verses 560–575), 589–597, Snp 3.12, 865, 885–890, 894–5, 897–901, 902–916, 919–921, Snp 5.14, 1040, 1071, 1135–7, 1145–9, 1151–6.

Laurence was clearly aiming for poetic effect in the translation, and there are many unusual turns of phrase and stylistic quirks. It was not always clear which of these were deliberate choices, and which were just the ordinary roughness of an unpolished text. I've tried to retain Laurence's vivid style, only correcting in a few places where the translation was in error, unclear, or inconsistent. Significant changes

¹ This very old translation is in the Public Domain.

² These few verses are adapted as fair use of copyrighted material.

³ Used by permission of the Pali Text Society.

⁴ For permission to include this text, I gratefully acknowledge Bhikkhu Ñāṇatusita of the Buddhist Publication Society.

are indicated in the footnotes. All notes added by me are indicated as such; if there is no name, the note or comment is Laurence's.

As for Laurence's commentaries that follow many individual suttas, I made no additions. I hope the reader will appreciate the text for what it is, and not judge too harshly the many unfinished sections. I have gone through and corrected and polished where I thought it was necessary, but with the exception of correcting a few mistakes, I haven't changed the content.

I have adjusted the verse numbering and reference conventions, using the same conventions as used on SuttaCentral.⁵ This will hopefully make referencing the Pali text easier.

One detail that may be confusing. The Sutta Nipāta in this book is referenced in two ways: either by chapter and Sutta (eg. Snp 1.1), or by verse number (Snp 11). If the reference contains a period, look for the chapter and Sutta, if there is no period, look for the verse number.

Literary character of the Sutta Nipāta

Laurence's manuscript included no general introduction, so I will say a few words here. What follows is strictly a general reader's introduction to the text, and I will refrain from either interpretation or text-critical analysis.

The Sutta Nipāta is the fifth book of the Khuddaka Nikāya of the Pali canon. It is mainly verse, with a few prose sections. The text is, so far as we know, unique to the Pali tradition. There are no parallels to the book as a whole in the Tibetan or Chinese canons, nor any references to it in the northern traditions.

There are, however, many parallels to specific verses or sections of the text; among others, the Ratana Sutta, Khaggavisāṇa Sutta, and Aṭṭhakavagga have important parallels. Several of the texts, such as the Sela Sutta, are found elsewhere in the Pali canon. And, as always,

⁵ <https://suttacentral.net/abbreviations>

individual verses are widely shared across the many verse collections found in all schools of Buddhism.

The Sutta Nipāta has a unique structure, in that it is comprised (almost) entirely of *poems*, that is, coherent sets of verses. Often Buddhist verse collections consist of assemblages of individual verses loosely connected by theme (Dhammapada), or verses associated with a prose background story (Udāna, Jātaka). Perhaps the closest literary cousin of the Sutta Nipāta would be the Sagāthā Vagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, which likewise consists of various sets of verses, often in dialogue form, and with a minimal narrative background. Several of the Sutta Nipāta texts are in fact shared with the Sagāthā Vagga, such as the Kasi-Bhāradvāja Sutta (Snp 1.4).

The poems of the Sutta Nipāta are, like all early Buddhist texts, organized in *vaggas*, that is, chapters of roughly ten texts; although, unusually, all the *vaggas* of Snp consist of more than ten texts. The first three *vaggas* have only slender thematic connections.

However the final two chapters are fairly tightly knit, and evidently were self-contained collections that were added to the Sutta Nipāta. They are referred to by name in several places in the prose Suttas, and the Aṭṭhakavagga has a version in the Chinese canon. These chapters, together with certain other texts such as the Khaggavisāṇa Sutta, show certain signs of being old texts, such as archaic vocabulary and metrical forms. This has led to the often repeated claim that the Sutta Nipāta is a uniquely early text. It is not. Many of the poems in the Sutta Nipāta are not especially early, and some of them are quite late, notably the opening verses of the Nālaka Sutta (Snp 3.11).

Even in the cases of the early verses, there is no compelling reason to consider them as any earlier than the prose Suttas.⁶ And these sections are themselves comprised of elements of differing periods; the

⁶ To learn more about the literary features of the text, see Bhikkhu Ānandajoti, *Pārāyanavagga: A New Edition together with A Study of its Metre*.
<http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Textual-Studies/Parayana-Metre/index.htm>

Introduction to the Pārāyana Vagga, for example, is much later than the questions that follow it.

Themes

Since the collection is primarily organized by literary style rather than topic, it contains texts on a wide variety of themes. These themes are familiar elsewhere in Buddhist texts, and I will briefly summarize them here.

1. The virtues of renunciation and the proper life of the ascetic (eg. Snp 1.1, Snp 1.3)
2. Ethical virtues and dangers (eg. Snp 1.6, Snp 1.7)
3. Revaluation of contemporary, often Brahmanical, views (eg. Snp 1.4, Snp 2.7)
4. Conversion of native deities (eg. Snp 1.9, Snp 1.10)
5. The virtues of the Buddha and Triple Gem (eg. Snp 2.1, Snp 3.7)
6. Biography (eg. Snp 3.1, Snp 3.2, Snp 3.10, Snp 3.11, Snp 4.15)
7. Meditation and mental development (eg. Snp 1.8, Snp 1.11, Snp 2.10)
8. Philosophy, especially of causation and not-self (eg. Snp 3.12, Snp 4.11)
9. Letting go of disputatious views (eg. Snp 4.3, Snp 4.12, Snp 4.13)

Laurence has commented on many of these themes in his notes on individual Suttas, and I don't think this is the place to add more. Laurence was not afraid to criticize what he felt needed it, and to praise where it was due. In this he follows the spirit of the Buddha's teachings, to engage and inquire, not to blindly submit. He shows how someone with a lifelong devotion to the Buddha's heart teachings can illuminate the Dhamma with a critical intelligence.

I would add a word of caution against over-interpreting the text. Perhaps the most striking themes, sometimes taken as emblematic of the collection as a whole, are the first and last in the above list: the

virtues of renunciation, and the dangers of disputatious views. If one assumes that the Snp is a uniquely archaic text, it is tempting to see these positions as more authentic to the Buddha's original teachings than what is found in the bulk of the prose texts. I don't think this is the case. The virtue of renunciation and a simple wandering life is mentioned in many places in the prose Suttas, as is the danger of getting involved in disputations based on theoretical views. Perhaps they are emphasized more in the Snp, but this is hardly a sign of any substantially different doctrine. It is, in my view, a mistake to develop a theory of Early Buddhism based on a few verses.

There is no overall thematic development in the text, so the reader can start wherever they like. The only exception is the final chapter, which is one long Sutta and should be read as a whole.

The Sutta Nipāta is most usefully read as a guide and an inspiration. The texts are vivid, personal, and direct. There is little of the flowery adornment that characterized later Buddhist literature. And the verse form leaves out much of the repetition that can seem so ponderous in the prose texts. The texts are highly concentrated; a little has a lot of flavour. In my first rains retreat, I read just the Sutta Nipāta, one Sutta each day, while I memorized most of the Pali text. It was an endless source of inspiration and wisdom for me, and I hope it can be so for you as well.

Bhikkhu Sujato

Sydney, June 2015

CHAPTER 1

First Chapter

1.1 The Serpent Sutta

URAGA SUTTA

Who removes arisen anger
as herbs a serpent's venom spread;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 1

Who lust pulls up remainderless
as in water, plants and blooms of lotuses;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 2

Who craving dams remainderless
as drying of a river's fierce and rapid flow;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 3

Who destroys conceit entire
as a great flood a bridge of reeds so frail;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 4

Who in rebirths¹ no essence finds
 as a seeker of flowers on Udumbara trees;
 a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
 as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 5

Who keeps no grudges inwardly
 but this “being-not being” has gone beyond;
 a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
 as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 6

In who do thoughts no longer smoulder,
 internally curtailed, remainderless;
 a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
 as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 7

Who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
 all mind-proliferation gone beyond;
 a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
 as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 8

Who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
 who of the world has Known, “All is not thus”;
 a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
 as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 9

Who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
 who free of greed has Known, “All is not thus”;
 a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
 as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 10

Who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
 who free of lust has Known, “All is not thus”;

¹ Sujato: LKM had “being”. However the text is *bhavesu*, which is plural. This is one reason why “being”, or for that matter “becoming”, are not good choices to translate *bhava*.

a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 11

Who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
who free of hate has Known, “All is not thus”;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 12

Who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
who delusion-free has Known, “All is not thus”;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 13

In whom are no latent tendencies at all—
whose roots of evil completely are expunged;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 14

In whom is no anxiety at all
to cause return to this existence here;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 15

In whom no attachment formed at all
to cause return to all existences;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 16

Who’s left behind five hindrances,
serene then, crossed doubt, lacking inner barbs;
a bhikkhu such leaves here and there
as a serpent sloughs its worn-out skin. 17

Notes on the Serpent Sutta

A Sutta with many striking points, which perhaps determined the fact that it comes first in this collection. The half-verse refrain notes that it describes a bhikkhu with various attainments. As the great commentator Buddhaghosa explains *bhikkhu* should be taken to mean “anyone who practises mindfulness”, that is anyone who is devoted to maintaining mindfulness, the heart of Dharma, in their daily lives.

These practitioners “leave here and there”: they have left attachment to “here”—this life—as well as “there”—any future life. The Pāli uses the compound word *orapāra*, which is literally “this shore or bank and the further shore”.

- 5: The fifth verse, which compares the one who finds no essence (*sāra*), with the lack of flowers upon fig-trees—*udumbara*, which the PTS Dictionary informs us is *Ficus glomerata*—needs a little explanation. None of the 800 species of *Ficus* or fig seems to have flowers, though they all have fruits, one of which is the well-known edible fig. But how could there be fruits without flowers first? The answer to this is that the receptacle, the small green figs, contain inside themselves the flowers which are pollinated there by small wasps, the eggs of which have been laid in there. When pollination has been accomplished the unripe receptacles swell and eventually soften, releasing a generation of small wasps which carry this process on. Trying to find identifiable flowers on *udumbara* trees is a waste of time, a misleading venture as apart from the figs themselves there are no flowers. No “essential” flowers can be found.
- 6: The next verse which has the phrase: “this-being-not-being” (*itibhavābhavatam*) includes all kinds of being or existence, even non-existence. Some people may have craving for non-existence, holding nihilistic theories, rather than the more common craving for various sorts of existence which supports the many views of

eternalism. God-worshipping religions generally have eternalist views.

- 8–13: These verses repeat their opening line, “Who neither goes too far nor lags behind” meaning one who does not resort to any sort of extreme. Extremes of views, speech and actions are popular in the world, now as they were in the Buddha’s time, while the Middle Way transcending all extremes is both hard to practise, and requires effort and mindfulness. Slipping into extremes is not hard, for the latent tendencies towards them are already embedded in our confused minds, with their conception of “I am” and “I want”. “Lags behind”—or in another translation, “hangs back”—refers to attachment to being, and hence to the wrong views of eternalism. “Goes too far” or “overreaches” means the opposite: the extreme of non-being with its views on annihilation. (See the small Sutta at Itivuttaka 2.22). The second lines of these verses lists a number of areas in which it is possible to go too far or lag behind. In verse 8 this is “mind-proliferation”, *papañca*, which could not be cured by extreme means. A natural Dharmic cure of *papañca* is the Middle Way but most people, from heads of state round to nameless monks of various kinds, incline to extremes and so create for themselves and others more experience of *saṃsāra*, more suffering, more conflict. “Mind-proliferation” is not just thinking too much but the indulging in extreme “solutions” based on ego, defiled mental states and of entrenched tendencies.

Verses 9–13 have in their second lines “who of the world has known, “All is not thus”. This phrase “all is not thus” signifies that the world as it appears to most people is not as they commonly regard it. For instance, though change and impermanence are obvious in everything within the body and outside, yet generally people do not know and see this. They are blind to what they themselves are and blind to the world known through the senses.

Those who are free from greed, lust, hate, delusion—they see the world as it is, or All is thus. “All” (*sabbaṃ/sarvaṃ*), is defined by the Buddha as, eye and sights, ear and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and touches, mind and thoughts. This is the All and no other all can be found. (See SN 35.23, the All Sutta).

- 14: Speaks of latent tendencies (*anusaya*) which all unenlightened persons have. They are like Melbourne’s tram-tracks (or those of trams elsewhere). A tram must stick to its rails, it cannot turn left when the tracks go right. Its way is conditioned by the tracks and in the case of trams there is no possibility of changing that route unless the rails are re-laid. So we trundle along our tracks and never take a new way. We see and do what our latent tendencies permit us to see and do, a great limitation! But there are no limitations for those whose roots of evil (greed, hatred and delusion), “completely are expunged”.

Anxiety and fear are part of the ever-turning wheel of birth and death. Where there is the state of *saṃsāra* there is fear. It is hard for us, enmeshed with fear and anxiety, even to imagine what the state of no-fear can be like. But to experience it we have to allow ego, the I-am view, to disappear. The same may be said for “attachment” in the next verse.

- 17: In the last, the five hindrances to deep meditation and spiritual experience have gone—serenity manifests and all doubts are allayed—for one who has Seen, what doubts could there be? With no “inner barbs” there is no obstacle to the heart’s opening of loving-kindness and compassion.

For an excellent and longer commentary upon this Sutta by Ven. Ñāṇapōṇika Thera, see “The Worn-out Skin”, The Wheel publication 241–242, published by Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

1.2 With the Cattle-owner Dhaniya

DHANIYA SUTTA

- DHANIYA Cooked is the evening rice, all milked the kine,
by Mahī's banks with friends, good cheer is mine,
my house well-thatched, my fire glows bright and still,
and so, rain on O sky, if such thy will! 18
- BUDDHA Hatred and barrenness from me are gone,
by Mahī's banks I bide this night alone,
my house unroofed, my fires in ashes lie:
so, an it liketh thee, rain on O sky! 19
- DHANIYA No stinging gnats are here to tease and fret,
my cattle crop the grasses lush and wet,
and take no hurt though floods the valley fill:
and so, rain on O sky, if such thy will! 20
- BUDDHA The raft is bound and well together cast,
the Further Shore attained, the flood o'erpassed;
of well-made raft what further need have I?
so, an it liketh thee, rain on O sky! 21
- DHANIYA Attentive is my wife, no wanton she,
long have I lived with her full happily,
nor ever heard of her a breath of ill:
and so, rain on O sky, if such thy will! 22
- BUDDHA My mind attentive is, from passion freed,
long trained in wisdom's way, well-tamed indeed:
evil in me, what searcher can espy?
so, an it liketh thee, rain on O sky! 23
- DHANIYA My needs are met by my own body's hire,
my sturdy boys sit round my own house fire,

- nor do I hear of them one word of ill:
and so, rain on O sky, if such thy will! 24
- BUDDHA No hireling I; to servile bonds inclined,
I walk all worlds with what I've earned in mind,
of wage or hire no smallest need have I:
so, an it liketh thee, rain on O sky! 25
- DHANIYA Cattle have I, yea, cows in milk are mine,
and cows with calf, and tender rising kine,
and lordly bulls whose ways the herds fulfil:
and so, rain on O sky, if such thy will! 26
- BUDDHA Cattle I've none nor cows in milk are mine
nor cows with calf, nor tender rising kine,
nor lordly bulls to lead the herds have I:
so, an it liketh thee, rain on O sky! 27
- DHANIYA The stakes all deeply driven, set firm and sure,
the newly-plaited ropes of grass secure.
No frenzied beast can break by any skill:
and so, rain on O sky, if such thy will! 28
- BUDDHA Like bull, bursting the bond of plaited twine,
or elephant breaking free from stinky-vine,
ne'er again I'll enter in a womb to lie:
so, an it liketh thee, rain on O sky! 29
- NARRATOR And now the furious showers came down amain
in pouring floods that covered hill and plain,
and, listening to the beating of the rain
Dhaniya, faithful, thus found voice again. 30
- DHANIYA Surely our gain is great and to be praised,
whose eyes upon the Radiant One have gazed!

O Seeing One, we for refuge go to thee!
 O Mighty Sage do Thou our Teacher be! 31

Attentive, lo! We wait my wife and I,
 to live the goodly life, the pathway high,
 that leads beyond all birth and death to know
 and win the final end of every woe. 32

MĀRA He who has boys rejoices in his boys,
 he who has kine, of kine are all his joys.
 Man's assets surely are his chiefest treasure,
 who has not assets how shall he have pleasure? 33

BUDDHA Whoso has boys, has sorrow of his boys,
 whoso has kine, by kine come his annoys.
 Man's assets, these of all his woes are chief.
 Who has no assets, nevermore has grief. 34

(Snp 18-34)

Notes on the Dhaniya Sutta

This translation is based on the work of Ven. Silācāra, an English bhikkhu (1871-1950). His translation, slightly amended here, reads well besides being accurate. I first read it in the library of Wat Bovoranives in Bangkok among the volumes of *The Buddhist Review* published by Luzac & Co for the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland before the first World War. Ven. Silācāra, at that time the Editor, lived in Burma. I have enjoyed reading it at various times and places and would like to honour his memory by including it. To be a bhikkhu at that time was to brave the disapproval of the prevailing imperial culture. May this translation of his at least live on!

This Sutta has three characters: Dhaniya, a wealthy owner of cattle who speaks of his domestic and farming concerns; the Buddha,

whose verses contrast in the ways of Dharma; and Māra, who raises his head only to speak one verse but a very important one. Beside this there is one narrative verse to give a picture of the monsoon rains as background to the dialogue.

There are a few interesting points in these verses which call for comments. In the first verse spoken by the Buddha, his statement

“my house unroofed, my fires in ashes lie”

is striking and memorable. As these words were spoken during the monsoon when protection from the elements is most necessary, how could the Buddha say “my house unroofed”? This phrase puts one in mind of a verse found in the Vinaya (Cullavagga, IX, 1):

Rain soddens when the roof is on
 But never when it's opened upon
 Uncover then what is concealed
 Lest it be soddened by the rain.

This Vinaya quotation refers to the modern idea of a “cover-up”, that certain facts about oneself should not be known and how those who practise this kind of immorality will become sodden and hence rotten. Buddhas have removed all their concealing coverings for they have nothing left to conceal. It's fine that the roof is off! Similar teachings are contained in the Sanskrit term *āvaraṇa*, translated by Conze as “thought-coverings”, though I prefer “obscurations of mind”—the complications and weavings together of all sorts of thoughts: true and false, purified and defiled, open and concealed. These “coverings” are also related to the famous Buddhist term *papañca*, multiplicity of thoughts or conceptual proliferation. Finally in this group of related matters dealing with coverings, there is the image of the Buddha Samantabhadra, always depicted naked—nothing covered up and sky-blue in colour symbolizing space. He may or may not be accompanied by his consort,

also naked and joined in bliss, the union of wisdom and compassion with nothing to hide.

The second of the Buddha's verses contains reference to the famous raft simile which appears complete at MN 22. The raft made up of Dharma learned and practised and bound up with actions of body and speech which lead out of bondage is to be paddled across from this shore of saṃsāra to the further shore of Nirvāṇa. When that has been experienced the raft is no longer needed, it should be left on the Nirvāṇa shore or set adrift there—not carried around any longer. The Dharma liberates even from its own concepts. It liberates from all attachments, even from attachment to the Dharma. Of course this does not mean that one then neglects one's teachers, or disowns the Dharma by which one has crossed over. Others will need the raft for their own journeys, while a natural gratitude for the Dharma manifests in those who have seen it for themselves. The rendering of MN 22 in the *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* by Bhikkhus Ñāṇamoḷi and Bodhi unfortunately contains a mistranslation of the important last sentence of the simile (par. 14), which should read, "When you know the Dharma to be similar to a raft, you should abandon even the Dharma, how much more so not-dharma". The published version is based upon the Commentaries of Buddhaghosa and is not what the Pāli text says. "Of well-made raft what further need have I?"—indeed!

"Evil in me, what searcher can espy?" The Pāli plainly rendered would translate as "evil in me cannot be found". However, the translation used here reminds us of MN 47, "The Inquirer", with its question, "are there found in the Tathāgata, or not, any defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?"

"I walk all the worlds with what I've earned in mind." The venerable's translation has "I walk the world content with what I find". The Pāli text has "all worlds (*sabbaloke*)" while the verb (*carati*) has the meaning both of "travel, journey" and of "progress along a spiritual path". Buddhas are able to review or investigate all states of existence

though we usually have access only to the human and animal realms and even of these know little enough. “In mind” is not found in the Pāli though the Buddha’s “earnings” are certainly in mind, not of worldly gains.

The two lines beginning, “Like bull”, have been retranslated. The “stinky-vine” is some tough and malodorous Liana in the forest. The third line originally reads, “No more shall I put on mortality” which is not a great rendering of the Pāli, so I have replaced it with “Ne’er again I’ll enter in a womb to lie”.

Coming now to the last two verses of the Sutta, the first two lines of each of them have not been revised except to replace “hath” with “has”. The second pair of lines concern *upadhi*, a Pāli word conveying the meaning of “basis” or “support”. Pāli Commentaries have elaborated the meanings of this word and given it a far greater range. The original translator used “being” as a rendering of *upadhi*, but this is too loose. Ven. Nāṇamoli has suggested “assets” as a possible translation and this is fine so long as we remember that “assets” must include what we think we own in body, in mind as well—My body, My mind—as well as external possessions.

“Man’s assets, these of all his woes are chief,
who has no assets nevermore has grief.”

1.3 The Rhino Horn: A Teaching for the Hermit-minded

KHAGGAVISĀṆA SUTTA

Put by the rod for all that lives,
tormenting not a single one;
long not for child, how then for friend?
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 35

Attraction comes from meetings with,
and from attraction *dukkha*'s born;
see danger of attraction then,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 36

One full of ruth for friends well-loved
with mind attached,² neglects the good,
seeing this danger in association,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 37

Tangled as the crowding bamboo boughs
is fond regard for partner, child:
as the tall tops are tangle-free,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 38

The deer untethered roams the woods
going where'er it wants to graze:
seeing its liberty, wise one,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 39

'Mong friends one's asked for this or that,
when resting, standing, going on tour,
seeing the liberty few desire,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 40

² Sujato: LKM had "unchanged", but *patibhadda* means "attached", "bound".

'Mong friends there's sexy playfulness,
and love for children's very great,
while loath to part from those beloved,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 41

Resentment none to quarters four,
and well-content with this and that,
enduring dangers undismayed,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 42

Some home-forsakers ill consort,
as householders who live at home;
be unconcerned with others' kids!
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 43

Let fall the marks of householder,
as Koviḷāra's parted leaves;
a hero, having house-ties cut,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 44

For practice if one finds a friend—
prudent, well-behaved, and wise,
mindful, joyful, live as one
all troubles overcoming. 45

But if you do not find a friend—
prudent, well-behaved, and wise,
then like a king who leaves his conquered lands,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 46

Surely we praise accomplished friends—
choose friends who're equal, or the best;
not finding these, live blamelessly,
fare singly as the rhino's horn. 47

See golden bangles on an arm,
 well-burnished by the goldsmith's art,
 clash together, the two of them,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 48

When there's for me "a second one"
 with intimate talk and curses both,
 seeing this fear in future time,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 49

Sense-things so sweet, so varied,
 in diverse forms disturb the mind;
 seeing the bane of sense desires
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 50

They are a plague, a blain, distress,
 disease, a dart and danger too:
 seeing this fear in sense-desires
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 51

The heat and cold, and hunger, thirst,
 wind, sun, mosquitoes' bites and snakes';
 enduring one and all of these,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn.. 52

As elephant bull of noble mien,
 full-grown, the flock forsakes and lives
 in forests as it pleases him,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 53

"Who loves to live in company
 e'en timely freedom cannot find";
 so Kinsman of the Sun declared—
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 54

View-contortions gone beyond,
 right method won, the path attained,
 “I Know! No other is my guide!”
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 55

No greed, no guile, no thirst, no slur,
 and blown away by delusion’s fault;
 wantless in all the world’s become,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 56

Shun the evil friend who sees
 no goal, convinced in crooked ways,
 serve not at will the wanton one,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 57

Follow that friend who’s deeply-learned,
 Dharma-endowed and lucid, great,
 knows meaning leading out of doubts,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 58

In playful love and sensual joys
 find no reward—no longer long;
 embellish not but speak the truth,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 59

Partner, children, parents too,
 kin and wealth—things bought with it,
 leaving all sense-desires behind,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 60

“They are but bonds and brief their joys,
 and few their sweets and more their ills.
 Hooks in the throat!” This knowing well,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn. 61

Do snap the fetters, as a net
 by river denizen is broke.
 As fire to waste comes back no more,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 62

With downcast eyes, not loitering,
 with guarded sense, warded thoughts,
 with mind that festers not nor burns,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 63

Discard householder's finery,
 as shed their leaves the Coral Trees;
 go forth in *kāsāya* robes,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 64

Crave not for tastes but free of greed
 for alms food walk, omitting none,
 and unattached 'mong families,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 65

Abandoned mind's five hindrances,
 set aside defilements all,
 affection-blemish having cut,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 66

Let go of pain and happiness,
 with previous joys and sorrows too,
 gained poise and calm and purity,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 67

Resolved to win the Ultimate,
 not slack in mind, nor slothful ways,
 but steady, strong in body and mind,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 68

Seclusion, *jhāna*—do not cease
 but what's in line with Dharma do,
 with mastered existential fears,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 69

Alert, aspiring craving's end,
 clear-voiced and learned, mindful too,
 striven, true Dharma having known,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 70

As lion is unafraid of sounds,
 like wind not caught within a net,
 as lotus not by water soiled,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 71

As lion strong-toothed, the king of beasts,
 subdues them all, so overcome
 by use of practice-place remote,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 72

Frequent the *mettā*-mind, and ruth
 at times, poised mind and joyful too—
 unhindered mind by all the world.
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 73

Lust, hatred and delusion gone,
 all the fetters having snapped,
 then at life's end, one trembles not,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 74

They serve and following having aims—
 folk cunning, selfish-aimed and foul,
 friends seeking nought are scarce today,
 fare singly as the rhino's horn. 75

(Snp 35-75)

Notes for the Rhino Horn Sutta

This excellent Sutta is famous throughout Buddhist traditions in various forms and deserves a good metric translation. In general few notes are needed as its meaning is clear, direct and straight to the point. This point is repeated in the fourth line of most verses, but will not appeal to those who do not esteem, even for part of their lives, its eremitic message. Though there are still monks who prefer the solitary life they are few compared to those who live in monastic settlements. And some lay scholars too may find shelter from the world's assaults for their study and practice and become "single-horned rhinos". The rhinoceros is remarkable in India for its single horn as opposed to the twin horns of cattle, deer and so on. It is not that one should be "single as the rhinoceros" as some translators have it. In fact the animals are usually found in groups, but their horns are only one.

I am very much in debt to E.M. Hare's translation of the Sutta Nipāta in *Woven Cadences* and have borrowed many of his good ideas, though modifying them, and in his honour one whole verse, Snp 57.

This Sutta does not identify the teacher who composed and recited it. Presumably these were the Buddha's words! The first Sutta in the book also records no speaker.

The few notes below are preceded by their Snp verse number.

- 44: Koviḷāra trees are these days called Bauhinia species. Their leaves are remarkable for their two leaflets joined at a single point. Many species open and close these two as the sun rises and sets. So their "parting" is demonstrated every day.
- 49: "A second one", literally "with a second" is a Pali idiom for a wife, the use of which here reminds me of "me old trouble (and strife)"!
- 50: Both "sense-objects" and "sense-desires" are translations of the Pāli word *kāma*. This word is explained in the commentary of the *Kāma Sutta*, Snp 4.1 or verses 773-778.

- 54: “E’en timely freedom cannot find” refers to *kāla-vimutti*, a freedom found temporarily and usually explained as the experience of *jhāna*. This contrasts with a *vimutti* or freedom beyond time, a liberation from all bondage. The “Kinsman of the Sun”, *Ādicca-bandhu*, is an epithet of the Buddha.
- 58: There seems to be, in this verse, a conflict between having a friend who is deeply learned and practised—a teacher in fact, and the refrain on faring singly. However, if one has the good fortune to meet and perhaps stay with such a teacher then when it is time to practise alone, one’s retreat will be much more fruitful. With or without a teacher in our minds, we still have to “fare singly as the rhino’s horn”.
- 64: Another tree, the Parichatta, is today known as the *Erythrina indica*, the species in general called Coral Trees. Most have spectacular red flowers borne on deciduous branches. They shed leaves before flowers appear. The leaves are here compared to the possessions of ordinary people (who are usually attached to them!), while the magnificent flowers which follow are hinted at by the words of the third line. *Kāsāya* robes refers to various vegetable dyes which will give robes of a yellow (many monks in Sri Lanka), reddish-brown (as in Burma) or yellowish-brown colour as used by the forest meditation monks of Thailand. These earthy colours remind practitioners of their connection with the earth-element.
- 69: “What’s in line with Dharma do” tries to translate the frequently occurring *dhammānudhammapatipatti*, literally, “practising the Dharma according to the Dharma” and is opposed to the commonly held path of “practising the Dharma according to oneself”, a very different kettle of fish. The Dharma which should be accorded with is the Dharma of what is true without any belief being necessary.

Examples:

“All conditioned things are impermanent,
 All conditioned things are *dukkha*,
 All dharmas are not-self (and empty).”

These self-evident truths may have to be pointed out first but after deep insight (*vipassanā*) practice will be known from a practitioner’s meditative experience. “Practising Dharma” is the best practice of generosity, moral conduct, loving kindness and compassion with all beings near and far, human and non-human. That becomes “according to the Dharma” with awakening or breakthrough experiences. No views of any kind are held, grouped, or believed by those who have seen things as they really are, not even “Buddhist” views.

...“and mastered existential fears” translates also as the fears of being or becoming. These are experienced indirectly through reports in newspapers and other media of murder, wars, plagues, starvation, and all manner of inhumane conduct; or they may sometimes touch more closely on one’s life. Many fears indeed! Being or becoming are also illustrated by the famous Indian painting (now Tibetan) of the Wheel of birth and death, showing the various realms of being and what one may, by making appropriate karma, experience there.

73: To pack the four Divine Abidings (*Brahma-vihāra*) into two short lines is not easy! *Mettā*, or loving-kindness as it is usually translated, has been left in the Pāli for obvious reasons. Next, *karuṇā* or compassion has had to be expressed by the little-used “ruth”. (Maybe it is a comment on this world that we still employ “ruthless” but have forsaken “ruth”?) The third of these meditative abidings is joy but particularly the joy with others’ happiness, a reflection for which we have no English word. (Does this mean we are singularly envious people?) The Pāli word is *muditā*. Last, *upekkhā* or equanimity is squashed into the second line as “those poised”. Still, being equanimous, it will not mind being so treated.

1.4 The Farmer Bhāradvāja

KASĪ -BHĀRADVĀJA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling among the Magadhans at South Mountain near the brahmin village of Ekanāḷā. Now at that time the brahmin Kasī-Bhāradvāja had five hundred ploughs fastened to their yokes at the time of “planting”. Then in the morning the Radiant One dressed and, taking bowl and robe, went to the place where the brahmin Kasī-Bhāradvāja was working.

As that time the brahmin Kasī-Bhāradvāja’s food distribution was happening. Then the Radiant One approached the place for the distribution of food and stood to one side. The brahmin Kasī-Bhāradvāja saw the Radiant One standing for alms and said to him:

“Samaṇa, I plough and plant, and when I have ploughed and planted, I eat. You too, samaṇa, ought to plough and plant; then when you have ploughed and planted, you will eat.”

“But I too, brahmin, plough and plant, and when I have ploughed and planted, I eat.”

“But we do not see Master Gotama’s yoke or plough or ploughshare or goad or oxen; yet Master Gotama says, “I too brahmin, plough and plant, and when I have ploughed and planted, I eat.”

Then the brahmin Kasī-Bhāradvāja addressed the Radiant One in verse:

KASĪBH. A ploughman, so you claim to be
 but we see not your ploughmanship.
 If you’re a ploughman, answer me,
 make clear your ploughmanship!

BUDDHA “With faith as seed and practice,
 rain and learning as my yoke and plough;

my plough-pole, conscientiousness,
memory, goad and ploughshare both. 77

My body's guarded, so is my speech,
Restrained is my belly's food,
The act of Truth is my cutting-off,
Gentleness is my release. 78

My harnessed ox is energy—
draws safe for yoking's end,
goes to where no sorrow is
and turns not back again. 79

In this way is my ploughing ploughed
towards the crop of Deathlessness—
who finishes this ploughing's work
from all *dukkha* will be free. 80

Then Kasī-Bhāradvāja had a large bronze bowl filled with milk-rice and brought to the Radiant One. “May it please Master Gotama to eat the milk-rice, Master Gotama is a ploughman, since he does the ploughing that has the Deathless as its crop.”

BUDDHA Chanting sacred verses for comestibles³
is not done by me;
for those who rightly See, Brahmin,
it accords not with Dharma.
Chanting sacred verses thus
is rejected by the Buddhas,
such is the Dharma, Brahmin,
such is their practice. 81

³ Sujato: Food items.

A great seer with Final Knowledge, conflicts stilled.
 one who has exhausted taints, is wholly free—
 make offerings of food and drink to such a one:
 the certain field for one who merit seeks.

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When this was said the brahmin Kasī-Bhāradvāja exclaimed to the Radiant One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dharma has been clarified by Master Gotama in many ways, as though he was righting what had been overturned, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms. I go for refuge to Master Gotama, to the Dharma and to the Saṅgha of bhikkhus. May Master Gotama remember me as an *upāsaka* who from today has gone for Refuge for life.”

(Snp 76–82)

Notes on the Farmer Bhāradvāja Sutta

This famous small Sutta appears twice in the Pāli canon, once here and again in the Saṃyutta-nikāya, where it has been translated in the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, SN 7.11). This present translation varies from that one, necessitating some notes.

First of these concerns the cultivation of rice. Most of my readers will be aware that unlike other grain crops—wheat, oats, barley, maize, etc.—which are planted with dry seed straight into the prepared field, rice requires first to be planted into a flooded nursery bed and then when the seedlings are ready, re-planted in small clumps in a flooded field. Water must be maintained at the proper level throughout its growth, only beginning to dry out with the ripening of the grain.

The prose introduction of this Sutta informs us that the farmer-brahmin, a wealthy landowner able to muster “five hundred” plough-

men and oxen,⁴ was that time celebrating *vappakāla*, the time (*kāla*) of *vappa*. But what is meant by *vappa*? The PTS Dictionary, followed by all translators gives “sowing”, but as we have seen above, rice is not sown in the way of other grains. If a religious celebration involving many men and oxen with chanting by Brahmins and the offering of cooked milk-rice is called for, this seems to be the planting of the seedlings rather than the ploughing of the land. The verb for “ploughing” is *kasati*, though in the case of rice this is more than the initial breaking of the soil with ploughs. The mud of the field must be smooth and without lumps, so it is harrowed. This is all *kasati*—to prepare the soil. It is followed by *vapati*, planting or sowing, though the former is not mentioned in PTS Dictionary. In this translation “sowing” is not mentioned, its place being taken by “planting”.

So at this *vappakāla* what is going on? Fields had already been flooded, ploughed, with perhaps harrowing in progress. The back-breaking work of planting—traditionally women’s work, though this is not mentioned here—would be in progress. The wealthy farmer dressed in his best and newest white cloth would be issuing orders and coordinating the whole operation, while also superintending the rituals ensuring that there would be a good crop. A large amount of milk-rice had been prepared for the various religious “wanderers” and also for Brahmins. Part of this would also be set aside for the labourers.

The Buddha’s first verse of explanation begins “With faith as seed ...” The Pāli word which translates as “faith” is *saddhā* (Skt. *śraddhā*). To most people faith means “belief”, but this is not the Buddhist sense. Belief involves accepting certain formulations of words as representing the truth. And in this world there are many such “truths” (see Snp 893–895) underlain by belief, none of them verifiable, many of them at odds with others and hence the basis for many conflicts between believers, political or religious, even for persecution, torture and wars. Throughout the Suttas the Buddha emphasised that attach-

⁴ “500” in Pāli means “a lot, many”.

ment to views (even Buddhist ones), departs from the path of Dharma. One must know through personal experience involving wisdom, not merely believe. *Saddhā*, therefore, is a tricky word to translate and sometimes “faith” must be used. Other possibilities are “confidence” and “assurance” but neither has quite the range of meaning of *saddhā*.

Tapo, translated “practice”, means to a brahmin “severe austerities”, or at least a very austere mode of life. Buddhists have softened the word to mean steady Dharma practice. As the Buddha is teaching a brahmin who would not understand the higher meanings of *pañña/prajña* I have not translated it as “wisdom”. But *suta-mayā-paññā*—the wisdom acquired by listening or learning—one of the three steps of *paññā*, is a feature of all Indian religions and well-known to the brahmin. In the last line of this verse “memory” is a possible translation of *sati/smṛti*, another word well-known to brahmins. Also *smṛti*, “that which is remembered” is used in Hindu tradition as a name for the commentarial corpus, as opposed to the holier god-given corpus of Vedas and Upanishads known as *śruti*, “that which has been heard”.

My knowledge of horticulture or perhaps agriculture has aided the translation of the second verse. I have paid little attention to the Pāli Commentary’s suggestions as these do not make much sense.

The third verse is beautiful and its profound, but straightforward in meaning and very moving. “Yoking’s End” is liberation.

It is not surprising that the brahmin is greatly impressed by these four spontaneous verses. He has been convinced that the Buddha is also a cultivator who ploughs and plants, but that his crop (literally “fruit”) is the Deathless (*amata/amṛta*). He wishes then to offer some special milk-rice to the Buddha in a large copper bowl as a mark of his respect. But to this invitation the Buddha replies in an unexpected way, saying that he does not chant sacred verses to gain food—presumably a thing done by many brahmins. Actually, this would be inconvenient to present-day monks who, if they kept to the Buddha’s practice, would

lose many a good morning meal.⁵ The meaning of this verse is very straightforward. This cannot be said of the second verse, which appears to mean that Awakened persons are fit recipients of food and will be a “certain field for one who merit seeks” — in other words, donors will make good karma by offerings given to such people. Perhaps this verse was added later by monks to mitigate the impact of the previous verse. In any case there is conflict between these two verses.

I have chosen the shorter version of this Sutta from the Saṃyutta-nikāya. The Snp version adds an incident in which the good brahmin asks to whom he could offer the rice. The Buddha replies that he knows not a single person who could receive it and advises the brahmin to put it in water or in the bush where it can harm no living thing. The brahmin finds that as it is poured into water it boils, sizzling and hissing with much steam, so he trembles and his hair stands on end. Finally the brahmin does not ask for the Refuge and become an *upāsaka*, but requests the leaving home with ordination as a bhikkhu. It seems likely that the Snp version is an expansion of a more ancient and simpler original now found in the Saṃyutta-nikāya. The magical addition of boiling milk-rice tipped into a stream seems a glorification of the Buddha done by later hands. This decided me not to translate the Snp version.

Portions of the Commentary’s explanations are translated into English in the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, see note 446 following on p. 446. There are rather astonishing remarks in these “explanations”, for the Pāli commentator has apparently had access to the Buddha’s thoughts (!) no doubt a very useful trick for ascertaining the truth of any problematic statement in the Suttas. To preface any “explanation” with the words “This was his (the Buddha’s) thought” is a claim to know precisely what an Awakened One was thinking. How could the truth be found in this way?

⁵ Sujato: It is a common custom in Buddhism for lay devotees to invite monks and/or nuns for a meal in the morning, at which time they are expected to chant the traditional verses of *paritta*.

1.5 To the Smith Cunda

CUNDA SUTTA

CUNDA I ask of the Sage abundantly wise,
Buddha, Lord of Dharma, one who's craving-free,
Best among men, charioteer beyond compare,
Please do tell me what sorts of samaṇas there are. 83

BUDDHA Asked by you personally I shall explain:
Four are the samaṇas, not a fifth is found—
Won to the Path, of the Path the Indicator,
Who lives upon the Path, as well the Path-polluter. 84

CUNDA Who do the Buddhas say is winner of the Path?
How will the Path-teacher be incomparable?
Tell about that one who lives upon the Path,
Also the one who is the Path-polluter? 85

BUDDHA Whoso has passed beyond the dart of doubts,
Nirvāṇa-delighted, no greediness at all,
Leader of the world together with the gods,
is Such, the Path-winner, so the Buddhas say. 86

Who knows the Best as what is best indeed,
then teaches Dharma and analyses it,
a sage all doubt severed, one undisturbed,
they call bhikkhu number two, indicator of the Path. 87

Who lives on the Way, the well-taught Dharma Path,
one well-trained and mindful as well,
whatever's unobstructing, a practitioner of that
they call bhikkhu number three, one who lives the Path. 88

Making a semblance of those with good vows,
deceitful one, worthless and quite unrestrained,

Insolent, braggart and family-defiler,
 who goes in disguise is polluter of the Path. 89

A noble disciple who's recognised each and every one,
 and knowing that among them, all are not alike,
 this having seen, that person's faith does not decrease.
 For how with the corrupt
 can the uncorrupted be compared?
 Or those purified with those who are impure? 90

(Snp 83-90)

A Few Words

A rather strange little Sutta in which the Buddha answers the questions of the smith Cunda. He wishes to be clear about what sorts of monks there are. In the Buddha's days there were a great variety of monks, some of who wandered in groups, others who were solitary, some who had monasteries, others who dwelt in caves or hollow trees. Their doctrines varied even more and in the Discourses of the Buddha these are examined as *diṭṭhi* or views and sometimes revealed as “wrong views”.

The Buddha on this occasion limits the sorts of monks to his own *samaṇas*, further limiting them to four and rather oddly adding “not a fifth is found”. This of course acknowledges the four sorts of monk, which the Buddha knows exist among his own Saṅgha. One may assume that what is true of the first three kinds of monks—*bhikkhus*, plus the fourth who is really not a *bhikkhu*, may also be found among the *bhikkhunīs*. Stories of recalcitrant monks and nuns may be found in plenty in the Vinaya for both *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. The four sorts of monks are briefly described below.

1. **Won to the Path.** This appears to be a practitioner who has for the first time experienced what is truly the Noble Path (*ariyamagga*). They are beyond doubt and have lost all greed. Also, lost

is ownership for though these monks who have won to the Path they do not own it. In fact, having experienced suchness, the way all things really are, they can let go of everything.

2. **Indicator of the Path** is the best of teachers of Dharma—they teach Dharma out of their deep experience of it. Who knows the best is truly awakened. He teaches with clarity, as those of his students know well and is a man who analyses accurately so that no misunderstanding can occur. They no longer have doubts about things that to ordinary persons seem either worth no understanding or are taken for granted. They point to matters most obvious, like impermanence, which in general are not noticed.
3. **Who lives on the Way, the well-taught Dharma Path.** This kind of monk is learned and his actions agree with the teachings in the Suttas as well as those of those famous living Teachers. So whether from their Teachers or from Suttas the Dharma is “well taught”. This expression means that at first it is derived from the Buddha and his disciples: all of their uttered words are derived from the Enlightenment—Bodhi. They had woken up and spoke the non-basis of Awakening. Their truth is not that of speculations and “views”.
4. **Those who pretend to be bhikkhus but are corrupted.** That this type of monk is included with the other three shows the honesty of the Buddha. If he had referred to monk number four as only to be found among the ascetics of other teachers that would have been a sort of dishonesty, but the Buddha knew quite well that he had corrupt monks in his Saṅgha. Though it is hard to believe that corrupt monks could live near to the Buddha’s presence, because of course he had the power of reading the minds of others, still some monks were (and are) shameless and thoroughly corrupt in their dealings. It is not so surprising that such monks can be found in our days. The Buddha points them out with these characteristics—

- a) They “pretend” by copying the ways of those who keep their precepts,
- b) They are “deceitful”, and trying to corrupt others,
- c) “Worthless” of receiving the gifts of honest practitioners,
- d) “Quite unrestrained” means that they indulge even in the pleasures usually sanctioned by society,
- e) “Insolent and braggarts”, hardly needs any comments,
- f) “Family-defilers”, leaves one’s mind to many possibilities.

1.6 Disaster

PARĀBHAVA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant one was dwelling at Jeta's Grove in the park of Anāthapiṇḍika near Sāvattthī. Then as the night was ending a deva of surpassing radiance, illuminating the whole of Jeta's Grove, went up to the Radiant One and stood to one side after saluting him. Standing there that deva addressed the Radiant One with a verse:

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| DEVA | To ask the lord we come here, from Gotama we wish to know; That one who goes disaster way— what's the way to disaster's woes? | 91 |
| BUDDHA | The wise one does develop well, the unwise to disaster bound; the lover of Dharma develops well, Dharma-hater to disaster's round. | 92 |
| DEVA | We clearly understand this much, that way's first to disaster's woe; second, may the Lord advise— what's the way to disaster's woe? | 93 |
| BUDDHA | The untrue, they are dear to me, true persons, they're not dear, so the untrue teaching one prefers— that's the way to disaster's woe. | 94 |
| DEVA | We clearly understand this much, second that way's to disaster's woe; thirdly, may the Lord advise— what's the way to disaster's woe? | 95 |

- BUDDHA Lethargic and gregarious—
 whoever is of effort low,
 lazy and anger marked—
 that's the way to disaster's woe. 96
- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
 third that way's to disaster's woe;
 fourthly, may the Lord advise—
 what's the way to disaster's woe? 97
- BUDDHA Though wealth's enough one does not help,
 mother and father who aged grow,
 though long their youth is left behind—
 that's the way to disaster's woe. 98
- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
 that way's fourth to disaster's woe;
 fifthly, may the Lord advise—
 what's the way to disaster's woe? 99
- BUDDHA Whether with priest or monk as well,
 one likes to lie and cheat, also
 deceiving other wanderers—
 that's the way to disaster's woe. 100
- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
 that way's fifth to disaster's woe;
 sixthly, may the Lord advise—
 what's the way to disaster's woe? 101
- BUDDHA A person of great property,
 with wealth and food they overflow,
 and yet enjoy its sweets alone—
 that's the way to disaster's woe. 102

- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
that way's sixth to disaster's woe;
seventh, may the Lord advise—
what's the way to disaster's woe? 103
- BUDDHA Proud of birth and proud of wealth,
so of their families they crow,
but meeting, slight their relatives—
that's the way to disaster's woe. 104
- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
seventh that way's to disaster's woe;
eighthly, may the Lord advise—
what's the way to disaster's woe? 105
- BUDDHA Debauched in drink, with women too,
by dice debauched; such a fellow,
little by little his assets waste—
that's the way to disaster's woe. 106
- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
that way's eighth to disaster's woe;
ninthly, may the Lord advise—
what's the way to disaster's woe? 107
- BUDDHA Unsatisfied with his own wife,
with others' wives he's seen in tow,
corrupted too with prostitutes—
that's the way to disaster's woe. 108
- DEVA We clearly understand this much,
that way's ninth to disaster's woe;
tenthly, may the Lord advise—
what's the way to disaster's woe? 109

because of its rhyme—the Pāli original has no rhyme—and partly the contents, the truths of which are not confined to the Buddha’s days! The setting of this Sutta reminds me of the Sagātha-vagga, the Book with Verses, which is the first part of the Saṃyutta-nikāya, the *Connected Discourses*. There, as in the present discourses, a deva asks questions of the Buddha. In this case it is within a stylised framework of the deva’s acknowledging the Buddha’s replies and asking further advice on, “what’s the way to disaster’s woe?” This particular repeated line in Pāli (*kim parābhavato mukhaṃ*) has a nice swing to it which I sought to repeat. However, *parābhavato mukhaṃ* is not easily translated. *Mukha* means entrance, mouth, face, while *parābhava* has the sense of decline or disaster, so the entrance or way to disaster. The whole Sutta, though it contains very straightforward advice, is like a game between the playful deva and the Buddha, who frames his replies in verses which end “that’s the way to disaster’s woe”. This fits with what we know of devas, who traditionally are taught the Dharma by singing and acting it. The “lower” devas of the Sense-realm at any rate, were used to pleasures and could only respond to Dharma teaching through singing it playfully as in this Sutta. Presumably, since conditions in this world are infinitely variable, the Buddha could have gone on all day with this numerical game, but perhaps he thought that the deva had enough material on the causes of *dukkha* (not many devas, or even human beings for that matter, are much interested in this), to be getting along with. The Sutta closes with the twelfth way to disaster’s woe.

The content of the Sutta—from Dharma and its teachers, through family and social considerations, to the corruption of politicians—is wide-ranging, and it would be possible to write a long commentary with stories from the Suttas, Dhammapada Commentary, and the Jātakas as well as from our own times on these ways to disaster.

The rhyme, which I think adds to its colour and swing, and helps learning by heart, was possible given the pattern of the Sutta’s verses. I have not attempted rhyme elsewhere in this translation.

1.7 Who is the Outcaste?

VASALA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling at Sāvattthī in the Jeta Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. Then in the morning the Radiant One dressed and, taking bowl and robes, entered Sāvattthī for almsfood. At that time the sacrificial fire was burning in the house of the brahmin Aggika-Bhāradvāja and the offering was held aloft. Then the Radiant One walking in almsround, house by house within Sāvattthī, came to the house of brahmin Aggika-Bhāradvāja. The brahmin saw the Radiant One coming from a distance and called out this to him: “Stop there, mere shaveling, stop there, vile ascetic, stop there, foul outcaste!” When this was said, the Radiant One said to the brahmin: “Do you know, brahmin, what an outcaste is or what things make a person ‘outcaste’?”

“I do not know good Gotama what an outcaste is or what things make one an outcaste. It would be good for me if the venerable Gotama were to teach me Dharma, so that I might know an outcaste and what things make an outcaste.”

“Then listen, brahmin, pay attention and I shall tell you.”

“Yes, venerable sir”, replied the brahmin.

BUDDHA An angry person, rancorous,
 with evils of hypocrisy,
 deceitful and of fallen views,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known.

116

Whether once or twice-born then
if one should living beings harm,
compassion for them—none at all,
as “outcaste” such a one is known.

117

Who kills in towns and villages,
destruction brings, and then behaves
oppressively—well-known for that,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 118

Whoso in forest or in town
steals whatever is not given,
from others to whom it’s valuable,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 119

Whoever does a debt contract
but urged to repay, then retorts,
“No debt have I to you indeed”,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 120

Who, for a trifle that’s desired
from traveller along the road,
kills, that trifle to possess,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 121

Whoso for self or others’ wealth,
or else for benefit of wealth
when questioned on this, falsehood speaks,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 122

Whoso is “seen” with others’ wives,
of relatives and friends, those
consenting mutually or forced,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 123

Whoso towards their mum or dad
whose youth is gone and age attained,
though prosperous, supports them not,
as “outcaste” such a one is known. 124

Whoever strikes, or utters hate
 against mother, father, brother too,
 sister or a mother-in law,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 125

Who, asked for good advice responds
 by giving bad advice, and then
 giving advice with a hidden agenda,⁶
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 126

Whoever evil karma makes
 wishing others may not know,
 and then conceals these actions bad,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 127

Who, gone to another’s house,
 enjoys fine hospitality,
 then honours not the other back,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 128

Whoever, brahmin, samaṇa,
 or even indigents who beg,
 deceives with false and lying speech,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 129

Whoso when mealtime has arrived
 abuses brahmins, samaṇas
 and then gives not a thing to them,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 130

As blanketed, delusion-wrapped,
 who predicts untruthful things
 desiring even trifling gain,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 131

⁶ Sujato: LKM had “teaching in obscurities”, which doesn’t quite hit the mark.

Whoever does exalt themselves
 while looking down on others, though
 inferior, caused by self-conceit,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 132

Provocative and selfish too,
 of evil wishes, miserly,
 cunning, shameless, no remorse,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 133

Whoso the Buddha does revile,
 insulting his disciples too
 whether left home or laity,
 as “outcaste” such a one is known. 134

Who, though not an Arahant,
 yet pretends to be—is Thief—
 in this world with Brahmin gods,
 the lowest outcaste of them all,
 These indeed are “outcaste” called
 as I’ve declared to you. 135

One’s not an outcaste caused by “birth”,
 not by “birth” a brahmin is;
 caused by karma one’s outcaste,
 a brahmin is by karma caused. 136

Know this is true according to
 the example following here:
 An outcaste boy well-known to you
 as Mātaṅga of the Sopakas. 137

Mātaṅga gained the highest fame,
 so hard a thing for him to gain;

then warriors, brahmins, others too,
many came to serve him. 138

Upon the way to deva-worlds,
set forth along the spotless path
and cleansed of sense-desired,
attained to Brahma's world, they say;
unhindered he by "birth" at all
he won to Brahma-worlds. 139

Though born in Veda-chanting clan,
brahmins with mantras as their kin,
frequently indeed they're seen
while making evil karmas, 140

Even in this world they're blamed,
the next for them's a painful bourn;
birth hinders not a painful bourn,
nor from being blamed. 141

One's not an outcaste caused by "birth",
not by "birth" a brahmin is;
caused by karma one's outcaste,
a brahmin is by karma caused. 142

When this was said, the brahmin Aggika-bhāradvāja exclaimed to the Radiant One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dharma has been clarified by the Master Gotama in many ways, as though he was righting what was overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes can see forms. I go for refuge to Master Gotama, to the Dharma and to the Saṅgha. May Master Gotama remember me as an *upāsaka* who from today has Gone for Refuge for life."

(Snp 116-142)

Commentary

“Vasala”, the name of this Sutta, is one of the many words in Pāli and Sanskrit for “outcastes”, those people which tradition, and in the past, high-caste laws, declared to be beneath the four basic castes or *vaṅṅa/varna*. These four, *brāhmaṇa* (priests with cattle), *khattiya/kṣatriya* (warrior nobility, kings), *vessa/ vaiṣya* (merchants, traders) and *sudda/ śūdra* (workers) are proclaimed by Hindu Law books to be a God-given ordering of society. Outcastes of various sorts were considered below even the *śūdras*.

As to the state of these outcastes, a passage from my earlier book “Noble Friendship” (p. 39), outlines some of the terrible disabilities:

Many barbarous rules made by the higher castes featured in a Dalit’s (outcaste’s) life. They could not even pass in front of Hindu temples, much less enter them; they had to wear cast-off rags, never good clothes; they had the duty of clearing away dead animals as well as removing human excrement; in some places they were forced to wear clay pots round their necks so that their spittle would not reach the ground, while their footsteps were obliterated by a broom tied to their waists; their women folk were compelled to wear non-precious jewellery of iron or pottery; their children had to be given “ugly” names, and finally they could not venture outdoors when the shadows were long lest their shadow fall on a high-caste person and pollute him. This fear of ritual pollution, very characteristic of Caste Hindus, underlies all these suppressive rules. It is easy to understand that people who have been so treated for hundreds of years, with no chance for education or self-improvement, would feel that their lives were a hopeless round of degradation. Brahmins emphasized that they had been born into such “low” births because of their sins—in

other words, they were to be humble menials, do the dirty work, and say nothing. Some groups of outcastes were so polluting to the eyes of Hindus that they were not only untouchable but “unseeable” as well. There was bitter saying among the outcaste groups deriding caste hypocrisy that goes as follows: male Untouchables are always untouchables but female Untouchables, untouchable by day, became touchable by night. Perhaps the most suppressive rule of them all forbade low-caste people and Untouchables to have any religious education or practice. Religion, largely controlled by the Brahmins, involved the learning of Sanskrit, and as this reckoned to be the “root-language” spoken by the Hindu gods, it was utterly forbidden for outcastes to even to hear it, let alone learn it.

Even worse was the penalty prescribed for outcastes who heard brahmins chanting in Sanskrit: molten lead was to be poured into their ears. Whatever religion outcastes had was their own mixture of ritual, their own mantras (presumably not in Sanskrit) administered by their own priests who will rarely have been literate: a sort of low-grade Hinduism.

Whereas in Hinduism there is a widespread dread of ritual pollution caused by exterior factors such as low-caste persons as mentioned above, also by restrictive brahminical injunctions, such as the rule that those of high caste will lose their “purity” by crossing the ocean, the Buddha’s teaching on purity emphasize that this depends on the karmas made by body, speech and mind, and ultimately by mind. So in this Sutta we see the Buddha listing all the actions which make one an “outcaste”, all them amoral, harmful to others and generally censured by the world. Thus, one may have high-caste brahmins who by the Buddha’s standards are “outcaste”, as well as those born as “outcastes” who in fact are people of great nobility of character, such as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The Buddha did occasionally say that such people were

brāhmaṇa or “Brahmins”, meaning Awake or Enlightened. (See the verses in the Vāseṭṭha Sutta, Snp 3.9, verses 600–662). Mere words of praise and blame have no ultimate truth. Words must be accompanied by compassionate actions.

The introductory prose section shows the Buddha going on alms-round with his bowl “house by house”, that is, he stopped briefly before each door to see if anyone wished to give alms of cooked food. This practice shows clearly that he had none of the Hindu prejudice that cooked by low-caste persons would be “polluted” and its consumption the cause of high-caste, such as brahmins, losing their status. The well-known brahmin Aggikā-bhāradvāja, as he later addressed the Buddha as Gotama, knew who he was and that he came from a high-caste warrior-noble family. At that time this brahmin was engaged in a fire-sacrifice ritual (notice the *aggika*, “of fire”, in his name) and had lifted the portion to be placed in the sacred fire when he saw the Buddha approaching. The latter was abused by the brahmin who feared that the benefits of the sacrifice would be lost due to the presence of a man who accepted food from low-caste and outcaste people. “Mere shaveling” (*muṇḍaka*) was abusive as brahmins kept some or all of their hair and looked down upon those, like Buddhist monks and nuns, who shaved it off. (Whether the Buddha shaved his head is rather a disputed matter as attested by all the images of the Buddha showing him with hair). “Vile ascetic” (*samaṇaka*) showed brahmin disapproval of those who left home and had a wandering religious life. Some of these will have been low-caste people as there were in the Buddha’s Saṅgha. Lastly, *vasalaka* as a word of abuse emphasizing low-casteness, means literally “little man”, hence an insignificant person. When the Buddha in reply asks him whether he knows who is an outcaste or what are the qualities which make a person so, the brahmin, rather surprisingly, says that he does not. Moreover, he addresses the Buddha quite politely as “venerable Gotama” though this is a familiar speech as to an equal. What could have brought about this sudden change in

attitude?

We should leave aside the possibility that the Buddha used one of his powers or abilities to influence the brahmin. He preferred not to employ these unless there was a situation in which ordinary means would not serve. See for instance his remarks in *Dīgha-nikāya* 11, *Ke-vaddha Sutta*. As it seems unlikely that this brahmin's attitude was changed by super-natural means we have to fall back upon what could be generally described as "the Buddha's presence". This is well illustrated by what happened as the Buddha approached the five monks who were to be his first disciples soon after his Awakening. Though they had made a pact with each other that they would no longer treat him as a Teacher (because he had given up starvation and was again eating), as he approached, they all rose and performed the duties of pupils towards teachers. We may assume that the Buddha's presence, regardless of the brahmin's prejudices about food, turned his mind to civility. The Buddha was praised for his handsome features, radiant complexion and height (see verses 554–559 in *Sela Sutta*, *Sn* 3.7).

Towards the end of this *Sutta* occurs the famous verse, twice repeated:

One's not an outcaste caused by "birth",
not by "birth" a brahmin is;
caused by karma one's outcaste,
a brahmin is by karma caused.

Brahmins in the Buddha's days and some maybe even now, were wont to say that they were pure back through seven generations in both the mother's and the father's family. All of these people, they were claiming, had married only into other brahmin families and hence they were "pure". The Buddha by no means agreed with this estimation of purity and has, in the *Suttas*, made fun of brahmin arrogance. To know one's ancestors back through seven generations on both mother's and father's sides is quite unusual even now, unless one comes from an

aristocratic family, so brahminical claims for so-called purity ring rather hollow. This claim of superiority through birth is not confined to brahmins in the Buddha's time, as we can attain from the radio and television news of notions of superiority and the conflicts arising from it in our own time.

It is related to the claim to be an *ariya*—those who are noble by race. The Buddha again does accept such claims, the likes of which have lasted in our time, notably in the causes of WWII and the slaughter of millions of people. One is noble by practising the Noble Eightfold Path, one is ennobled by Dharma, not by lineage or race.

The Sutta concludes with one of the stylised passages which are characteristic of orally-transmitted works. Presumably the brahmin of this Sutta was impressed and praised the Buddha's teaching. There is no reason to suppose that he spoke exactly the words exactly translated here which appear hundreds of times at the end of Suttas. Whether he went to for refuge in the formula quoted here, or indeed, whether he went in any sense for refuge at all is something that we shall never know.

Three points in the Sutta may be remarked upon: one a minor matter and the others weightier. Verse 118 mentions the term "twice born". This means a man from high castes who has not only been born in the normal way, but has also received a "second birth" in the ceremony of being invested with a sacred thread, usually at puberty. Brahmins, for instance are "twice born". The rest of us remain "once born" and so of lower status. Workers and outcastes (and those not touched by the Indian caste-system) are merely "once born".

Of greater importance in the next verse which declares very straightforwardly (for the ears of heads of state or generals) that if they behave, as they have commonly done in history, by invasion of other lands and slaughter, they should be known as outcastes. One or two notable examples will make clear this Buddhist attitude to war. We have an Alexander who is even honoured with the epithet "Great". By the stan-

dards of verse 119, he should be known as “Alexander the Outcaste”. As for modern times, one may choose from a long list which will no doubt include Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Mao Zedong—outcastes all.

Also in verse 127 there is the line “teaching in obscurities”, a phrase covering a multitude of errors. It may mean teaching which will confuse others while promoting the so-called teacher’s ego, implying he or she has Dharma attainments which do not exist. Or this may mean teaching an obscure and useless subject from the viewpoint of Dharma. As an example there is the brahmin “science” of marks or characteristics to be found on animals or people. Such “marks”, such as a mole on the cheek, are claimed to be characteristic of those who cheat and lie. Such “science” (*vijjā/vidyā*) is not based on any cause and effect considerations.

Connected to this in modern times, there is a small Pāli treatise in verse, on the marking upon cats, a playful and unusual subject, written by a Saṅgharāja of what was then Siam and now Thailand! Elephants have also been the subject of such a “science” of markings and their meanings. These matters are not exactly essential Dharma, and may well be regarded as obscurities.

1.8 Loving-kindness

METTĀ SUTTA

What should be done by one
who is skilled in wholesomeness,
to gain the State of Peacefulness is this:
One should be able, upright, straight and not proud,
easy to speak to, mild and well content, 143

easily satisfied and not caught up
in too much bustle, and frugal in one's ways,
with senses calmed, intelligent, not bold,
not being covetous when with other folk, 144

not even doing little things that other wise ones blame.
(And this the thought that one should always hold):
“May beings all live happily and safe,
and may their hearts rejoice within themselves. 145

Whatever there may be with breath of life,
whether they be frail or very strong,
without exception, be they long or short,
or middle-sized, or be big or small, 146

or dense, or visible or invisible,
or whether they dwell far or they dwell near,
those that are here, those seeking to exist—
may beings all rejoice with themselves.” 147

Let no one bring about another's ruin
and not despise in any way or place;
let them not wish each other any ill
from provocation or from enmity. 148

Just as a mother at the risk of life
 loves and protects her child, her only child,
 so one should cultivate this bondless love
 to all that live in the whole universe— 149

extending from a consciousness sublime
 upwards and downwards and across the world,
 untroubled, free from hate and enmity. 150

And while one stands and while one sits
 or when one lies down still free from drowsiness,
 one should be intent on this mindfulness—
 this is divine abiding here they say. 151

But when one lives quite free from any view,
 is virtuous, with perfect insight won,
 and greed for selfish desires let go,
 one surely comes no more to be reborn. 152

(Snp 143–152)

Commentary

The State of Peacefulness appears at the opening of this Sutta and is implied in the last verse. Elsewhere it is called *Nirvāṇa*, liberation and so on. In between the first and last verses a number of conditions are mentioned for attainment of the Peaceful State. There is no trace in this Sutta of a “method” for attainment of this goal, such as the Pāli commentary presents and which is also explained in the *Visuddhimagga*, “The Path of Perfection”, a fact that we shall return to later.

In the Sutta’s first line there is a clear indication of what is needed for experience of the Peaceful State: skill in wholesomeness, in other words, good conduct with body, speech and mind. This is followed by fifteen requirements—things that one should work on and make effort

with—but as they are straightforward little needs to be written about them, though the following remarks may be useful. “Able” refers to a person who can do and is willing to try. “Upright” and “straight” refer, we are told, respectively to the moral behaviour with body and speech, and the same with mind. However, they may also be taken as emphasising the importance of general honesty. With mention of “well content, easily satisfied and frugal in one’s ways” we come to factors more easily practised by monks, or while on retreat. These three go against the current of worldliness and materialism. The ministers in charge of economic development in various countries would not be happy if their populations began to practice them! Not being “bold” means foolishly over-estimating one’s capacity and taking big steps which one cannot follow, based on pride and delusion. Not wanting what others have is good for peace of mind, so not being covetous when visiting others’ houses is very helpful. Wise ones, like spiritual teachers, have developed their minds and are aware of the consequences of doing “little things”. Their “blame” is expressed to their unwise students often in private. This does not refer to wholesale condemnations.

The line in brackets is not part of the text but is needed to link the fifteen requirements with the next part upon the various kinds of beings to which *mettā* should be extended. They are defined by having “breath of life”, though this does not mean only those having lungs or gills as the Pāli word *pāna* (*prāna* in Sanskrit) means not only breathing but also living. Examples of creatures fitting the following list of adjectives can easily be thought of, until we come to “dense or visible or invisible”. This could be rendered “those which are substantial, those that can be seen and those that cannot”. In the context of Dharma the last means, “those that the human eye cannot see.” Rationalists might want this to mean “those that require a microscope”, and though this would be a possibility it is not in accordance with tradition. This definitely means “those with bodies too refined for the human eye to see”, *devas* for instance or ghosts. Awareness of such beings increases with

depth of meditation practice. “Dwelling far or near” may be taken to mean “those beings whose bodies (or non-bodies in the case of the formless-realm devas) are remote from our experience”, while “near” signifies those whose existence overlaps our own experience (as with animals), or are “near” to us because of former relationships, as with some ghosts and devas which may act as guides or protectors.

Next comes an interesting line: “those that are here, those seeking to exist”. Strict Theravāda philosophy upon life after death departs from the main line of Indian Buddhist teaching. The Theravāda Abhidhamma analyses all experience into momentary dharmas, a doctrine which rationalizes the teaching of not-self and defends the notion that no being (which contradicts the idea of not-self) goes from life to life. The trouble is that often no distinction is drawn between the two kinds of truth: conditional and ultimate. Rebirth belongs to the realm of conditional truth within which we usually live. To say that “so-and-so has gone to heaven” may be quite correct according to conditional and dualistic truth. The phrase may seem to imply that this person will be the same there as he or she was here except that they have a new and less visible body. This view would be on the side of eternalism, one of two extremes which the Buddhist Dharma-in-the-Middle avoids. Moreover, such a view ignores the first of the three characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*) of all conditioned things: impermanence. So a phrase like “Go to Hell!”, despite showing little loving-kindness and a good deal of hate, is true within its dualistic limitations: someone goes to Hell.

Ultimate truth in its Abhidhamma form says that there are no beings, only moments of experience, so no one goes from one life to another. This theory denies that there is anyone who goes and comes, perilously near to the other extreme of nihilism. It has led Theravāda scholars to deny that there is any experience between lives.

The concept of the “between-life” or *antarabhava*, usually known these days by the convenient Tibetan translation, Bardo, is a agglomeration of common sense, ESP, memory of past lives and vision of

famous living teachers. The common sense (or conditional truth) is that so-and-so died and because this person made karma of some kind, will be reborn accordingly. The extra-sensory perception will be the visions and sensations of that being who has died by those who were close to him or her, that suggest that the deceased is still in some way present. Memory of past lives and the periods that link them may be experienced by some people, a recollection which comes with clarity of mind, quite different from the confusions of desire and imagination.

The visions of living Teachers may explore the processes of being reborn during the intermediate state and give disciples instructions upon how to practise, even achieve liberation in that state. Teachings on the Bardo are mostly about the latter. Though it is useful to have books explaining perception after human death, the transmission of that practice from living teacher is really required. So “those that are here” are all the beings that we can be aware of in our present life. “Those seeking to exist” are those in the Bardo seeking existence through the limitations of their karmas.

Buddhaghosa, the Pāli commentator who lived about a thousand years after the Buddha, strenuously denies this obvious truth and makes implausible suggestions as to the meaning of this line (see *Minor Readings and Illustrator*, pp. 286–7). This is not the only case where the classical commentators try to defend an “orthodox” Theravāda position and so distort the straightforward meaning of the Pāli texts. The words of Pāli commentators should be carefully examined.

Why does a verse upon anger/hatred/resentment follow next? The Sutta has already emphasized that *mettā* should be extended to all kinds of beings, classified in less poetic terms elsewhere as “the footless, two-footed, four-footed and many-footed; those with perception, those with no perception, and those with neither perception nor non-perception” (AN 4.34). But for effective practice these must not remain abstract categories towards which one plays at extending *mettā*. Particular beings, especially “difficult” humans or animals which evoke

fear, must be involved. Real *mettā* then arises naturally through understanding one's fears. This verse is here so that the practitioner does not fool him or herself: "Now my practice of limitless love, unconditional love, flows to all beings!" Better look at how one feels with those one fears or does not like! In *mettā*-practice beings come first, directions and direction-less practice follow. This order prevents self-deception.

There follows the famous simile of a mother's love for her child and how one's mind becoming limitless with *mettā* should resemble this. For most of us, loving all beings in that way is not going to be easy. "Boundless love" becomes possible through the experience of *jhāna* and while a few people will have spontaneous experience of this relaxed but concentrated state of meditation, most require to be diligent with regular meditation practice. *Jhāna* has no good English translation and for that reason is left untranslated. Meditation, concentration or contemplation are all Latin-based words which do not have the clear meaning of the Pāli word *jhāna*. This word does not occur in the Sutta but is implied by such expressions as "boundless", "consciousness sublime", "upwards and downwards and across the world". Other religious traditions outside the Buddha's teaching have also what is known as "saints" and mystics who experience *jhāna*.

The last but one verse indicates the practice of mindfulness, how one should not drift and attach to rapture of *jhāna* but rather cultivate a mental state near to wisdom (*paññā/prajna*). This union of calm and clarity characterises the four Divine Abidings, which are frequently referred to in the Suttas. The words "they say" refer in general to wise meditative persons, not specially to Buddhist teachers.

The last verse however restricts these people to those who are "quite free from any view" that is, they are free from mere or blind belief which cannot be verified by practice with an unclouded mind. They are free even from the Buddhist assumptions which everyone will have when they start regular and sustained meditation practice. Such people are not keen to label themselves "Theravāda", "Vipassanā",

“Mahāyāna”, “Vajrayāna”, “Zen” for these are the playthings of those who do not Know. The truly liberated are not imprisoned by such limitations though they may use such words in the instruction of others. The verse reminds us that to find this liberation we need to act in a way that neither harms others or ourselves—“virtuous” (*sīlavā*), have access to insight-wisdom (*dassana*), and have more moderate sense-desires and let them go, the famous or infamous *kāma* which limits the mind’s freedom, so that we arrive at the state of not being ever again being driven into birth.

No methods of meditation are offered in the Pāli Suttas. For these, in ancient times and still in present, one consulted one’s teacher. Teachers in the Buddha’s time would have had direct Knowledge of the Dharma and so needed to learn no methods. Teachers in later times, if they have no direct knowledge would consult the *Path of Purification*, the compendium of Theravāda Buddhist knowledge compiled by Buddhaghosa. This is still highly revered, both teacher and book, in Theravāda lands. Some more recent teachers out of their own experience have taught methods that differ somewhat from this tradition.

If one wishes to consult the traditional Pāli sources explaining this Sutta, they are available in the translation of the Paramatthajotikā, *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning*, by translator Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, published by the Pāli Text Society.

The present translation is based, though with many corrections, upon that of David Maurice, in the long out-of-print anthology, “The Lion’s Roar”.

1.9 The Buddha teaches Sātāgira and Hemavata the *Yakkhas*

HEMAVATA SUTTA

- SĀTĀGIRA Today's the lunar fifteenth day—
uposatha—a night divine arrived;
Let's go to the Teacher Gotama,
him of high repute. 153
- HEMAVATA Is the mind of such a one
towards all beings well-disposed?
Within his power are his thoughts
towards the wished, the unwished too? 154
- SĀTĀGIRA Yes, the mind of such a one
towards all beings well-disposed.
Within his power are his thoughts
towards the wished and unwished too. 155
- HEMAVATA Is he the one who does not steal?
To beings he's restrained?
Is he far from indolence?
Does *jhāna* he neglect? 156
- SĀTĀGIRA He is one who does not steal,
to beings he's restrained.
Buddha's far from indolence;
jhāna he never neglects. 157
- HEMAVATA Is he not one who falsely speaks?
Does he use harsh or violent words
or employ slanderous ones?
Or a user of meaningless speech? 158

SĀTĀGIRA He's not one who falsely speaks,
nor uses harsh or violent words;
nor utters words of slander,
but wisdom speaks which benefits. 159

HEMAVATA Does he not desire, indulge,
In mind he's unattached?
Has delusion overcome?
'Mong Dharmas has he Eyes? 160

SĀTĀGIRA He does not desire, indulge,
for his mind is unattached.
Delusions all he's overcome—
'Mong Dharmas, Buddha's Eyed. 161

HEMAVATA Has true knowledge he attained?
Is his conduct perfect, pure?
Are his inflows now extinct?
Is he not again to be? 162

SĀTĀGIRA Indeed true knowledge he's attained
and his conduct's perfect, pure,
for him all inflows are extinct,
so he'll not again become. 163

Accomplished is the Sage's mind,
his actions and his ways of speech,
of true Knowledge and conduct he's possessed—
rightly he is praised. 164

Accomplished is the Sage's mind,
his actions and his ways of speech,
of true Knowledge and conduct he's possessed—
rightly you rejoice. 165

Accomplished is the Sage's mind,
 his actions and his ways of speech,
 of true Knowledge and conduct he's possessed—
 it's good that we see Gotama. 166

Who limbed like antelope and lean,
 wise, with no greed and having little food,
 Sage in the woods who meditates alone—
 let us go see Gotama. 167

The Great One like a lion who lives alone,
 among all pleasures he's expectation-free,
 let us draw near that we may ask of him
 how to escape from the snarefulness of death. 168

O proclaimer of the Dharma, expounding it too,
 one who's beyond all dharmas' Further Shore,
 all fear and hatred you've utterly overcome
 both of us then of Gotama inquire— 169

HEMAVATA What co-arises with the world?
 With what's it make acquaintance?
 The world grasps after what indeed?
 Why's the world afflicted? 170

BUDDHA Six with the world do co-arise,
 with six becomes acquainted,
 the world's attached to six indeed,
 so, world's by six afflicted. 171

HEMAVATA The grasping— what is it then
 by which the world's afflicted?
 When asked about this, please do speak:
 how to be free from *dukkha*? 172

- BUDDHA The sensual pleasures five are taught
in the world with mind as six,
having let go of all desire for those,
be thus from *dukkha* free. 173
- This for the world's the leading out,
its "as-it-is" declared to you,
and this to you I do declare:
be thus from *dukkha* free. 174
- HEMAVATA Here, who goes across the flood,
who goes across the sea,
No standpoint or support,
who in the deep sinks not? 175
- BUDDHA That person ever virtuous,
with wisdom, concentrated well,
with mind turned inward, mindful—
crosses the flood that's hard to cross. 176
- Detached from thoughts of sense-desire,
all fetters overpassed,
delight-in-being quite destroyed—
who in the deep sinks not. 177
- HEMAVATA Behold the Great Seer of wisdom deep,
of subtle meanings Seer, one owning nought,
unattached to sensual being, free in every way,
proceeding along the pathway of the gods. 178
- Behold the Great Seer of perfect repute,
of subtle meanings Seer, of wisdom the imparter,
unattached to the senses' basis and greatly wise,
all-knower, treading the path of the Noble Ones. 179

Well-viewed by us today indeed,
 well-dawned upon us, well-arisen:
 the Awaken One we've seen,
 crossed the flood, from inflows free. 180

These ten hundred Yakkhas here
 of great power and renown,
 all of them for refuge go—
 You are our Teacher unexcelled! 181

BOTH Village to village we shall roam,
 mount to mount revering him,
 the Fully Awakened One, as well
 the Dharmaness of Perfect Dharma. 182

(Snp 153—182)

A few notes

Yakkha: who or what are they? They were, in the Buddha's day, believed to be semi-spiritual beings who were powerful and rather easily angered, living in wild places. Possibly they were members of aboriginal tribes who had proficiency in magical matter or were believed to possess these. They were certainly feared.

153: mentions "the lunar fifteenth day" which requires a little explanation. In the Buddha's days the calendar was counted by the moon's action rather than the sun. "Months" of about 28 days, thirteen of such lunar months approximating to a solar year at 364 days needed to be augmented to complete the sun year. New Moons and Full Moons were important for these days measured the *uposatha* days. The *uposatha* day was (and is) the gathering of disciples who reconfirmed their dharma-practice twice every year on these two days by celebrating the chanting of the Pātimokkha rules.

- 154: Hemavata asks whether Gotama’s mind is well-disposed towards all beings—he is in fact asking about *mettā*/loving kindness. While in the second two lines his enquiry regards wisdom, *paññā*. He seems to be well-informed since these words cover both necessary approaches for awakening. “Within his power, are his thought towards the wished, the unwished too”. Though it is possible to talk about “thought within one’s own power”, this is only a way of speaking fit for the awakened. For who is this assumed person who possesses thoughts and can label them “mine”? It is not that anything is owned, not even thoughts are owned by the Awakened!
- 161: **“Among dharmas Buddha (is) Eyed”**: Dharmas are the qualities, virtuous and otherwise which manifest in mind, flit though it in a constant stream always changing. Many of these mind-patterns are disregarded, neglected or repressed by ordinary people but their understanding of themselves sharpens as they begin to practice mindfulness. With the maturity of mindfulness practice they can be called “Eyed”, those with insight, with deep understanding of the way things really are. More upon Eyes will be found at AN 3.29 where the eyeless, the one-eyed and the two-eyed are explained.
- 162: **“Are his inflows now extinct?”** Inflows (*āsava*) are usually said to be the inflow of sensual desire, the inflow of being/existence, and that of ignorance, to which is occasionally added the inflow of views. These are the deepest level of confused mind and are frequently explained in the Suttas.

Sātagira rightly remarks: “for him all inflows are extinct, so he will not again become”. Notice that “extinction” applies to the inflows which are conditioned and are therefore impermanent. The Buddha, though, will not be driven into becoming this or that sort of being again. This does not mean that a Buddha will disappear into a mysterious Nirvāṇa which is neither existence

or non-existence. His condition is neither and beyond either the extremes of nihilism and eternalism.

Three verses all opening with “Accomplished is the Sage’s mind” have interesting final lines:

- 164: **“Rightly he is praised”**: He’s praised for his actions and speech which cause no suffering but bring benefit—they are never harmful. The true Knowledge that he is possessed of is usually described as the threefold knowledge (*tevijjā*) consisting of the knowledge of past lives, the knowledge of the future results of karmas made, and should we not praise a person like this with such virtues, though recommending him to others, or chanting his praises in pujas, if we did not what sort of practitioners would we be?
- 165: **“Rightly you rejoice”**—why would one do that? “Rejoice” here means to rejoice in the knowledge—all the good things—of the Teacher. Not to do so might mean that one was too proud to acknowledge these virtues of the Teacher. *Anumodanā*, to rejoice in another’s merits is to make very good karma indeed, while not to do so points to a narrow egocentric mind.
- 166: **“It’s good that we see Gotama”**: “seeing” a Teacher is a traditional Dharma practice in India. “Seeing” a Teacher may be only glimpsing him/her with the expectation that one will receive a blessing in which case it is called *dharshan* (*ḍassana* in Pāli, a verb related to the *passāma*, we see, which is found in the Snp text). More deeply committed pupils will want to have closer connection to their teacher: to see more than a brief glimpse, to understand how to practice, or even to See or realise for themselves.
- 170: Hemavata, obviously a very intelligent *yakkha*, eventually asks the Buddha a subtle question: “What co-arises with the world?” etc. This line and others that he speaks shows his awareness, for instance, that he knows that the world’s arising, in whatever way

one thinks of “world”, is according to Dharma, co-production — produced from many causes. The second question poses difficulties which most translations have not solved, while mine is just a shot in the dark. The third is straightforward, while the fourth question treats the results of the third. The verse with its four questions is partly a least a riddle.

- 171: On this occasion, the Buddha answers riddle with riddle and does not really explain his reply to Hemavata’s questions. All he seems to have done is add the number “six” — to each line in the verse. It would be surprising if these two *Yakkhas* had obtained the fullest satisfaction with this “explanatory” verse, for the Buddha explained nothing. The Snp Commentary has tried to account for this strange situation and “explains” what the various sixes are. Buddhist understanding of creation is not that there is a creating force beyond the world which somehow brings forth in the world. Creation comes about as all necessary factors arise for a world, those factors must “arise together”, or as I have translated, “co-arise”.

1.10 With the *Yakkha Ālavaka*

ĀḶAVAKA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Lord dwelt at Ālavā in the haunt of the *yakkha* Ālavaka. Then the latter went to the Lord's dwelling and spoke to him as follows: "Monk, come out!"

"Very well, friend" said the Buddha (and came out).

"Monk, go in!"

"Very well, friend" said the Buddha and entered his dwelling. He repeated these demands twice, but on the fourth demand the Buddha said:

"I shall not come out to you, friend, do what you will."

"Monk, I shall ask you a question and if you cannot answer it I shall either overthrow your mind, split your heart, or seizing you by the feet, throw you to the other side of the Ganges river."

"I do not see, friend, anyone in the world with its devas, Māras and Brahmās, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, princes and men who can either overthrow my mind, or split my heart, or seize me by the feet and throw me to the other side of the Ganges river. However, friend, ask what you will."

ĀḶAVAKA For humans here what wealth is best?
What often done brings happiness?
What surely has the sweetest taste?
How living do they say "life's best"?

183

BUDDHA Faith the wealth for humans best,
Dharma done brings happiness,
Truth surely has the sweetest taste,
"Lived with wisdom" this life's best.

184

ĀḶAVAKA How can the flood be overcrossed?
How overcrossed the sea?

- How *dukkha* can be overcome?
How win to purity? 185
- BUDDHA By faith the flood is overcrossed.
By vigilance the sea.
By effort *dukkha*'s overcome.
By wisdom, purity. 186
- ĀLAVAKA How wisdom will be won
with riches also found?
How attain to fame
and bring together friends?
When passing from this world, to next,
how does one not grieve? 187
- BUDDHA One with faith in arahats' Dharma
for attainment of Nirvāṇa
diligent, wishing to listen,
and discerning, wisdom wins. 188
- One who acts appropriately,
who's steady and industrious,
finds wealth and fame, attained by truth;
by giving, friends are gained. 189
- A faithful household seeker has
attained these four: truthfulness,
virtue, courage, generosity too,
and so grieves not when passing hence. 190
- Now if you wish, ask others too,
numerous monks and brahmins—if
truth, generosity, taming self,
patience too—what's better than these? 191

ĀḶAVAKA Why should I consult with these
 monks and brahmins numerous,
 when now for myself I know
 who brings my future's benefit? 192

 For my benefit truly He came here,
 the Buddha visiting ĀḶavī.
 Now do I know where a gift
 bestowed will bear great fruit. 193

 Village to village I shall roam,
 town to town revering him—
 the Full Awakened One, and
 the Dharmaness of perfect Dharma. 194

(Snp 183-194)

1.11 Victory Over Fascination with Bodies

VIJAYA SUTTA

Whether walking or standing still,
down one sits or lays it down,
bends it in or stretches it—
it's just the body's movement. 195

This body by bones and sinews bound,
bedaubed by membranes, flesh
and covered all over by skin—
not seen as it really is: 196

Filled with guts, with stomach filled,
with bladder, liver-lump
with heart and lungs it's filled,
with kidneys too and spleen. 197

Liquids like spittle and snot
together with sweat and fat,
with blood and oil for the joints,
with bile and grease for the skin. 198

Then by the streaming nine
impurity oozes out:
from the eye there's dirt of eyes,
from ears, wax—dirt of ears, 199

Whether walking or standing still,
down one sits or lays it down,
bends it in or stretches it—
it's just the body's movement. 200

Snot-mucuses from nose,
vomit at times from the mouth,

sometimes phlegm's spewed forth,
and from the body sweat and dirt. 201

And then within its hollow head
bundled brains are stuffed—
the fool thinks all is beautiful,
by ignorance led on. 202

But when it's lying dead,
bloated and livid blue,
cast away in the charnel-ground
kin care for it not. 203

Then dogs devour, jackals too,
wolves and worms dismember it,
crows and vultures tear at it,
and other creatures too. 204

Contemplate: this living body,
that corpse was once like this
and as that corpse is now
so will this body be—
for body then discard desire,
whether within or without. 205

Such a monk who's wise, desire
and lust discarded utterly,
attains to Deathlessness, to peace,
Nirvāṇa, the unchanging state. 206

But this foetid, foul, two-footed thing,
is pampered, though filled
with varied sorts of stench, as well
with oozing here and there.⁷ 207

⁷ Sujato: I have changed the syntax of this verse a little.

Whoever such a body has,
 but thinks to exalt themselves,
 or to despise another—
 what's this but wisdom's lack?

208

(Snp 195–208)

Comments upon the Vijaya Sutta

Apart from attachments to one's "own" mind, the next strongest bond is to the body, one's "own" of course but by extension to other bodies.

This is a Sutta fit for two sorts of persons: one who wishes to practise renunciation as a member of a monastic *saṅgha*; or second, one whose sexual desires are very powerful. The teachings of this Sutta are not so appropriate to those living a non-monastic life, or to people whose desires are of less power. Still, everyone will benefit from an occasional perusal of this Sutta's teachings, a reminder of the nature of this body which we identify as "ours".

The first verse conveys the way the body really is, its movements just movements, neither refined nor gross. The movements are not "mine" or "yours" they are merely the body's. Leaving aside the embellishments, so much advertised and flaunted in our times, as well as the repulsive aspects of bodies—they are all just as they are, neither good nor bad, neither beautiful or ugly, neither attractive nor repulsive. Of course, this is advice to those who meditate and who wish to have some success with their practice. Others may not understand.

Verse two starts to specify medicine for minds too much swayed by lust. This Dharma-medicine will seem to the attached as rather bitter in flavour. The body, one's own and others', not seen as it really is, is sketched in outline, bones, sinews, membranes, flesh, and skin and reminds one of the famous five: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth and skin. These five are first in the list of 32 parts recommended for meditation and summarize precisely what we see when looking

at another person. These are listed in the Khuddaka-pāṭha, whose commentary discusses the 32 parts.

A few more choice ingredients of the body appear in verse 197. These are parts and liquids that in general people are not happy to see, especially when they are their own. But where should we be without bones and sinews, or how to exist lacking guts and belly? We only look on the outside of our own or others' bodies and take for granted that other more or less unpleasant hidden parts exist. Rather a one-sided view of the body!

Continuing the list with emphasis on liquids, as found also in the 32 parts: "bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, (skin) grease, spit, snot, oil-for-the-joints, piss". The whole list may be a pre-Buddhist medical list of the body's contents, though surprisingly it ignores semen. The nine streams or impurity are explained in the next verse.

These are what flows from: 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, 1 mouth, plus the body. This adds up to eight. "Mouth" could be counted twice as two sorts of impurity are mentioned: vomit and phlegm. Or "sweat" and "dirt" may count as two from the body. The Pāli Commentary does not clarify this. In other texts the body's openings are counted as 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, mouth, urinary exit plus anus, making nine. Here, the last two are absent, rather strange if "impurities" are being counted.

While it may seem to us that many people have hollow heads without any "bundled brains", the real function of the brain was not appreciated in ancient India though many other parts of the body had functions known to Ayurveda (medical) treatises.

The following verse, number 203, turns attention from internal body bits to the body's death. "Cast away in the charnel ground" refers to a common way of recycling bodies in the Buddha's days. A portion of forest was declared both a crematory and a disposal point for bodies. Cremating bodies cost more—trees to be felled or wood to be scavenged, while taking the body to this secluded and forested area and leaving it there after due rites was more economical. It is unlikely that the latter

will recommend itself to local councils, though ours are the days of recycling. Perhaps we are more sentimentally attached to the corpse of a dear one than were Indians of those times. This seems to have been the case as “kin care for it not” and of course they do not care for the corpse because there was no refrigeration then, so that its “bloated and livid blue”, and most importantly what the text takes for granted, its stench, is unbearable.

However, it was still attractive to some creatures who were very happy to recycle it, as the next verse recalls. *Susāna*, the charnel-ground, was not a place for the faint-hearted. Those who delivered bodies to be dealt with by fire, or by decay or by creatures, did not hang about there. Only some yogis/yoginīs and occasional bhikkhus/bhikkhunīs would be bold enough to stay there, especially through the night. Most people would have found, and would find today, such serious reminders of impermanence too stark but serious Dharma practitioners lived there without fear.

This tradition from pre-Buddhist times, through the Buddha’s lifetime about 2500 years ago, lasted in India at least another 1500 years. We know this through the gory descriptions of such “boneyards” found in Buddhist Tantras. These documents, some earlier around 500 CE and some as late as 1000 CE, paint pictures of some fairly wild characters dwelling in these places. They were at home not only with the ghastly sights but also with various spiritual protectors as well as demonic forces that dwelt there. There is no doubt that these practitioners, for instance some of the famous 84 Siddhas, lived for long periods there to their great benefit.

A “bhikkhu” praised in the next verse, should be understood to include any devoted practitioner. Of course, there are bhikkhus and bhikkhus, a few wise but many without much practice and certainly no insight. It is sad to say this but the mere fact of a man (or woman) having shaven head and robes on does not guarantee spiritual awareness. There are so many people who assume otherwise and then lose

all faith when their robed guru turns out to have worse than clay feet.

Knowing the body “as it really is” means that most of us do not have thorough knowledge of it. Somehow we muddle on with a decaying body and only wake up a little when our bodies are in their last drawn-out struggles. It is better to see how it really is long before that time.

Verse 205 has been expanded in this translation. Literally the first two lines read:

As this (is) so (was) that,
as that (is), so (will be) this,

Though the Pāli meaning is clear, such brevity conveys little in English. Those *susāna* were used for such reflection and helped to discard desires whether for one’s own or others’ bodies.

Notice that the emphasis in this Sutta is upon using bodily bits and corpses to see things as they truly are. It is uncharacteristic of early Buddhist works to stir up hatred for the body, and accordingly there is no trace of such hatred here. Other religious traditions, and to some extent later Buddhist works, do emphasize hatred against the body. This may be seen in some Pāli Commentaries as well as in some Mahāyāna works; see for instance Chapter 8 of the *Bodhicāryavatāra*.

1.12 The Sage Inwardly Silent

MUNI SUTTA

From familiarity fear is born,
from household life arises dust;
no household, no familiar life—
such is the vision for the sage. 209

Who, cutting down what has grown up,
plants not again, supplies no means for growth,
they call that Sage who fares alone;
great-seeker-seen-the-place-of-peace. 210

Who has surveyed the grounds and lost the seeds,
and supplied no means for further growth,
is Sage seen to the end of birth and death,
logic abandoned and beyond reckoning. 211

Truly have been known all resting-places
with no desires at all for any there—
that sage indeed, free from crowing, greed,
struggles not, gone to the further shore. 212

Who is intelligent, knowing All, All overcome
among all the dharmas, one who cannot be sullied,
who All has abandoned, freed by craving's end—
that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 213

In wisdom strong, in virtuous conduct established,
in concentration and enjoying *jhāna*,
free from all ties, aridity and the inflows—
that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 214

The vigilant sage who practises alone,
who unshaken is by blame or praise,

is as a lion that trembles not at sounds,
 or as wind within a net cannot be caught,
 or like a lotus flower by water not defiled,
 leading other people but not by others led—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 215

Who though oppressed, is unmoving as a pile-post,
 when others about oneself use speech extreme;
 that one free from lust, sense-faculties restrained—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 216

Who is straight-minded as shuttle straightly moves,
 and who conduct examines both the rough and the smooth,
 and so who turns away from evil karma-making—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 217

Who with a mind restrained, evil does not do,
 whether young, middle-aged or sage self-controlled,
 who cannot be provoked nor others does provoke—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 218

Who lives upon almsfood by others donated,
 receiving the first, the middle, or remainders at the end,
 who then sings not owned praises, or hurtfully speak—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 219

The sage not practising indulgence in sex,
 who even when youthful was not tied to anyone,
 not indulgence in madness of wanton ways but free—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 220

True Knower of the universe, Seer of highest truth,
 crossed the ocean's flood, One Thus and unattached,
 One who's knots are cut, with no inflows left—
 that one do the wise proclaim as a sage. 221

The householder with wife, and the “not-mine-maker”
of strict practices—their living-ways not the same:
house-livers not restrained from taking others’ lives,
but the sage always guards other beings’ lives. 222

In flight the crested peacock, turquoise-necked,
never the swiftness of the swan attains,
so a house-liver cannot match a bhikkhu,
a sage meditating in the woods.⁸ 223

(Snp 209–223)

On *muni*, *mona*, *munāti* and other matters

There are a group of related words in Pāli with meanings that cannot be covered by a similar linguistic group in English. This can be seen from the list below.

muni: (noun) sage, or perhaps a word not to be translated.

mona: (noun) silence, solitary practice.

munāti: (verb) to be wise, specifically because of solitary life.

Originally, the person referred to was not a bhikkhu in the Buddhist sense though the later Pāli Commentaries maintain that *muni* = solitary bhikkhu. Evidence in the Suttas suggests that some disciples of the Buddha lived as solitaries in the forest or in caves without the burden of the monk’s rules, the Vinaya. This tradition of receiving instructions from a teacher and then retiring for practice in solitude pre-dates the Buddha. What we now call Hinduism had, and still has, many holy men who practised among other things, silence to varying degrees. The most extreme would never speak and lived in solitary places so that they never had any cause to do so. There is, in Buddhist records an

⁸ Sujato: LKM had “so a house-liver and a bhikkhu cannot match a sage meditating in the woods.” But this is a mistake: *gihī* is nominative, while *bhikkhuno* and *munino* are dative/genitive and must agree.

example of bhikkhus who decide that during their first Rains Retreat they will refrain from talking. At the end of this three or four months they return to visit the Buddha who asked them how their retreat has been. They tell him of their silence. He rebukes them that they should practise silence like animals do.⁹ Human beings should communicate and not act as they do for lack of speech. To this day, what they wanted to practise was and is called *mauna*. The verb *munāti* is not so common in Pāli but its existence demonstrates a further meaning: wisdom derived from long periods of contemplation without much conversation.

The last verse perhaps is not entirely true of our own times when educated practitioners may be found among the laity. Many years ago in my work on Vinaya (*Moss on the Stones*, unpublished), I had made another and more elegant, translation of this verse:

As the peacock, azure-necked,
never rivals flight of swans,
so householders are no match
for forest sage who meditates.

Finally, though it is not found in Pāli Buddhist tradition, there is the well-known mantra for the praise of our great teacher when he is called Śākyamuni:

Om Muni, Muni, Mahāmuni, Śākyamuni Svāha!

⁹ Sujato: LKM is referring to the origin story of the Pāvāraṇakkhandhaka, chapter 2 of the Vinaya Khandhaka. However, the Pali term there is *mūgabbata* “a vow of dumbness”, not *mauna*, which is always associated with wisdom.

CHAPTER 2

The Minor Chapter

2.1 The Threefold Gem

RATANA SUTTA

Whatever beings are assembled here,
creatures of earth or spirits of the sky,
may they be happy-minded, every one,
and pay good heed to what is said to them. 224

Hence, all ye spirits, hear attentively,
look lovingly upon the human race,
and, since they bring you offerings day and night,
keep watch and ward about them heedfully. 225

The riches of this world and of the next
and all precious things the heavens may hold,
none can compare with the Tathāgata.
Yea, in the Buddha shines this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 226

The waning out of lust, that wondrous state
of Deathlessness the Sakyan Sage attained
through calm and concentration of the mind— 227

nothing with that state can ought compare.
 Yea, in the Dharma shines this glorious gem:
 By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 228

That flawless meditation praised by Him
 who is the wisest of the wise, which brings
 instant reward to one who practises—
 naught with this meditation can compare.
 Yea, in the Dharma shines this glorious gem:
 By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 229

Those Persons Eight who all the sages praise,
 make up four pairs. Worthy of offerings
 are they, the followers of the Happy one,
 and offerings made bear abundant fruit.
 Yea, in the Saṅgha shines this glorious gem:
 By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 230

Whoso, desireless, have applied themselves
 firm-minded to the love of Gotama,
 reached to the goal, plunged into Deathlessness,
 freely enjoy Cool Peace they have attained.
 Yea, in the Saṅgha shines this glorious gem:
 By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 231

As a pillar firmly planted in the earth
 Is unshaken by winds from the four directions,
 So too, I say, is the True Person
 Who sees the Noble Truths from their own experience.
 Yea, in the Saṅgha is this glorious gem:
 By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 232

Who clearly comprehend these Noble Truths
 well-taught by him of wisdom fathomless,

however heedless be they afterwards
upon an eighth existence they'll not seize.
Yea, in the Saṅgha is this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 233

As soon as one with insight is endowed,
three things become discarded utterly:
wrong view of a perduring self, and doubt,
and clinging to vain rites and empty vows.
Escaped that one from all four evil states,
and of the six great sins incapable.
Yea, in the Saṅgha is this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 234

Whatever sort of evil karma done—
by body even, or by speech or mind,
for one to hide these is not possible—
impossible for Seer of the State, it's said.
Yea, in the Saṅgha is this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 235

Just as a forest grove puts forth its flowers
when the first month of summer heat has come,
so for the highest good of all, He taught
the truth sublime which to Nirvāṇa leads.
Yea, in the Buddha is this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 236

The Highest One, the Knower of the Highest,
the Giver and the Bringer of the Highest
'tis He who taught the Highest Truth of all.
Yea, in the Buddha is this glorious gem:
By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 237

The old is withered up, new being there is not,
 now their minds desire no future birth,
 destroyed the seeds, no want for future growth,
 extinguished are those wise ones as this lamp.
 Yea, in the Saṅgha is this glorious gem:
 By virtue of this truth, may blessing be! 238

Whatever beings are assembled here,
 creatures of the earth or spirits of the sky,
 to th' gods-and-men-adored Tathāgata,
 to the Buddha let us bow: may blessing be! 239

Whatever beings are assembled here,
 creatures of earth or spirits of the sky,
 to th' gods-and-men-adored Tathāgata,
 to the Dharma let us bow: may blessing be! 240

Whatever beings are assembled here,
 creatures of earth or spirits of the sky,
 to th' gods-and-men-adored Tathāgatha,
 to the Saṅgha let us bow: may blessing be! 241

(Snp 224-241)

2.2 Food and the True Meaning of “Stench”

ĀMAGANDHA SUTTA

QUESTION Wild millet, grains of grass and pulse,
young shoots and roots and jungle fruits—
Dharma-gained and by the Peaceful eaten,
they who speak no lies desiring sensual pleasures. 242

But who, eating food that’s well-prepared and cooked
of Sālī-rice, all other things to eat,
delicious, by others donated specially
that one, O Kassapa, is like a carrion-stench. 243

“No carrion-stench is mine”, you say like this,
that it does not apply to you, O Brahma-kin—
while eating sālī-rice, all other things
with flesh of fowls so very well prepared;
the meaning of this, O Kassapa, I ask:
Your food, what sort of carrion-stench it has? 244

ANSWER Taking life, torture, mutilation too,
binding, stealing, telling lies, and fraud;
deceit, adultery, and studying crooked views:
this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 245

Those people of desires and pleasures unrestrained,
greedy for tastes with impurity mixed in,
of nihilistic views, unstable, hard to train:
this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 246

The rough, the cruel, backbiters and betrayers,
those void of compassion, extremely arrogant,
the miserly, to others never giving anything:
this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 247

Who’s angry, obstinate, hostile and vain,
 deceitful, envious, a boastful person too,
 full of oneself, with the wicked intimate:
 this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 248

Those of evil ways, defaulters on debts,
 imposters, slanderers, deceitful in their dealings,
 vile men who commit evil deeds in this world:
 this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 249

Those people unrestrained for living beings here,
 taking others’ property, on injury intent,
 immoral, harsh and cruel, for others no respect:
 this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 250

Towards others greedy or hateful — they attack them,
 ever on misdemeanours bent,
 they go to darkness after death;
 such beings as this fall headlong into Hell:
 this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat. 251

Not from fish and flesh tasting and not by nudity,
 not by the plucking of head-hairs,
 nor growing of matted locks,
 not by the smearing of the ashes of the dead,
 not wearing abrasive skins,
 not following sacrificial fires,
 or worldly austerities for gaining immortality,
 nor mantras, nor offerings,
 oblations, seasons’ services
 can purify a mortal still overcome by doubt. 252

Who lives with sense-streams guarded, well-aware,
 in the Dharma firm, enjoying gently rectitude,

beyond attachments gone, all *dukkha* left behind,
that wise one's unsullied by the seen and the heard. 253

NARRATOR Again, again the Radiant One this topic taught
to that knower of the Vedas, in those mantras expert,
thus clarified the Sage in verses sweetly-sounding.
Him of no carrion-stench, free who's hard to trace. 254

Having listened to these verses well-spoken by the Buddha,
free of such stench, all *dukkhas* dispelling,
he of humble heart bowed at the Tathāgata's feet
and there and then requested his own Leaving-home. 255

(Snp 242–255)

The meaning of *āmagandha* and other considerations

This short Sutta provides us with a number of puzzles beginning with its title. It is critical how this compound of *āma* and *gandha* is translated. *Āma* originally meant “raw” or “uncooked” while *gandha* is a general word for “smell” which can be qualified by adding the prefixes *su* “good”, or *du* “bad”. One might assume from this that the meaning of these words compounded should be “the smell of uncooked food”. In fact, they came to mean “the smell of raw (meat)”. By extension, and considering the lack of refrigeration in tropical India in ancient times and the speed with which raw meat goes off, it implied “the stench of carrion”.

Past translators have struggled with this complex word:

“such are flesh-savours and not eating meat” (E.M. Hare)

“this is a stench. Not the eating of meat” (Saddhātissa)

“this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh” (Norman/Horner)

“the foul smell of carrion, not the eating of flesh” (Jayawickrama)

These are four examples of the refrain in verses 245–251 according to the authors above. However it is translated it must apply both to

eating meat and the bad “smell” of evil karma. This is because the Buddha in these verses lists evil conduct as “carrion-stench” of great import, as opposed to “the eating of meat”, which is a much lesser matter. Brahmins particularly proclaimed their purity because they adhered to a vegetarian diet, while looking down upon some lower castes who ate meat. To this day while travelling in India one may be asked by a high-caste person if one is a vegetarian. A positive answer to this question will gain one several points of esteem in that brahmin’s mind. This is based upon a common Hindu teaching which could be called the doctrine of “purity through eating”. If only purity was so easy! The Buddha’s verses in this Sutta point out what is truly impure. However, this should not be taken as a rejection of vegetarian food or a denial of its benefits, specially that it involves no slaughter of animals.

Earlier Buddhist views about this are influenced by the example of the Buddhist monk or nun’s behaviour going upon alms round with their bowls, accepting to eat this day whatever food they are offered and then eating it without the discrimination “this is good, this is not”. Such an attitude is reasonable for monks and nuns who have no money and so cannot choose what they will have. But laypeople who do have money are able to choose and may give food which has not involved killing. And many monks these days do have money. Later Buddhists, as monastic institutions grew in size, perceived that it would be better to advise their donors to adhere to vegetarian diets and to give monastics, from a concern for the animals killed, vegetarian food. Even with this consideration, the main emphasis for all Buddhists is upon the mind, with less stress upon food. That this is correct may be seen from the presence of occasional extremist vegetarians whose concern for a particular diet based upon some “view” of food is in their eyes the most important feature of practising Dharma, while to others their doctrines are a neurotic obsession.

At a few places in the Suttas, including this Sutta, it seems that the Buddha when he was offered food containing meat, ate it. Possibly,

since references to this are few, this was a rare event. If challenged the Buddha would give most importance to the state of mind and very much less to the content of food. And it is worth our consideration, though this cannot be an excuse for indulgence, that even the purest of vegans will not be able to eat anything without the destruction of some living beings: to live is dependent upon eating; to eat is to destroy. This is *saṃsāra*—the wandering through birth and death—and has its dark side, though compassion may limit this.

Another odd matter about this Sutta is its participants—only two of them, once a brahmin, Tissa, and the other a Buddha called Kassapa. At least this is what the Commentary says. In the Sutta itself the name “Tissa” does not occur while the expounder of the Dharma is just called “Kassapa”. Now, both these names are very common in the Suttas where dozens of Tissas occur and many Kassapas as well. While the interlocutor may well have been a brahmin called Tissa, that the Kassapa here should have been a Buddha is more doubtful. There is a Buddha by that name in DN 14, and if we take that reference literally, he lived very long ago. To claim, as Commentary does, that that remote Buddha and that the Kassapa of this Sutta are the same makes for difficulties. The most obvious of these is found in Pāli Commentaries that claim that a new Buddha cannot arise until all marks of a previous Buddha—teachings, robes, stupas, images and so on—have disappeared. This may be called a rather “late” doctrine and in our eyes these days a rather unimportant one. Still if the Commentary is examined the question will arise: How did this supposed Sutta from the mouth of the Buddha Kassapa survive the intervening aeons to appear eventually in the text of Snp? As this is such a doubtful matter and one which cannot be resolved we are faced with either its acceptance as a wonderful survival from another Buddha’s era, or more likely the verses of a disciple of “our” Buddha, one of a number of disciples called Kassapa. This however, will not explain references to a Buddha in the last two verses.

Two other minor matters may be mentioned here. Verse 252 gives poetically a list of wrong practises, wrong because by themselves they will not lead to liberation though some of them may have value. These austerities, mild or severe, were not praised by the Buddha as he was surrounded, outside his own disciples, by extremist doctrines and practitioners, who held the wrong view that liberation was to be attained by *dukkha*. A similar but shorter verse is found at Dhp 141:

Neither going naked, nor matted hair, nor filth,
nor fasting, nor sleeping on the earth,
no penance on the heels, nor sweatiness, nor grime,
can purify a mortal still overcome by doubt.

Whoever the Kassapa was, he was faced by a Tissa who was either stupid or prejudiced, since the teacher had to repeat his teaching again and again according to verse 254!

A further use of this word in Snp at verse 723 is in the negative form *nirāmagandha* where it is translated “carrion-stench”, but seems to refer not to food but to sex.

2.3 “Conscience” and so on

HIRI SUTTA

Though this person says “I am your friend”,
nothing’s done for you as comrade would,
but bereft of conscience, e’en despising you:
as “not one of mine” this person should be known. 256

Who uses pleasant words to friends
but does not act accordingly,
wise people understand like this:
“a speaker not a doer.” 257

That one’s no friend who diligently
seeks your faults, desiring strife;
but with whom one rests, as child on breast,
is friend indeed who none can part. 258

One who causes states of joy,
who brings praiseworthy happiness,
who’s grown the Fruits’ advantages,
the human burden bears. 259

Having drunk of solitude
and tasted Peace sublime,
free from sorrow, evil-free,
one savour: Dharma’s joy. 260

(Snp 256–260)

Notes on the Hiri Sutta

First, a few words upon the translation of *hiri* into English. Most translators have used “shame” but there are many objections to this: *hiri* as a

quality in the Suttas and Abhidhamma is wholesome, a good quality. It features notably in the Suttas at AN 2.8–9 where *hiri* and its companion *ottappa* are translated as “shame and fear of blame” (*Gradual Sayings*, PTS) though the translator in a footnote has “conscientiousness” as an alternative for the first of these. This ungainly word is preferable to “shame”, as the latter in English could not be called totally wholesome being associated, as it is, with guilt. *Hiri* and its companion by contrast are called bright (*sukka*) dharmas and praised as world’s protectors. They protect the world from degeneration to greed, hatred and delusion. Protecting the world has two meanings—protecting the mind of the potential doer, and protecting others from the sufferings brought about by unrestrained evil.

Ñāṇamoli in his translations suggests “shamefulness” for *hiri* but this does not cover subsidiary meanings such as “shyness” or “bashfulness” which cannot be described as wholesome qualities. “Conscience” will be appropriate in some places and “modesty” in others, sometimes even “decency”. It is difficult to find an English word to cover all this. *Ottappa* is best translated as “fear of consequences” and with *hiri* acts as a brake for some peoples’ unwholesome drives.

The verses of this Sutta are a rag-bag; bits and pieces from here and there somehow cobbled together with little attention to coherence. Though called the Hiri Sutta, it is not mostly about conscience, decency, shame etc., but rather concerns the qualities of a good friend. The Pāli Commentary tries to make sense of these verses by giving them an invented occasion when a brahmin asked of the Buddha four questions. However this seems an artificial “explanation” and has led to some strange translations. (For the four questions see Saddhātissa’s translation).

The first three verses are straightforward but the fourth has had many and varied translations. I have not followed the Pāli Commentary in interpreting this Sutta. The fourth verse describes a person who has fully practised the Dharma and is fit to be a teacher of others, a bod-

hisattva perhaps since he/she bears the human burden by removing it from others who suffer. A true friend indeed!

Verse 5, a favourite of mine, is from the Dhammapada (205) while verse 2 appears also at Jataka iii 193, Vaṇṇāroha Jātaka, No. 361.

2.4 The Supreme Good Omens

MAHĀMAṄGALA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling at Jeta's Grove in the park of Anāthapiṇḍika near Sāvattthī. Then, as night was ending, a deva of surpassing radiance, illuminating the whole of Jeta's Grove, went up to the Radiant One and stood to one side after saluting him. Standing there that deva addressed the Radiant One with a verse:

DEVA Of humans, gods, there are so many
 who have sought to know good omens
 which, they hope, will bring them safety:
 tell then the supreme good omen. 261

BUDDHA Not consorting with the foolish,
 rather with the wise consorting,
 honouring the honourable:
 this is a supreme good omen. 262

Living in befitting places,
having in the past made merit,
right direction in self-guidance:
this is a supreme good omen. 263

Ample learning, and a craft, too,
with a well-trained disciplining,
any speech that is well-spoken:
this is a supreme good omen. 264

Aid for mother and for father,
and support for wife and children,
spheres of work that bring no conflict:
this is a supreme good omen. 265

Giving, practising by Dharma,
with support for kin provided,
karmas causing no obstructions:
this is a supreme good omen. 266

Shrinking, abstinence, from evil,
from besotting drink refraining,
diligence in Dharma-practice:
this is a supreme good omen. 267

Respectfulness, a humble manner,
contentedness, and grateful bearing,
hearing Dharma when it's timely:
this is a supreme good omen. 268

Patience, meekness when corrected,
visiting too those pure in practice,
discussing Dharma when it's timely:
this is a supreme good omen. 269

Ardour, and the Good life leading,
insight into Truths so Noble,
realization of Nirvāṇa:
this is a supreme good omen. 270

Though one is touched by Worldly Dharmas
yet one's mind does never waver,
griefless, spotless and secure:
this is a supreme good omen. 271

Having practised all these "omens"
everywhere they go unvanquished,
they go everywhere in safety:
such is their supreme good omen. 272

(Snp 261–272)

False *maṅgalas* and Dharma-*maṅgalas*

In the Buddha's days, as in our own, people adhered to the superstitious ideas of what is lucky/unlucky, auspicious and its opposite and even "religious" omens of fortune and misfortune. Such events, happenings and bodily marks have of course varied through the ages but the ideas and superstitions connected with it remain a part of many peoples' lives. India being a vast country with many languages and cultural differences, then as now, had differing traditions about what was lucky but no certainty could be reached about the underlying reasons why "a" was lucky and "b" unlucky. Tradition could not agree about it. This is what the Maṅgala Sutta's first verse is about. Devas and humans decided to ask the Buddha about this matter.

Before we read his list of 37 "supreme good omens", we should be clear about the usual understanding of omen. An example that I encountered years ago in Thailand will illustrate the tangled and confused nature of omens generally.

In Thailand, where bhikkhus usually go out to collect their food with their bowls in the early morning, the sight of a monk or several of them, as soon as the house or shop door is opened, is reckoned to be very auspicious. This "auspiciousness" does not take account of whether the monk or monks are ennobled by their Dharma practice, or whether they are guys using the robes to get an easy livelihood. This "omen" of the sight of early morning monks of whatever kind, is reckoned "good".

Opposed to this illogic is the idea held by Chinese, of whom there are many in Bangkok and other Thai cities. If they behold a monk first thing in the morning, this is reckoned in their tradition as inauspicious, not a good day for the making of money. Why? Though it is hard to believe, the argument goes thus: Monks own nothing (at least they are not supposed to own much) and they teach a doctrine of nothing (a confused reference to what is called "emptiness" or "voidness" in English), so they are ill-omened for businessmen! Here are two cul-

tures with quite opposed ideas upon a supposed omen! Is one more true than the other? No, both are superstitions, because the reason behind these “omens” is not based upon cause and effect. The causes (seeing monks) have no real relation to the supposed effects of either auspicious (Thai idea) or inauspicious (Chinese).

In some cultures which are supposed to be scientifically “advanced”, still many may be found who adhere without thought to ancient superstitions about what is good, lucky, or an omen. The Buddha’s standard of auspiciousness transcends these confused ideas and offers a clear summary of what is truly beneficial for everyone irrespective of race, language, culture, and religion.

The Sutta, which is straightforward, does not need a detailed commentary, though if one is required, the classical Pāli Commentary upon this Sutta is translated in *Minor Readings and Illustrator* published by the Pāli Text Society. The translation of this book and of the Sutta quoted here is by Ven. Ñāṇamoli Thera, who tirelessly devoted his life to rendering many Pali texts into English, some of them quite abstruse. In his honour, and with the permission of the PTS, I quote his translation here with one or two minor changes.

One note upon the line: “Though one is touched by Worldly Dharmas” may be useful. What are the worldly dharmas that one may be touched by? This refers to the famous eight *lokadhammā* found principally in AN 8.5–6. In my old translation made in Wat Bovoranives, Bangkok, the verses of this Sutta read as follows:

Gain and loss together with honour and dishonour,
blame and praise, happiness, dissatisfaction¹ too,
these, the impermanent conditions of mankind
never perpetual, perturbate are they:
these, the heedful one with wisdom well-endowed
carefully discerns as conditions perturbate.

¹ “Dissatisfaction” = *dukkha*.

Desirable conditions do not agitate the mind,
nor conditions undesired and can make resentment rise,
compliance, opposition too, are for that one no more,
not smouldering are they, to non-existence gone;
and then having Known that Stainless, Griefless State,
rightly one Knows becomings' Other Shore. (AN 8.6)

2.5 To the *Yakkha* Sūciloma

SŪCILOMA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling in Gaya at the Stone Couch in the place of the *yakkha* Sūciloma. At that time the *yakkhas* Khara and Sūciloma paused nearby and the former said: “That is a monk”. “He’s not a monk, he’s just a ‘mere-monk’; but wait until I find out whether he’s a monk or a ‘mere-monk’.”

Then the *yakkha* Sūciloma approached the Radiant One and pressed his body against him, at which the Radiant One drew back. The *yakkha* then said to him, “Are you afraid of me, monk?” “Friend, I am not afraid of you, but your touch is evil.”

“Monk, I shall ask you a question and if you do not reply to me I shall overturn your mind, split your heart, and grasping you by the feet fling you to the other side of the Ganges.”

“Friend, I do not see anyone indeed who in this world with its devas, Māras and Brahmā-gods, together with its people—monks and brahmins, rulers and ordinary persons—who could overturn my mind, split my heart and grasping me by the feet fling me to the other side of the Ganges. Still, friend, you can ask whatever you wish.”

Then the *yakkha* Sūciloma addressed the Radiant One with this verse.

SŪCILOMA From whence the causes of both lust and hate,
from what are likes, dislikes and terror born,
what origin’s there for thoughts in mind,
as boys harass a (captive) crow? 273

BUDDHA From causes here come lusts and hate,
from here, likes, dislikes and terror’s born,
present origin’s there for the thoughts in mind,
as boys release a (captive) crow. 274

Born of lubricity, arisen from self,
 bearing branch-born roots as the banyan figs,
 such are they in sensuality entwined,
 as woods entangled by the stinky-vine. 275

Listen, O *yakkha*, for those who know,
 from where these causes come—all they dispel,
 they cross this flood so hard to cross,
 uncrossed before, to not become again. 276

(Snp 273–276)

Remarks upon Sūciloma Sutta

Yakkhas are perhaps demonized wild non-ariyan inhabitants who lived in forests and had few possessions, but some reputation in magical matters. Sūciloma, a name meaning “needle-hair” was possibly a very hairy male, though one may doubt that his hair was needle-like. The Buddha’s remark that he was not afraid of him but that his touch was “evil” may mean that this *yakkha* was unwashed and malodorous. Yet even though he seems to have been uncouth, the question he asked is not that of an ignorant person.

The question-verse in its first three lines has the Pāli interrogative *kuto*, “whence, from where, from what”. *Kutonidāna* in the first line means “from whence the causes”, *kutojā* in the second translates “born from what”, while the third line has *kuto samuṭṭhāya* is “from what origin”. This question is framed very much in Buddhist teaching: the enquiry into causality.

The simile in the last line raises a number of questions, the first of them being, what is it that boys do to a crow? We are not told in the Sutta about this and most translators have resorted to the Pāli Commentary. There it is explained that boys catch a crow, tie string to its legs, and let it go as far as the string permits when they jerk it and so crash the crow. Sounds like boys generally have not changed much!

This may be true, or perhaps the Commentary has based its tale on later behaviour of boys! As the line reads it is literally “as boys a crow ...” The space here is for translation of the verb *ossajjati* which PTS Dictionary says means “to let loose, let go, send off, give up, dismiss, release”, while Cone’s *A Dictionary of Pāli* adds “lets go, releases, throws, abandons”. The Pāli Commentary glosses this verb with *kipati*, to throw.

Translators so far have rendered the simile: “drag down as boys will drag a crow” (E.M. Hare), “(harass) as boys do a crow” (Saddhātissa), “as young boys toss up a (captive) crow” (K.R. Norman), “like (tethered) crow pulled by boys captors) earthward” (Mrs Rhys Davids in *Kindred Sayings*, Saṃyutta Nikāya, Vol. I), and “(toss one around) as boys toss up a crow” (Bhikkhu Bodhi in *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, Saṃyutta Nikāya). While the *ossajjati* will support such translations as “drag”, “toss up”, “pull”, etc, it cannot stretch to “harass”: “harass” and even “torture” are what the boys are undoubtedly doing to the crow, an interpretation rather than a translation. As *kipati* = “to throw” is a commentarial gloss this gives more latitude.

The simile of the boys and the crow is interesting and unusual. The Commentary explains that the boys represent the thoughts, while the crow is the mind which is either harassed or released. No doubt the Pāli Commentary identifies the boys as unwholesome states of mind and this is fitting in the first verse but even if the same meaning is given to the simile in the second verse, it will not fit. Suppose that one chooses “toss around” as the translation for *ossajjati* in both verses this is only appropriate for the verse, not for the Buddha’s reply. All translators without exception, in following the Commentary, repeat the same rendering of the simile in both verses. But now, supposing that the Buddha has played with the multiple meanings of the verb *ossajjati*, so that a different meaning in the second verse is appropriate in translation?

To appreciate that this might be so, we have to consider the mean-

ings of *ito* which replaces *kuto* in the second verse. In this verse *ito* appears three times and is rendered “here”, “now”, and “present”. The Buddha in this verse has emphasized that “causes”, “birth”, and “origin” are not so much a matter of the past, especially of such beliefs as in past lives, as the first verse suggests, but concern the present. This emphasis on the present ties in with such teachings as:

One should not trace back the past
or on the future build one’s hopes,
the past is just the left-behind,
the future is the yet-unreached;
rather with insight one should see
each dharma as it arises now ...

(MN 131 Bhaddekaratta Sutta)

And of course with the practice of mindfulness.

As the second verse deals with causality in the present moment which would lead to Awakening in the present, and as the verb *ossajjati* can mean “release, let go, loose”, it seems appropriate to translate the line as: “as boys release a (captive) crow”.

This pair of Pāli verses could be corrupt, as traditions other than the Pāli texts vary widely. The Sutta is repeated in SN 10.3 and readers should consult portions of the Commentary translated in *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, Vol. 1, for further information.

2.6 Wrong Conduct in the Bhikkhu's Life

DHAMMACARIYA SUTTA

The Good Life living, with Dharma accordingly,
they say that this is wealth supreme.
But if one leaves the household life
gone forth from home to homelessness 277

and then be one of those foul-mouthed,
beast-like, delighted doing harm,
such a one's of evil life
increasing "dust" within himself, 278

a bhikkhu delighting in quarrelling
while in delusion wrapped,
knows not the Dharma even when
it's by the Buddha pointed out; 279

led along by ignorance so
that one harms those of well-grown mind,
and does not know defilements' path
that leads to hellish life. 280

To Downfall going on and on,
from life to life, from dark to dark,
a bhikkhu such as this indeed
hereafter to *dukkha* descends. 281

One such with blemishes is like
a public shit-pit filled to the brim,
used for many years,
so very hard to clean. 282

O bhikkhus, when you come to know
one such attached to household life—

of evil desires and evil thoughts
and of evil ways of behaviour, 283

all of you united then
should shun, avoid a person such,
blow away these sweepings and
throw away that trash, 284

and suchlike chaff winnow away—
those sham monks, those conceited monks—
having blown them off, those who are
of evil wants and wrong resorts, 285

then living in purity with the pure
with mindfulness you will abide,
in concord live, intelligent—
you will arrive at *dukkha's* end. 286

(Snp 277-286)

Notes on the Dhammacariya Sutta

This Sutta is unusual in that it contains no indication of who is teaching, though one may assume that it is the Buddha. Of course, the Commentary offers an occasion for its teaching and makes it plain that the Buddha is exhorting the bhikkhus. Though called “Dhammacariya” it could better be known as the Adhammacariya Sutta as most of the verses concern the wrong conduct of a bhikkhu.

The language of condemnation of wayward monks is here quite strong and is directed at those who have major failings rather than peccadilloes. Obviously, such monks were hard to reform and the verses in the middle part of this Sutta advise monks to avoid such people. Perhaps they were considered irreformable and there is certainly no suggestion here of compassionate action towards them.

In one sense, just as all humans can be labelled “crazy”, so we are all “shit-pits” to some degree. Only those ennobled by the Dharma are free of these taints. So then the language of some of these verses seems unnecessarily severe. Perhaps these stanzas were composed by a particularly self-righteous monk who felt himself far above the failing of his brethren. How they came to be attributed to the Buddha is unknown.

2.7 How Brahmins Lived by the Dharma

BRĀHMAṆADHAMMIKA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One dwelt at Sāvattihī, in the Jeta Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's park. Then many decrepit old Kosalan brahmins, aged, elderly, advanced in years, attained to old age, those indeed of palatial abodes, went to the Radiant One and exchanged greeting with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished they sat down to one side. Sitting there these brahmins of palatial abodes said, "Master Gotama, are there now to be seen any brahmins who practise the Brahmin Dharma of the brahmins of old?"

"No, brahmins, there are no brahmins now to be seen who practise the Brahmin Dharma of the brahmins of old."

"It would be excellent if the good Gotama would speak to us upon the Dharma of the brahmins of old if it would not be too much trouble."

"Then brahmins, listen well and bear in mind what I shall say".

"Indeed, venerable" said those brahmins of palatial abodes to the Radiant One. He spoke as follows:

In ancient times the sages then
austerely lived, were self-restrained,
let go five bases of desire
to fare for their own benefit. 287

Brahmins then no cattle had,
no gold, no grain they hoarded up,
their grain, their wealth was Vedic lore—
this the treasure they guarded well. 288

For them, whatever food prepared
was by the doorway placed
from faith prepared for those who sought,
for (donors) thought it should be given. 289

Then in various states and provinces
 rich in colourful cloths well-dyed
 with furniture and dwellings too
 with these to brahmins they paid respect. 290

Unbeaten were brahmins and inviolate—
 guarded by Dharma-goodness then,
 none hindered or obstructed them
 when they arrived at household doors. 291

Until the age of eight-and-forty
 they practised celibate student life—
 the brahmins of those ancient times
 fared seeking knowledge and conduct good. 292

Those brahmins went not to others' wives
 nor bought a wife from other clans;
 by mutual consent together they came,
 being happy with each other. 293

Brahmins then did not indulge
 in sexual intercourse out of time,
 during menstruation,
 but only when wives were free from this. 294

The celibate life was praised by them
 with virtue and uprightness,
 friendliness, penance and gentleness,
 harming none and patient too. 295

Whoso 'mong them strong efforts made
 resembling Brahma, best,
 he never did engage in sex
 not even in a dream. 296

Then some of them with wisdom blest
followed his practice path
praising the celibate life, as well
as virtue and as patience too. 297

Having begged rice, butter and oil,
with cloths and bedding too,
they sought and stored these righteously,
and from them made a sacrifice:
during that sacrificial rite
cattle they never killed. 298

Like mother (they thought), father, brother
or any other kind of kin,
cows are our kin most excellent
from whom come many remedies. 299

Givers of good and strength, of good
complexion and the happiness of health,
having seen the truth of this
cattle they never killed. 300

Those brahmins then by Dharma did
what should be done, not what should not,
and so aware they graceful were,
well-built, fair-skinned, of high renown.
While in the world this lore was found
these people happily prospered. 301

But then in them corruption came
for little by little they observed
how rajahs had to splendours won
with women adorned and elegant, 302

and chariot, yoked to thoroughbreds,
 caparisoned, embroideries finely sewn,
 and houses well-designed with walls—
 insides divided into rooms, 303

filled with crowds of women fair
 and ringed by herds of increasing cows—
 all this the eminent wealth of men
 the brahmins coveted in their hearts. 304

Then they composed some Vedic hymns
 and went chanting to Okkāka king:
 “Great your wealth and great your grain,
 make sacrifice to us with grain and wealth”. 305

That rajah, Lord of chariots,
 by brahmins was persuaded so
 he offered all these sacrifices:
 of horses, men, the peg well-thrown,
 the sacrifice of soma drink
 the one of rich results—
 while to the brahmins wealth he gave: 306

of cattle, bedding and of cloth
 with women adorned and elegant
 and chariots yoked to thoroughbreds
 caparisoned, embroideries finely sewn, 307

dwelling in which one would delight,
 these well-divided into rooms
 and many different kinds of grain,
 this wealth he to the brahmins gave. 308

When they had all this wealth received
 to hoard it up was their desire

for they were overwhelmed by greed—
 their craving thus increased—
 so they composed more Vedic hymns
 and chanting went to Okkāka king. 309

“As water is, and earth, as well
 as gold, as grain as well as wealth,
 in the same way for human beings,
 and cattle are necessities;
 Great your wealth and great your grain,
 make sacrifice to us with grain and wealth”. 310

That rajah, lord of chariots,
 by brahmins was persuaded—so
 in sacrifice, he caused to kill
 cattle in hundreds, thousands too. 311

But neither with hooves nor horns
 do cows cause harm to anyone,
 gentle they are as sheep
 yielding us pails of milk;
 in spite of this the rajah seized
 their horns, slew them by the sword. 312

Then devas, antigods, demons, led
 by Indra, even the ancestors,
 cried out “Against the Dharma is all this!”
 while fell the sword upon the cows. 313

In former times three ills were found:
 desire and hunger and decay;
 but due to the killing of cattle,
 ninety-eight diseases came. 314

This adharmic wielding of weapons,
 descended from times of old:
 in this are the innocents slain,
 while ritual priests from Dharma fell. 315

So this ancient practice, base,
 is censured by the wise;
 where similar things are seen,
 people blame the ritual priests. 316

When Dharma was perverted thus,
 merchants and workers split apart,
 and warrior-nobles split as well,
 while wife her husband did despise. 317

Then nobles and those of Brahmā “kin”
 and others restrained by love of caste,
 neglected then their laws on “birth”
 and under the sway of pleasures came. 318

When this was said the brahmins of palatial abodes exclaimed to the Radiant One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dharma has been clarified by Master Gotama in many ways, as though he was fighting what had been overturned, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms. We go for refuge to Master Gotama, to the Dharma and to the Saṅgha. May Master Gotama remember us as *upāsakas* who from today have Gone for Refuge for life.”

(Snp 287–318)

The rich old Brahmins and the Buddha

What happened?

Imagine the scenario: the Buddha is seated in the grounds of the Jeta Grove outside the prosperous city of Sāvattihī (Śrāvastī). A number of really old brahmins who are also rich come to call on the Buddha, no doubt in chariots, and with servants and possibly pupils as well. That they are old is insisted upon by the use in the text of no less than six adjectives to this effect, so we may picture them in the 70s, 80s or 90s even. That they are rich is described by only one word *mahāsāla*, literally “of great halls”, surrounded no doubt by great estates from which they derived much wealth. As was the custom among Indians, especially brahmins, in approaching a Teacher, they first exchanged greetings and no doubt their names with the Buddha, and we are told that this included “courteous and amiable talk”. This was taken to be a polite and auspicious beginning to contact with a Teacher. Sitting to one side is also polite, in this way a visitor does not presume to occupy the space immediately opposite the Teacher. Then one of these rich old brahmins speaking on behalf of the others, asked his astonishing Question.

At this point we may pause in our imagination of the scene and bring to the fore our examining faculties: Why did these old brahmins ask the Buddha a question which they must have known would receive a negative reply? They would know—perhaps partly from their own lives—that brahmins of their times conducted themselves far differently from the ideal brahmins of the past. And of course the Buddha denied that there were any brahmins in their times who lived according to the ancient brahmin Dharma. The old brahmins then asked him very politely, (“if it would not be too much trouble”) to discourse upon this subject.

The puzzle posed by the Sutta is why the brahmins asked this particular question. They would know the conditions of most brahmins

in their society: a glimpse of this may be had from some verses of Snp 618–625. There we learn that so-called brahmins were farmers, craftsmen, merchants, servants, thieves, soldiers, priests and rajahs. But the Buddha's very high standards on what constituted a brahmin (626–653) went far beyond these worldly descriptions.

From their studies of the Vedas and auxiliary literature, they would know how brahmins were portrayed in the distant past, so why did they, according to this text, ask the Buddha about this. It could be that some of them were curious as to how the Buddha would reply, for, after all, he was not regarded by them as an "orthodox" brahminical teacher. Perhaps he would give a scathing account of brahmin behaviour which they could then argue with him. Or perhaps they wished an answer from a teacher they knew to be famous who would see this question in a different light. In general though, the brahmins in the Pāli Suttas are portrayed as orthodox and conservative, having little interest in exploring others' teachings. There are notable exceptions, as with Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja at Snp 3.9, but most brahmins did not welcome other teachers examining and criticizing parts of the Brahmin Dharma. In any case these brahmins did not ask a question which could go beyond their own tradition.

As an alternative to these speculation there is the possibility that the occasion" (*nidāna*) for this discourse has nothing to with rich old brahmins asking an improbable question. Prose Suttas have "occasions" describing when and where they were spoken by the Buddha and there are a few cases of this in Snp. In the majority of the poetic Suttas there is no occasion given in the Snp text, but the Snp Commentary provides "occasions", some of which are more likely than others. Let us suppose that this "occasion" though included in the Snp text is in fact a later addition to the verses and provides a story upon which may be build a strong Buddhist criticism of the brahmins. This supposition would dissolve away the story of old brahmins asking about their own Dharma.

Brahmins, those then past and then present

Verses 287–301 concern how the ancient brahmins lived with their ideal conduct given in detail. Whether this is looking back upon a “golden age” of brahmins, or whether it agreed with the facts of history, is hard to tell, though it is common to all religious traditions that they begin with a flowering of true spirituality, to be followed over generations by decline. Verses 287–291 could almost apply to the lives of good bhikkhus who also are held in honour for their austere and compassionate practice and so receive gifts from their supporters. The next verse introduces a particularly brahminical practice, the long studentship of young celibate brahmins more or less spent with their teachers. When this period of the Good Life was complete then brahmins married.

Verse 294 throws light upon brahminical fears of “pollution”, that is, of degradation from their caste, in this case caused by contact with menstrual blood. Hindu law books contain many examples of what leads to being outcasted, such as travelling overseas and partaking food not cooked by brahmin-caste people, and so on. By contrast, the Buddha emphasized pollution of the mind/emotions. However, verse 295 pictures a Good Life which would be an ornament to anyone whether in Buddhist monastic robes or within other religious traditions.

There follow two verses strongly advocating the celibate life in a way that could describe good bhikkhus too. From 298 onwards there are verses upon “begging”. English does not have a very good word to translate *yācati* as understood by Buddhist teachings. A bhikkhu going on almsround must be silent, unless spoken to, and may not ask for food generally though allowances are made for sick monks. They collect in their bowls whatever people are happy to give to them. This dignified practice differs in many ways from the pictures conjured up by “begging”.

Verse 298 emphasizes that the original form of brahminical rites involved no bloodshed and is followed by two verses praising cattle,

particularly cows, for their benefits to human society. No mention of course, is made of the so-called benefits of beef! Those brahmins then, and most of them today, were vegetarians and appreciated the many products that come from milk. The results of this kindness to cattle and Dharma-practice generally are listed in 301.

But as is the way in this world, this happy state could not continue. The causes of brahminical decline are spelt out in the next few verses. Many of these factors would apply equally to Buddhist monastic degeneration. Just as those brahmins of old greedily stared at the wealth and luxury of the rajahs' courts and coveted what they saw, so many Buddhist monks these days want to enjoy the pleasures advertised in so many ways in "western" materialistic life.

It is worth our reflection upon present times, when so much *adharma* is practised, and so many new diseases have arisen as dangers for us now. Could there be causes and effects—past human causes with painful results for us?

Weapons and killing are clearly stated (315) to be not the way of Dharma. But if we view our world now—through newspapers, radio, television and so on—what do we find every day: more and more violence. Some of it is dressed up as the lawful control of others who would bring even worse evils than we have presently. Powerful people, the present-day representatives of rajahs, speak upon this and are believed. "Well, they must know, mustn't they? They must know more than us!" So the blind follow the blind. What good can ever come from violence? This is not to recommend pacifism in its extreme forms for even the famous Buddhist king, Asoka, kept an army, though he did not use it for offensive warfare after he became a Buddhist. But in general, violence begets violence, while as Dhammapada 5 reminds us:

Never here by enmity
are those with enmity allayed:
they are allayed by amity—
this is the Natural Law.

The Sutta closes with two verses upon the destruction of traditional norms caused by the violence (in this case of the sacrifices) in their society. Even if the norms of that society (caste, discrimination and even persecution of low caste and outcaste people) does not recommend itself to our understanding of civilization, still it was an established code of behaviour. But the Buddha, whose essential teaching was (and is) karmic causation, pointed out and made clear that ritual sacrifices involving violence cannot possibly bring the good results of peace, good health and wealth. The (violent) causes do not agree with the desired peaceful results. If we desire peace these days, this causation still applies: peace, happiness and spiritual growth can never be brought about by more and more dreadful weapons. Evil cannot be put down by more evil even when this is disguised by the powerful calls of nationalism, destruction of violent foes and our personal safety in future.

2.8 Dharma as a Boat

NĀVĀ SUTTA

As devas do venerate their lord, Indra king,
so likewise to that person from whom one knows Dharma,
respected, clear-minded, and very learned too,
that teacher makes manifest the words of the Dharma. 319

This having considered then, the wise person,
while practising Dharma according with Dharma,
becomes learned, intelligent, subtle-minded too,
by diligently dwelling with one who is Such. 320

But by following the foolish, inferior fellow,
who's not found Dharma's goal, while envious of others,
to death one will come before Dharma knowing,
not having crossed over (the river of doubts). 321

Just as a person going into a river
swollen in flood and very swiftly flowing,
would be carried away by the force of the current—
then how can this person help others across? 322

So it's the same with the unpractised person,
who knows not the Dharma as explained by the wise,
sans knowledge profound, not crossed over doubting:
how could this person cause others to Know? 323

But one who does on a strong boat embark,
furnished with oars and rudder complete,
as skilled in the means, with wisdom as well,
that one can take so many others across. 324

Of mind developed deeply, one who Knows truly,
one of great learning, or unshakeable Dharma,

other people can lead who possess the capacity
to listen attentively and penetrate deeply. 325

Therefore be sure to frequent a True person,
an intelligent one who is of great learning,
realized in the meaning, practised on the Path,
a Knower of Dharma attained to the Bliss. 326

(Snp 319–326)

Commentary on Nāvā Sutta

319: Whether the word *viññāṇa* in the second line should be translated “knows” (in an intellectual sense) or “Knows” (through personal experience of Dharma’s truth), one’s Dharma-teacher, or many Dharma-teachers, should be greatly respected. They have opened one’s eyes to the treasure of the Dharma, a gift excelling all other gifts. How they should be revered will vary with different cultures, even simple matters of prostration and *añjali* vary greatly, while some traditional marks of reverence may not be appropriate in “western” lands. Still, these things are not so important in comparison with heartfelt devotion and helpfulness. Those who truly revere their teachers never create trouble for them nor do they stir up strife among their disciples.

320: “Practising the Dharma according with Dharma” (*dhammānu-dhammapatipatti*) is obviously opposed to the egocentric method of “practising Dharma according to oneself”. With the former since it is Dharma-practice according with the teachings and principles of Dharma which will advance experience of the Dharma, while with the latter the only result will be to lead away from Dharma and from one’s teacher’s instructions. The qualities of both the teacher and the pupil are both mentioned in this verse, and it is obvious that pupils, with diligent practice, will become like their teacher in virtues and wisdom, eventually to

become teachers themselves. Awakened teachers are sometimes referred to as those who are Such (*tādi*) that is, they have Known the Dharma as Such (or Thus) and not otherwise.

- 321: The dangers of not practising with a teacher who is Such but “following a foolish inferior fellow” are made plain in this verse. This description of an unworthy teacher and the disadvantages of being a student under him/her remind us of the verse (Snp 262):

Not consorting with the foolish,
rather with the wise consorting,
honouring the honourable:
this is a supreme good omen.

The river of doubts is the experience of all unenlightened people. What do they doubt? They think that they know through blind devotion, intellectual knowledge or by following tradition, that really they Know but they only believe. “To believe” in fact, means “not to know” although one may be sure that one’s belief is pure and correct, even the only doctrine which is true. But as belief in doctrines, including Buddhist ones, means that these have not been verified, there must, somewhere in the back of the mind, be doubt. The effort to believe, for instance in six improbable things before breakfast, is a rather unskilful way to cover up doubts. Doubts make for interior conflict, while beliefs can lead to exterior conflicts, even to bloodshed, persecution and wars.

What are called religious beliefs in English are included under the Pāli-Sanskrit word *diṭṭhi/dṛṣṭi*, literally “what has been seen”, hence the English translation “view”. Right views are those which accord with Dharma whether in matters of moral conduct (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) or in wisdom (*paññā/prajñā*).

Dharma in this sense does not equate solely with “Buddhism”. It is not only Buddhists who are good, kind and generous people

and who purify their minds! Wrong views may be minor matters of belief held in the mind but not disputed with others, or they may lead to violence, killings, sectarian wars and assassinations.

In general, holding views is a block to spiritual development. Holding Buddhist views of any kind means one has not seen the Dharma for oneself. Holding wrong views—and there is a great variety of them—is destructive of Dharma both within and without. Believing in the Dharma may be a first step but it should not be long adhered to: clinging to the Dharma is just another kind of clinging (*upādāna*) and this is certainly not Dharma. Dharma is to be verified, not views to be clung to.

322–3: The first of these verses presents a striking simile with a question at its conclusion. So, how can this person help others across these floods? The help that they try to give others—to get them across the floods of ignorance and craving—could not succeed because they have not yet experienced “knowledge profound” and so have not gone to the Further Shore themselves.

Elsewhere too, the Buddha speaks about the situation where one stuck on this shore of *saṃsāra* will be unable to extricate another person in the same plight: “This situation does not occur, Cunda, that one person sunk in a morass will be able to pull out another in the same plight” (MN 8), but one who is no longer stuck will be able to extract another.

The Suttas also speak of three persons: one sunk in quicksands, another with one foot upon dry land, and last the person with both feet on firm ground. Only the last one, representing Buddhas and Awakened masters, is capable of pulling out others from the *saṃsāra*-morass. The middle person may be able to give some help as they have some personal experience of the awakening Dharma, but the first person can hardly help others. Even if one has vowed, as in Mahāyāna traditions, to cross over all beings to Nirvāṇa, still one must spend many years with good

masters, learning and practising, before this can be even partly accomplished.

- 324: The strong boat is the Dharma. I have been fortunate to know a number of teachers who may have crossed over in the Dharma-vessel and taken many others across. These teachers' Dharma, both their instructions and their conduct, was wonderful, the words and actions of those gone beyond self. They had hundreds or thousands of pupils who revered them as models of the Dharma manifest in a living person. So of course, they could "take so many others across".

In another Sutta (MN 22) the Buddha says:

"I shall show you how Dharma resembles a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping. Suppose a traveller saw a great expanse of water, whose near shore was dangerous and fearful, whose further shore was safe and free from fear, but there was no ferry or bridge. Then after considering this, he collected grass, twigs, branches and leaves and bound them together in a raft, supported by which, and making efforts with his hands and feet, he got safely across. Then when he had got across, he thought 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since by its means I got safely across; suppose that I hoist it on my head or load it on my shoulders and go wherever I want?' What do you think, bhikkhus, would that man, acting thus, be doing what should be done with a raft?"

"No, Lord."

"What should he do with it then? If when he got across, he thought, 'This raft has been very helpful to me since by its means I got safely across; suppose I haul it up on dry land or set it adrift on the water and go where I want to go?' That is how he should do

what should be done with a raft. So I have shown you how the Dharma resembles a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping. When you Know Dharma resembling a raft, then even Dharma should be abandoned, what to speak of non-Dharma.”²

The strong boat of Dharma can also be a vast vessel, as in a Mahāyāna sutra:

What then again is the vessel leading to Bodhi?
 Standing upon it one guides all beings to Nirvāṇa.
 Great is that vessel, immense,
 vast like the vastness of space
 Those who travel upon it are carried
 to safety, delight and to ease.

So going across the ocean, lake, river, floods, has been taught in many ways by the Buddha according to the persons being addressed.

- 325: “Unshakeable Dharma” is only found in those who Know and See. They are not unshakeable because of obstinacy, or from attachment to views, dogmas or to their own ideas. No force of any kind can shake their Knowing and Seeing the truth of the Dharma. They are unshakeable, as the traditional Pāli Commentary remarks, by any or all of the eight Worldly Dharmas: gain and loss, honour, dishonour, blame, praise, happiness, dissatisfaction (= *dukkha*). See also Commentary on Snp 2.4.
- 326: “Attained to the Bliss”. *Sukha* in this book is usually translated “happiness” but the *sukha* referred to here is that of realization of Dharma beyond all views.

² Sujato: KLM here had “even Dhamma-teaching should be abandoned”, but surely he did not mean to say that the teaching of Dhamma should be abandoned. I think it is clearer as is.

2.9 What is Good Conduct?

KIMSĪLA SUTTA

SĀRIPUTTA With what kinds of conduct and morality,
growing in what sorts of karmas,
will a person well-established be
for attainment of the highest goal? 327

BUDDHA Let that one be an honourer of elders, never envious,
a knower of the right time for the teacher seeing,
and when Dharma's being taught, a knower of that time
to listen precisely to those well-spoken words. 328

And at the right time go to the teacher's presence
in an unassuming way, discarding obstinacy,
with restraint and recollection of the way to practise,
remembering the Dharma for the life of purity. 329

Dwelling in the Dharma, delighted in Dharma,
in Dharma established, and skilled in deciding Dharma,
never uttering words to the Dharma's detriment,
Let such a one be guided by well-spoken truths. 330

Disputatiousness, gossip, complaints and ill-will,
deception, hypocrisy, longing and pride,
aggressiveness, harshness, defilements-attached,
fare abandoning these, pride-free, of steady mind. 331

Understanding's the essence of well-spoken words,
while that and the learnt is the essence of calmness;
but wisdom and learning in one do not grow—
that person who's hasty and negligent both. 332

Delighting in Dharma by Noble Ones taught,
their mind, speech and body all unsurpassed—

in gentleness, peace, meditative-states firm,
attained to the essence of wisdom and learning. 333

(Snp 327-333)

2.10 Wake up! Make an Effort!

UṬṬHĀNA SUTTA

Get up and sit!
What need of sleep!
For the sick what rest is there,
pierced by the dart of pain? 334

Get up and sit!
Train hard for peace.
Let not Māra know
that you are negligent,
deluded and under his control. 335

Cross beyond this craving—
tied to, desiring which
gods and men remain.
Don't let this chance pass by:
those who do so grieve,
sending themselves to hell! 336

From “dust” arises negligence,
from negligence to more:
by diligence and knowledge,
pluck out the dart oneself. 337

(Snp 334–337)

A pithy comment

How long has one to live? Does an end, the old end of death, come today, tomorrow, a few weeks or months away? And here we are lying down for hours and hours. Do we sleep so long because life is so painful—too much *dukkha*. And when we reach bodily sufferings even the escape of sleep and drowsiness may be no longer available.

“Get up and sit”, means “do it while you can!” The obvious pleasures do not last for long and a time will come when even comforts no longer manifest. Life isn’t nice for long. Even if you think of eighty years as long, think even that one hundred years passes soon and what will come after?

Our own Māras—our temptations and conflicts—strengthen the lazier we become. Māra is just a picturesque name for mental defilements. No Māra is “out there” to increase our *dukkha*—Māras are our own burdens. No need to be under Māra’s control—or to be under the dominion of the daughters of Māra! So don’t use Māra as an excuse of one’s own weakness or failings.

Craving may be pleasant, evenly divinely pleasant for so are the devas attached to their delights and burdened by them. Divine attachments must seem superior to the joys of humanity but deva-happiness does not equate to liberation. In fact, tangling oneself with innumerable pleasures—where one can do this as a human—could lead as a result of that karma to a painful future. “Sending themselves to hell”: no one else sends them there.

“Dust” accumulates in the house from not cleaning it, similarly does dust in the mind, which does however need moment by moment diligence to keep the dust away. Or perhaps a dart, rather than dust, will illustrate how painful is the accumulation of dirt. But it is all impermanent. Who has ever heard of permanent dirt? Though this is true, one still has to open an eye and see what is to be seen. So,

get up!

2.11 Teaching Rāhula

RĀHULA SUTTA

BUDDHA From living together constantly,
the Teacher you don't scorn?
Torch-bearer to humanity,
is he by you revered? 338

RĀHULA From living together constantly,
the Teacher I scorn not.
Torch-bearer to humanity
is by me revered. 339

BUDDHA Having let go five sense-desires,
and forms that are dear, delighting mind,
with faith renounce the household life,
be one who *dukkha* ends. 340

Keep company with noble friends,
dwell in a lonely practice-place,
secluded, having little noise,
with food be moderate. 341

Robes as well as food from alms,
with shelter, also remedies—
for these things no craving form,
so turn not to the world again. 342

By Pāṭimokkha stay restrained
and by the five sense faculties,
practise bodily mindfulness
to be dispassionate. 343

Avoid those objects beautiful,
which may be linked with lust,

on the unlovely, one-pointed,
well-concentrated, grow the mind. 344

Develop then the signless state,
with tendency to pride let go—
by fully understanding it,
truly as peaceful you will fare. 345

In this way the Radiant One with these verses frequently exhorted the venerable Rāhula.

(Snp 338–345)

A note upon Rāhula Sutta

This contains very ordinary Dharma advice for bhikkhus and the only unusual feature is found in verse 338. This raises the question of why the Buddha asks his son, Rāhula, if he scorns him. Of course this happens often enough in household life, and could also occur in monastic communities. Having asked this, the Buddha continues with words praising himself. Somewhat odd! Perhaps, though this is a speculation, the first two verses are later additions for they ring rather hollow.

2.12 Vaṅgīsa’s Questions, Buddha’s Answer

VAṄGĪSA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Lord dwelt at Ālāvī, at the Aggāḷava Shrine. Not long before, the venerable Vaṅgīsa’s preceptor, by name the elder Nigrodhakappa, had become completely Cool at the Aggāḷava Shrine. Then in Vaṅgīsa’s mind, being at one and in solitude, arose this thought: “Has my preceptor become completely Cool or has he not?”

Later in the day Vaṅgīsa left his solitude and went to the Lord and having drawn near him, paid his respects and sat to one side. While sitting there Vaṅgīsa said this to the Lord: “While I was sitting in meditation this thought arose in my mind: ‘Has my preceptor become completely Cool or has he not?’”

Vaṅgīsa then arose from his seat, placed his upper robe over one shoulder and, lotussing his hands respectfully, addressed the Lord with these verses.

VAṄGĪSA We ask now the Teacher of wisdom supreme—
 who’s cut off all doubts in this very life,³
 that Aggāḷava bhikkhu who died recently,
 famous, well-known, was he truly Cool-become? 346

 His name Nigrodhakappa was,
 to that brahmin given by the Radiant One,
 he went around revering you, and, strenuous
 seeking Liberation, O Seer of the Secure. 347

 O Sakya, All-Seeing, we all wish to know
 concerning this hearkener, Kappa by name,
 all of our ears are ready to hear—
 the Teacher you are, the One unsurpassed. 348

³ Sujato: LKM had “who’s inseen the Dhamma”, which is incorrect.

Sever our doubt and tell me of this:
 that he knew complete Cool, O Wisdom Profound:
 tell this in our midst, O All-Seeing One,
 as thousand-eyed Sakka by devas ringed. 349

Whatever here deluded paths bring on the bondages,
 on ignorance's side, the bases for all doubts,
 on reaching the Tathāgatha they cease to be,
 for certainly his Eye is supreme among men. 350

If never, no one, could defilements disperse,
 as forceful wind a piled-up mass of clouds,
 enshrouded would be, for sure, the whole world,
 and even the illustrious would have no chance to shine. 351

But the Wise in this world are the makers of light
 and you, a Wise One, are such I conceive,
 we have come upon Him who Knows and who Sees—
 to those here assembled, Kappa clearly reveal. 352

Swiftly send forth fair speech, O Fairest One,
 as swan (its neck) stretches sounding softly forth;
 with your melodious voice so well-modulated
 to it we listen, all of us, attentively. 353

Remainderless, you've let go of birth and death—
 I'll urge the One who's Cleansed to Dharma teach;
 ordinary persons cannot act out their desires,
 but with discrimination Tathāgatas act. 354

(Your) expositions (of Dharma) so thoroughly based
 on straightforward wisdom then thoroughly grasped;
 (and he) last lotussed his hands with greatest respect:
 so do not delude us, You of wisdom supreme. 355

Having known the Dharma noble, the basics and refined,
 You the Energetic One who Knows, do not delude.
 I long for your words as for water one does
 in summer season by heat overcome.
 Rain down on our ears! 356

That purpose for which Kappāyana led
 the life of purity—surely it wasn't in vain;
 did he become Cool or did residues remain—
 tell of his Freedom, that we long to hear. 357

BUDDHA Craving he cut for mind and body both—
 craving's stream that long had lain within him;
 completely he has crossed beyond all birth and death—
 So the Blessed One spoke, the Fore before the Five. 358

VAṄĪSA Hearing your word, O Seventh of Seers,
 I'm both pleased and truly satisfied.
 Truly my question's not in vain—
 that brahmin did elude me not! 359

As he spoke, he acted so,
 one of the Buddha's hearkeners
 who rent the deceiver Māra's net,
 spread wide and very strong. 360

Lord, Kappa the capable
 saw graspings', clingings' source;
 Kappāyana has gone beyond
 death's realm so hard to cross. 361

(Snp 346-361)

2.13 Perfection in the Wandering Life

SAMMĀPARIBBĀJANIYA SUTTA

QUESTION Of the Sage of great wisdom, one gone across,
to the further shore gone, completely Cool, poised
who's renounced a house,
sense-pleasures dispelled, I ask:
How would a bhikkhu rightly wander in the world? 362

BUDDHA Who has destroyed (belief) in omens, in luck,
the occurrence of dreams and other signs such,
who is rid of the bane of what is auspicious,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 363

Who sensuality is able to divert—
both varieties, human and divine—such a bhikkhu
passed beyond being, knowing Dharma well,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 364

Anger and avarice by the bhikkhu abandoned,
his back having turned upon slander as well,
compliance, opposition, completely disappeared,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 365

Letting go the pleasant, what's unpleasant too,
ungrasping, unsupported by nothing at all,
from all the causes for the fetters—completely free,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 366

Seeing no essence in mental substrata,
dispelled passionate desire for what can be grasped,
not being dependent or led by another,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 367

In speech, mind and deed to others unopposed
and knowing very well the Dharma's full extent,
and one who is aspiring to the state of Nirvāṇa,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 368

The bhikkhu not conceited thinking, "Me he reveres",
nor on being abused does he retaliate,
nor thrilled with others donations of food,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 369

For greed and for being, the bhikkhu's let go,
as for injury and bondage it's not done by him
crossed over doubts, removed is the dart,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 370

A bhikkhu who knows what he himself enjoys
would not be one who harms others in the world;
realizing the Dharma as it really is,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 371

in whom are no hidden tendencies at all—
the roots of evil completely removed,
for them no longings left, no yearnings come anew
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 372

Inflows eradicated and conceit let go
and transcended the path of sexual desire,
one tamed, completely Cool and imperturbable,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 373

Confident and learned, one who Sees the Way,
one Wise who among sects is no sectarian;
who greed has diverted, hatred, ill-will too,
such a one rightly would wander in the world. 374

A conqueror—purity perfected, remover of the veil,
 with majesty of dharmas, far-shorer, inturbulent,
 skilful with knowledge of conditioned things' cessation,
 such a one rightly would wander in the world. 375

Of wisdom purified surmounting both
 past and the future, gone beyond time,
 and in every way free from sense-bases,
 such a one rightly would wander in the world. 376

Final Knowledge of the State, having realized the Dharma,
 having seen openly the letting-go of inflows,
 with all the substrata completely dissolved,
 such a one rightly would wander in the world. 377

QUESTION Indeed, O Blessed One, certainly it is thus,
 for that bhikkhu tamed, living like this—
 one who beyond all the fetters has passed,
 such a one rightly would wander in the world. 378

(Snp 362–378)

2.14 To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct

DHAMMIKA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Lord dwelt at Sāvattthī, in the Jeta Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the *upāsaka* Dhammika accompanied by five hundred *upasakas* went up to the Radiant One and sat to one side. Having done so and saluted the Radiant One, the *upasaka* Dhammika addressed him with verses.

DHAMMIKA I ask of Gotama—one profoundly wise:

Behaving in which way a hearkeeper is good—
whether from home to homelessness gone
or *upasakas* living the householder's life. 379

The birthplaces of this world together with devas
and final Release, you clearly understand,
none compare with you in seeing this profundity
for, as they say, you are Buddha supreme. 380

All knowledge is yours, you have perfectly revealed
Dharma, out of your compassion for beings all,
remover of the veil, one with the All-round Eye
and stainless do you illuminate the world. 381

Then came to your presence a *nāga* renowned,
Erāvaṇa by name, having heard you were a conqueror,
he had secluded talk with you and then attained—
“*Sādhu*” he exclaimed, and departed, pleased. 382

Then were there kings, Vessavaṇa, Kuvera,
who came to ask questions on Dharma from you,
so you, O Wise One, being asked then replied,
and they being pleased departed from there. 383

These theorist sectarians used to dispute—
 Ājīvakas and Nigaṇṭhas, all of that kind—
 unable in wisdom they go not beyond you,
 as a man standing still passes not one running swiftly.⁴ 384

Then there are Brahmins who're used to dispute—
 even old Brahmins are found among them;
 or other disputants proud of themselves:
 all, for the meaning, depend on you. 385

This Dharma indeed is blissful, profound,
 by you well-proclaimed, O Radiant One,
 so wishing to listen are all of us here,
 now when we asked, speak to us, Buddha the best. 386

So let all these bhikkhus well-seated here,
upāsakas too, who likewise wish to listen,
 listen to the dharma by the stainless won,
 as devas to Vāsava's well-spoken words. 387

BUDDHA Listen, O bhikkhus, I give you chance to hear—
 to the Dharma that's strict—all of you remember it,
 let the intelligent seeing the benefit
 practise the deportment of one who's left home. 388

A bhikkhu in the times proscribed should wander not
 but seek for alms timely going round a town;
 who goes at times proscribed, temptations do tempt,
 so the awakened go not within the wrong time. 389

Sights with sounds and tastes, smells and touches too—
 all these with which beings are completely drunk,
 for all of these dharmas let go desire,
 and at the right time walk for the morning meal. 390

⁴ Sujato: I completed the translation of this line.

A bhikkhu with timely almsfood gained
 returns by himself, then seated alone,
 contemplative within, not distracted without,
 not externalizing, since oneself's restrained. 391

Should he with other hearkeners converse,
 with bhikkhus, or anyone else at all,
 of the Dharma let him speak refined,
 not utter slander or another's blame. 392

Some, disputatious, offer warfare with words,
 but we do not praise them, those of little wit,
 bound by attachment to talking this and that,
 so certainly they send their minds far away. 393

The truly wise disciple having listened to the Dharma
 pointed out by the Well-farer, should carefully use
 food-offerings, a sitting and a sleeping place,
 with water for washing the principal robes. 394

Let a bhikkhu, therefore, with almsfood and hut
 for sitting and sleeping, for his robes washing,
 be unsullied, quite unattached,
 as water-drop spreads not upon a lotus-leaf. 395

Now I shall tell you the household's rule,
 by practising which one's a good hearkeeper,
 for by one with possessions it cannot be got—
 that dharma complete by a bhikkhu attained. 396

Kill not any beings nor cause them to be killed,
 and do not approve of them having been killed,
 put by the rod for all that lives—
 whether they are weak, or strong in the world. 397

What is “ungiven”—anything, anywhere,
 that’s known to be others’, its theft one should avoid.
 Neither order things taken,
 nor others’ removal approve—
 all of this “ungiven” let the hearer avoid. 398

Let the intelligent person live a celibate life,
 as one would avoid a pit of glowing coals;
 but being unable to live the celibate life,
 go not beyond the bounds with others’ partners. 399

In government assembly, or artisans’ guild,
 or one to another, speak not what is false,
 not others compel, nor approve of their lies,
 all kinds of untruthfulness you should avoid. 400

Whatever householder this Dharma approves,
 in maddening drink should never indulge,
 nor make others drink, nor approve if they do,
 knowing it leads to a mind that’s disturbed. 401

Fools do many evils because they are drunk,
 while causing other people to be negligent.
 This basis of demerit should be avoided,
 but fools are delighted, confused with mind upset. 402

Kill not any being, what’s not given do not take,
 neither be a liar nor addicted to drink,
 and, let go of sex and the non-celibate life,
 in the “wrong-time” for food, eat not in the night. 403

Neither necklaces display nor perfumes employ,
 use the ground as a bed or sleep upon a mat:
 these are the *uposatha* eight-factored vows
 made known by the Buddha gone to *dukkha*’s end. 404

With devotion at heart the *uposathas* kept,
 completely perfected in its eight parts,
 on the fourteenth, the fifteenth, and the eighth days,
 as well the days special in the moon's half months. 405

Let that one intelligent with devoted heart,
 having kept *uposatha*, early next morning,
 distribute food and drink—whatever's suitable—
 to the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, rejoicing in this act. 406

Support mother and father according to Dharma,
 do business as merchant to honesty adhering,
 diligently practising this householder's rule—
 then to the self-radiant devas one will arrive. 407

(Snp 379-407)

CHAPTER 3

The Great Chapter

3.1 The Leaving Home of Gotama

PABBAJJĀ SUTTA

NARRATOR Now I'll tell of the Leaving Home,
how he, the mighty seer, went forth,
how he was questioned and described
the reason for his Leaving Home.

408

The crowded life lived in a house
exhales an atmosphere of dust:
but leaving home is open wide—
seeing this, he chose Leaving Home.¹

409

By doing so did he reject
all bodily evil acts,
rejected too, wrong ways of speech,
his livelihood he purified.

410

He went to Rājagaha town,
hill-guarded fort of Magadhans;

¹ Sujato: LKM had “this he saw; chose Leaving Home”.

there he, the Buddha, walked for alms,
with many a mark of excellence. 411

King Bimbisāra from within
his palace saw him passing by,
and when he saw such excellence
in all his marks, 412

BIMBISĀRA “Look, sirs”, he said,
How stately is that man, handsome,
how pure, how perfect is his gait;
with eyes downcast, mindful, he looks
only a plough-yoke’s length ahead. 413

He’s surely not of humble birth!
Send forth royal messengers at once
upon the path the bhikkhu takes.” 414

MESSENGER The messengers were sent at once
and followed closely in his wake:
“Now which way will the bhikkhu go?
Where has he chosen his abode? 415

He wanders on from house to house
guarding sense-doors with real restraint.
Fully aware and mindfully,
his alms bowl soon was full. 416

His almsround is now done. The Sage
is setting out and leaving town,
taking the road to Paṇḍava—
he must be living on its hill.” 417

NARRATOR Now when he came to his abode
the messengers went up to him;

though one of them turned back again
to give the King reply: 418

MESSENGER The bhikkhu, sire, is like a lion,
or like a tiger, like a bull
and seated in a mountain-cave
on the eastern slope of Paṇḍava! 419

NARRATOR The Warrior hears the runner's tale,
then summoning up a coach of state,
he drove in haste from out the town,
out to the hill of Paṇḍava. 420

He drove as far as he could go,
and then descended from the coach;
the little distance that remained,
he went on foot, drew near the Sage. 421

The King sat down, and he exchanged
greetings, and asked about his health.
When this exchange of courtesy was done,
the king then spoke to him these words: 422

BIMBISĀRA You are indeed quite young,
a youth, a man in life's first phase,
you have the good looks of a man
of high-born warrior-noble stock, 423

one fit to grace a first-rate force,
to lead the troops of elephants,
wealth can I give you to enjoy;
please tell me of your birth. 424

BUDDHA Straight over there, O king,
the Himalayas can be seen,

there, with wealth and energy,
living among the Kosalans 425

are the Ādicca of solar race,²
in that, the clan of Sakyas.
From that family I've left home
not desiring pleasures of sense. 426

Having seen dangers in sense-desires,
renunciation seen as secure,
I shall go on to strive
for there does my mind delight 427

(Snp 408-427)

² Sujato: Indian royal histories speak of a "lunar" and a "solar" lineage. The Buddha's clan is believed to be descended from King Okkāka (Skt: Ikṣvāku) of the solar race. In Snp, Okkāka is mentioned in verses 305, 309, and 998.

3.2 The Striving of Gotama

PADHĀNA SUTTA

- BUDDHA As I strove to subdue myself
beside the broad Nerañjarā,
absorbed unflinchingly to gain
the surcease of bondage here,
Namucī came and spoke to me
with words all garbed in pity thus: 428
- MĀRA O you are thin and you are pale,
and you are in death's presence too: 429
- a thousand parts are pledged to death
but life still holds one part of you.
Live, sir! Life's the better way;
you may gain merit if you live, 430
- come live the life of purity, pour
libations on the holy fires
and thus a world of merit gain.
What can you do by struggling now? 431
- The path of struggling too is rough,
and difficult and hard to bear.
- NARRATOR Now Māra, as he spoke these lines
drew near until he stood close by. 432
- The Blessed One replied to him
as he stood thus:
- BUDDHA O Evil One,
O Cousin of the Negligent,
you have come here for your own ends. 433

Now, merit I need not at all.
 Let Māra talk of merit then,
 to those that stand in need of it. 434

For I have faith and energy,
 and I have understanding, too.
 So while I thus subdue myself,
 why do you speak to me of life? 435

There is this wind that blows, can dry
 even the rivers' running streams;
 so while I thus subdue myself,
 why should it not dry up my blood? 436

And, as the blood dries up, then bile
 and phlegm run dry, the wasting flesh
 becalms the mind: I shall have more
 of mindfulness and wisdom too,
 I shall have greater concentration. 437

For living thus I come to know
 the limits to which feeling goes.
 My mind looks not to sense-desires:
 Now see a being's purity. 438

Your squadron's first is Sense-desires
 your second's Sexual Discontent,
 Hunger and Thirst compose the third,
 and Craving is the fourth in rank, 439

the fifth is Sloth and Accidy,
 while Fear is called the sixth in line,
 Sceptical doubt is seventh, the eighth
 is Sliminess, Hardheartedness; 440

Gain with Honour, Praise besides,
and ill-won Notoriety,
Self-praise and Denigrating others— 441

These are your squadrons, Namucī,
the Black One's fighting troops.
None but the brave will conquer them
to gain bliss by the victory. 442

As though I'm weaving *muñja*-grass,
proclaiming no retreat: shame upon life
defeated here—better to die in battle now
than choose to live on in defeat. 443

Ascetics and brahmins there are found
that have surrendered here, and they
are seen no more: they do not know
the paths the pilgrim travels by. 444

So, seeing Māra's squadrons now
arrayed all round, with elephants,
I sally forth to fight, that I
may not be driven from my post. 445

Your serried squadrons, which the world
with all its gods cannot defeat,
Now I'll break with wisdom sharp,
as with a stone a raw clay pot. 446

With all mind's thoughts within the range,
with well-established mindfulness,
I'll travel on from state to state
many disciples leading out. 447

They, both diligent and resolute
 carry on my *Sāsana*,
 and though you like it not, they'll go
 to where they do not grieve. 448

MĀRA Though step by step for seven years
 I've followed on the Blessed One,
 the Fully Enlightened One, possessed
 of mindfulness, he gave to me no chance. 449

A crow there was who walked around
 a stone that seemed a lump of fat;
 "Shall I find something soft in this?
 And is there something tasty here?" 450

He finding nothing tasty there,
 made off: and we from Gotama
 depart in disappointment, too,
 like to the crow that tried the stone. 451

NARRATOR Then full of sorrow he let slip
 the lute from underneath his arm,
 then that dejected demon
 disappeared just there. 452

(Snp 428-452)

3.3 The Well-spoken

SUBHĀSITA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One dwelt at Sāvattthī, in the Jeta Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. The Radiant One spoke thus: “Bhikkhus”.

“Venerable Sir”, those bhikkhus replied.

“Speech having four qualities is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, and blameless, not blameworthy, among the wise. What four? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu speaks only what is well-spoken, not what is ill-spoken; what is Dharma, not what is not-Dharma; what is kindly, not what is unkind; what is the truth, not what is false. This speech is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, and blameless, not blameworthy among the wise.”

This is what the Radiant One said, then he spoke further.

Now peaceful Ones say: first speak the well-spoken,
and second, speak Dharma but not its opposite,
what’s kind do speak, third, not the unkind,
while fourth, speak the truth but never the false. 453

Then the venerable Vaṅgīsa rose with robe over one shoulder and lotussed hands towards the Radiant One saying to him: “Sir, it has come to me!”

“Let it come to you, Vaṅgīsa.”

The venerable Vaṅgīsa then praised the Radiant One in his presence with these appropriate verses:

Only that speech should be spoken
from which harm does not come to oneself,
nor torment brings upon others—
this truly is speech that’s well-spoken. 454

Speak only those words that are kind,
the speech that is gladly received,

so whatever one speaks to others,
conveying no evil, is kind. 455

Truth indeed, is deathless speech—
this is the ancient Dharma.
On truth, its study and practice both,
they say are the Peaceful firm. 456

Whatever words the Buddha speaks,
Nirvāṇa's safety to attain,
bringing *dukkha* to an end,
such words they are the worthiest. 457

(Snp 453-457)

Notes

This small Sutta is important for Dharma-practice. It is easier to make unwholesome karma by way of the mouth than it is through bodily action—words just slip off the tongue so easily. Think how many words one speaks every day! So the Buddha here defines what is *subhāsita*, well-spoken. He does this twice, first in prose and then in a summary verse, a mnemonic aid in a world where teachings were not recorded even by writing.

To ensure that this teaching stuck in the mind, Venerable Vaṅgīsa, famous for his ability to speak inspired and spontaneous verse, then, with the Buddha's approval, elaborates upon these four types of good speech. This occasion does not bring forth his best verses.

This Sutta also occurs in SN 8.5 (Vaṅgīsa-saṃyutta) though there it has no occasion, nor the Buddha's prose and verse.

Verse 456 mentions "the ancient Dharma". The word translated here as "ancient" is *sanantano* which PTS Dictionary defines as "primeval, of old, for ever, eternal". When used as an adjective with *dharma*, the meaning is that this Dharma is true:

“Whether Tathāgatas (or Buddhas) arise or Tathāgatas do not arise, there is this state of causality that always exists, this established order of dharmas, this natural lawfulness of Dharma, that is to say: All conditioned things are impermanent ... all conditioned things are *dukkha* ... all dharmas are not-self ...”

This is the ancient Dharma true of all worlds, of all beings, at all times, whether or not it is known to these beings. For the above quotation see AN 3.134.

The Hindu understanding of the Sanskrit *sanātana-dharma* emphasizes time—that this Dharma is eternal and includes among other matters the society ordered into castes. This view is defended in the Bhagavad-gīta.

3.4 To Sundarika-Bhāradvāja on Offerings

SUNDARIKA-BHĀRADVĀJA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling among the Kosalans. At that time the brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja performed on the bank of the Sundarika river the fire sacrifice and offered the fire-ritual. Having completed the sacrifice and ritual the brahmin rose from his seat and surveyed the four directions, thinking, “Who will partake of the remains of this sacrifice?” It happened then that the brahmin saw the Radiant One seated at the foot of a tree not far away, but with his head covered. Seeing him, the brahmin grasped the sacrificial remains in his left hand and a water-vessel in his right and approached the Radiant One who, hearing his approach, uncovered his head. Then the brahmin thought:

“This venerable one is shaven-headed, a mere shaveling” and desired to turn back. But it occurred to him: “Though shaven-headed there are some brahmins here like this. It would be good to inquire about his ‘birth’.” Then Sundarika-Bhāradvāja the brahmin approached the Radiant One and having done so, said this: “Of what ‘birth’ is the venerable one?” Then the Radiant One addressed these verses to the brahmin:

BUDDHA No brahmin am I, nor son of royalty,
 nor of merchant stock, nor any other (caste),
 for I know very well ordinary people’s line
 so wisely, having nothing, I fare through the world. 458

My robe is my dwelling, I live in no house,
My head is shaven, I am fully quenched;
Not clinging to any students here,
It is not appropriate, brahmin, to ask me of my clan. 459

SUNDARIKA But brahmins, sir, of brahmins always ask
 “Are you as well a brahmin, friend?” 460

- BUDDHA If you say you brahmin are, but call me none,
then of you I ask the chant of Sāvitrī,
consisting of three lines
in four and twenty syllables. 461
- SUNDARIKA On what do they rely, these seers,
born human, the nobles and brahmins, all of them,
that to the devas they sacrifices make
to bring about results here in this world? 462
- BUDDHA One gone to the End, one who's gone to Knowledge,
at the time of sacrifice receives that offering,
and that will be a blessing, I say. 463
- SUNDARIKA Then for sure will be fruitful this my sacrifice,
because we have seen one such as yourself—
one gone to Knowledge, for if seeing not,
another would have eaten the sacrificial cake. 464
- BUDDHA Well then, brahmin, you should ask,
since you have come to seek the meaning.
Perhaps you will find here a Wise One,
Peaceful, clear, unsoiled, desireless. 465
- SUNDARIKA I do delight in an desire to sacrifice, O Gotama,
but I do not know how, instruct me please, sir,
and how a sacrifice succeeds, do tell me of that? 466
- BUDDHA If that is so, O brahmin, lend your ears,
and in the Dharma I shall instruct you.
Ask not of "birth" but of behaviour enquire—
truly from sticks of wood the sacred fire is born,
so though of lowly line, a sage becomes a thoroughbred,
one both resolute, and restrained by self-respect, 467

tamed by Truth, endowed with self-restraint,
 one gone to Knowledge's end and the Good Life living:
 a timely offering one should give to such—
 a brahmin seeking merit to such a one should sacrifice. 468

Let go of sensuality, and homeless faring—those
 with minds well-restrained and as a shuttle straight
 a timely offering one should give to such—
 a brahmin seeking merit to such a one should sacrifice. 469

Free from lustfulness, sense-faculties controlled,
 as the moon freed from old Rāhu's grasp:
 a timely offering one should give to such—
 a brahmin seeking merit to such a one should sacrifice. 470

They who wander the world completely unattached
 ever-mindful of mine-making, always letting go:
 a timely offering one should give to such—
 a brahmin seeking merit to such a one should sacrifice. 471

Whoever fares victorious, let go of sensuality,
 who is a Knower of the end of birth and death,
 become quite Cool as a cool-water lake;
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 472

Who's equal with equals, unequals far away,
 a Tathāgata—of wisdom infinite,
 one who is unsmear'd either here or hereafter:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 473

In whom does not dwell deceit or conceit,
 who's greed-free, unselfish, having no desire,
 who anger has lost, exceeding Cool of self,
 that Brahmin who's removed impurity of grief:
 such a Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 474

Whoever has removed the dwellings of the mind,
 in whom there exists no clinging any more,
 no grasping at anything here or hereafter:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 475

With a mind composed and crossed the flood,
 a Knower of Dharma by the highest vision,
 cleansed of pollutions, bearer of a last body:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 476

No pollutions for existence, neither harsh words,
 not smouldering are they, to non-existence gone,
 one gone to Knowledge, completely released:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 477

One gone beyond ties, no ties still exist,
 among conceited men, one of no conceit,
 comprehending *dukkha* with its range and base:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 478

A seer of solitude and not depending on desire,
 escaped from the views by other people known,
 in whom are no conditions found at all:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 479

Who's understood completely the dharmas high and low,
 not smouldering are they, to non-existence gone,
 by clinging's exhaustion freed and so at peace:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 480

Who's a seer of exhaustion of birth and fetters all
 and who has dispelled the sensual trail complete—
 purified, faultless, untainted and flawless:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 481

One not seeing self by means of self within,
 firm and straightforward as well contemplative,
 free from lust, harsh-heartedness and from all doubts:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 482

In whom no conditions for delusion can be found,
 a seer with wisdom among all the dharmas,
 one who's the bearer of the ultimate body,
 attained to the blissful unexcelled Awakening
 to this extent there's purity among the powerful:
 such Tathāgata's worthy of sacrificial cake. 483

SUNDARIKA In the past I sacrificed, now let my sacrifice be true,
 for now I have met such a one of wisdom's qualities;
 you're Brahmā manifest indeed, accept from me O Radiant,
 may the Radiant One eat my sacrificial cake. 484

BUDDHA Chanting sacred verses for comestibles—
 that's not done by me,
 for those who rightly see, brahmin,
 it accords not with Dharma.
 Chanting sacred verses thus
 is rejected by the Buddhas,
 such is the Dharma, brahmin,
 such is their practice. 485

A Great Seer with Final Knowledge, conflicts stilled,
 one who has exhausted taints, is wholly free—
 make offerings of food and drink to such a one:
 the certain field for one who merit seeks. 486

SUNDARIKA Good indeed, sir, that I should know of this.
 But having gained your teachings (now I ask):
 Who should eat the gift of such as I,
 whom I'm seeking at this time of sacrifice? 487

- BUDDHA Whose anger's disappeared,
 who has unclouded mind,
 who's free from lustfulness,
 whose sloth is thrust aside, 488
- guide for what's beyond the bounds,
 Knower of birth-and-death,
 Sage with sagely virtues,
 arrived at the sacrifice, 489
- with super pride removed,
 revere with lotussed hands,
 honour with food and drink,
 thus prosper rightful gifts. 490
- SUNDARIKA The Buddha, sir, is worthy of sacrificial cake,
 a field for merits,
 recipient of all the world,
 what's given to you bears great fruit. 491

When this was said, the brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja said to the Radiant One: “Magnificent, master Gotama! The Dharma has been clarified by Master Gotama in many ways, as though he was righting what was overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes can see forms. I go for Refuge to Master Gotama, to the Dharma, and to the Bhikkhu-Saṅgha that I may receive the Leaving home from the venerable Gotama with ordination.” Then the brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja received this.

Not long after his ordination the venerable, living in solitude, secluded, diligent and zealous by realizing from himself with Direct Knowledge here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the Good Life for the sake of which clansmen rightly leave home for homelessness. He Knew directly: birth is destroyed, the Good Life

has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being. And the venerable Sundarika-Bhāradvāja became one of the arahants.

(Snp 458-491)

3.5 To Māgha on Giving

MĀGHA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant one dwelt at Rājagaha on the Vulture Peak Mountain. Then the young brahmin Māgha went to the Radiant One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down to one side and spoke thus to the Radiant One:

“Master Gotama, I am certainly a donor, one who is generous and glad to comply with others’ requests. From wealth sought rightly, obtained rightly, acquired in accordance with Dharma, I give to one, two, ten, twenty, a hundred or even more—so do I, Master Gotama giving and bestowing in this way accrue much merit?”

“Certainly young brahmin, giving and bestowing in this way you accrue much merit. If anyone is a donor, one who is generous and glad to comply with others’ requests from wealth sought rightly, obtained rightly, acquired in accordance with dharma and given to one, two, ten, twenty, a hundred or even to more, that one accrues much merit.”

Then the brahmin youth Māgha addressed these verses to the Radiant One:

MĀGHA I ask the world-knower Gotama
 who wanders homeless clad in *kāsāya* cloth:
 One glad to comply with others’ requests,
 a generous giver, one living at home,
 a seeker of merit, desirer of merit,
 who to other as sacrifice gives food and drink—
 how would such offerings be purified by this?

492

BUDDHA One glad to comply with others’ requests,
 a generous giver, one living at home,
 a seeker of merit, desirer of merit,

who to others as sacrifice gives food and drink
achieves his results through those worthy of gifts. 493

MĀGHA One glad to comply with others' requests,
a generous giver, one living at home,
a seeker of merit, desirer of merit,
who to others as sacrifice gives good and drink—
Sir, who are the gift-worthy,
please speak about that. 494

BUDDHA Those truly who fare unattached in the world,
own nothing, perfected, they're self-controlled,
to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 495

Who all the fetters and bonds have cut off,
tamed are they, freed, with no troubles or hopes,
to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 496

Who from all fetters are released,
tamed and freed, with no troubles or hopes,
to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 497

Passion and hatred, delusion—let go,
exhausted the inflows, lived the God Life,
to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 498

In who lurks neither deceit nor conceit,
greed-free, unselfish, trouble-free too,
to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 499

Those free of greed, unselfish, without desire,
 with inflows exhausted, the Good Life completed,
 to them would a brahmin on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 500

They who to cravings have not succumbed,
 the flood overcrossed they unselfishly fare,
 to them would a brahmin on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 501

But those with no cravings at all in the world
 for being this, being that, now or afterwards,
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 502

They who fare homeless, sense-pleasures let go,
 themselves well-restrained, as shuttle flies straight,
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 503

Those passion-free, their faculties restrained,
 as the Moon from the grip of Rāhu released,
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 504

Those who are calm, passion gone, anger-free,
 who here have given up all places to go,
 to them would a brahmin on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 505

Who've birth and death abandoned—nothing left
 and all unsettling doubts have overcome,
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 506

With themselves as an island they fare in the world,
 own nothing and everywhere utterly freed
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 507

Those who Know here as really it is—
 “This is the last, no more being to come” —
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 508

The mindful in holy words learned, who in *jhāna* delight,
 won to Awakening, the refuge of many,
 to them would a brahmin, on merit intent,
 sacrifice at the right time and oblations bestow. 509

MĀGHA My question truly was not in vain
 for the Radiant has spoken of gift-worthy ones.
 This indeed you Know as it really is,
 for certainly this Dharma’s Known to you. 510

One glad to comply with others’ requests,
 a generous giver, one living at home,
 a seeker of merit, desirer of merit,
 who to others as sacrifice gives food and drink,
 tell me, O Radiant, the success of such sacrifice. 511

BUDDHA Do you sacrifice! But during this sacrificial act,
 make your mind happy all of the time;
 for the sacrificiant, this sacrifice is the base,
 established in this one is rid of all faults. 512

One with passions gone would other faults restrain,
 developing boundless *mettā*-mind, in this,
 continuously diligent by day and by night,
 suffusing all directions boundlessly. 513

- MĀGHA Who can be cleansed, released and Awakened?
 With what does the self to the Brahma-world go?
 O Sage, when asked reply to me—one who doesn't know—
 for the Radiant I've seen with my eyes as Brahmā today
 and it's true that you're the same as Brahmā for us.
 In the Brahma-world,
 how does one arise, O Refulgent One? 514
- BUDDHA The sacrificiant who achieves triple success in sacrifice,
 achieves their results through such gift-worthy ones;
 so perfected in sacrifice
 and complying with others' requests,
 that one arises, I say, within the Brahma-world. 515

When this was said the young brahmin Māgha said to the Radiant One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dharma has been clarified by Master Gotama in many ways, as though he was righting what was overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes can see forms. I go for Refuge to Master Gotama, to the Dharma and to the Saṅgha. May Master Gotama remember me as a layman who from today has Gone for Refuge for life.

(Snp 492–515)

3.6 Sabhiya’s Questions

SABHIYA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One dwelt at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels’ Feeding-ground. Now at that time a deva gave a question to Sabhiya the Wanderer, who had been his relative in a past life, saying, “Sabhiya, if any ascetic or brahmin can answer this question, you should live the Holy Life with them.”

When Sabhiya the Wanderer had learned that question from the deva, he approached various respected ascetics and brahmins and asked them the question. These included teachers with large followings and many devotees, well-known and famous, well-regarded by many people as having crossed over, such as Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosālo, Ajita Kesakambala, Pakudha Kaccāna, Sañcaya Belaṭṭhaputta, and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta. But when they were asked this question, they were not able to answer, and they showed unreasonable anger and annoyance. Then they asked Sabhiya questions in return.

Then it occurred to Sabhiya, “These teachers are not able to answer my question, and instead they ask me about something else. Perhaps I should return to the lesser life and enjoy sensual pleasures.”

Then he thought, “There is also this Ascetic Gotama, who is a teacher with a large following and many devotees, well-known and famous, well-regarded by many people as having crossed over. Why don’t I go and ask him this question?”

But then it occurred to him, “The respected ascetics and brahmins who I asked previously—Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosālo, Ajita Kesakambala, Pakudha Kaccāna, Sañcaya Belaṭṭhaputta, and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta—were not able to answer me, and they are old, elderly, great figures, come to the last stage of life, seniors, long gone forth. How could this Ascetic Gotama answer my question, since he is young, and only recently gone forth?”

BUDDHA By the path they walked themselves,
Nirvāṇa is realized and doubt is left behind;
Existence and non-existence have been abandoned,
Complete, having ended rebirth: they are a “bhikkhu”. 520

Mindful and equanimous everywhere,
They do not harm anyone in the world;
An ascetic crossed over, without distress,
And with no vanity: they are “gentle”. 521

With faculties developed
For the whole world, inside and out;
They have understood this world and the next,
And complete their time fulfilled: they are “tamed”. 522

Having thoroughly investigated the ages
Of transmigration through both deaths and births,
Free of passion and defilements, pure,
Arrived at the end of rebirth:
such is called “awakened”. 523

Then Sabhiya the Wanderer rejoiced, thankful for the Buddha’s answer. Pleased and joyful, uplifted with rapture and happiness, he asked the Buddha a further question.

SABHIYA Attaining what is one called a “brahmin”?
How is one an “ascetic”? And how “washed”?
Why is one called “dragon”?
Please answer me this question, Lord. 524

BUDDHA Having shaken off all bad deeds,
Stainless, well-stilled, and steadfast;
Gone beyond transmigration, consummate,
Unattached: such is called a “brahmin”. 525

Settled, with good and bad abandoned,
 Dustless, knowing this world and the next;
 Transcending birth and death,
 True to themselves: such is called an "ascetic". 526

Having washed off all bad deeds,
 For the whole world, inside and out;
 They have no wish for the human
 Or divine existences: that is called "washed". 527

Doing no harm at all in the world,
 Not tied to any fetters;
 Unattached everywhere, and free,
 True to themselves: such is called a "dragon". 528

Then Sabhiya the Wanderer rejoiced, thankful for the Buddha's answer. Pleased and joyful, uplifted with rapture and happiness, he asked the Buddha a further question.

SABHIYA Who do the Buddhas say is the "victor on the field"?
 How is one "skilled"? And what is a "wise man"?
 Why is one called a "sage"?
 Please answer me this question, Lord. 529

BUDDHA Having thoroughly investigated the fields,
 Heavenly, human, even the Brahmā-fields,
 One is freed from the root binding one to all fields,
 True to themselves: such is called "victor on the field". 530

Having thoroughly investigated the storehouses,
 Heavenly, human, even the Brahmā-stores,
 One is freed from the root binding one to all storehouses,
 True to themselves: such is called "skilled". 531

Having investigated the sense fields
 Both inside and out, one is of pure wisdom;
 Transcending black and white,
 True to themselves: such is called “wise”. 532

Knowing good and bad principles,
 Inside and out in all the world;
 Worthy of worship by gods and humans,
 Gone beyond the tie and the net, they are a sage. 533

Then Sabhiya the Wanderer rejoiced, thankful for the Buddha’s answer. Pleased and joyful, uplifted with rapture and happiness, he asked the Buddha a further question.

SABHIYA Attaining what is one called “knowledgable”?
 How is one “informed”? And how “energetic”?
 Why is one called “thoroughbred”?
 Please answer me this question, Lord. 534

BUDDHA Having thoroughly investigated the knowledges,
 Whether those of ascetics or of brahmins,
 One is free of desire for all feelings,
 Gone beyond all feelings, they are “knowledgable”. 535

Understanding the proliferation
 Of mental and physical phenomena,
 Inside and out, the root of disease;
 One is freed from the root binding one to all diseases,
 True to themselves: such is called “informed”. 536

Abstaining from all bad deeds,
 The energetic one escapes the suffering of hell;
 Energetic, resolute,
 True to themselves: such is called “hero”. 537

One who has cut the bonds,
 Inside and out, the root of attachment;
 One is freed from the root binding one to all attachments,
 True to themselves: such is called “informed”. 538

Then Sabhiya the Wanderer rejoiced, thankful for the Buddha's answer. Pleased and joyful, uplifted with rapture and happiness, he asked the Buddha a further question.

SABHIYA Attaining what is one called “scholar”?
 How is one “noble”?
 And how “well conducted”?
 Why is one called “wanderer”?
 Please answer me this question, Lord. 539

BUDDHA Having learned all phenomena
 in the world with direct knowledge,
 Whatever is blameworthy or blameless;
 One who is a winner, doubtless, free,
 Untroubled in every respect, is a “scholar”. 540

Having cut off corruptions and attachments,
 Knowing, one does not go to another womb.
 Dispelling the three defiled perceptions,
 He comes back for no age,
 that is who they call “noble”. 541

One who is accomplished in good conduct,
 Always skilful in understanding principles;
 Not attached anywhere, with mind freed,
 And bearing no grudges, is “well conducted”. 542

Whatever deeds are to result in suffering,
 Above, below, across, or in-between;

Having gone forth one lives to fully understand
 Illusions, conceit, as well as greed and hatred;
 Terminating mental and physical phenomena,
 That, they say, is an accomplished wanderer. 543

Then Sabhiya the Wanderer rejoiced, thankful for the Buddha's answer. Pleased and joyful, uplifted with rapture and happiness, he stood up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, and, raising his folded palms to the Buddha, spoke these suitable verses of praise in his presence.

SABHIYA One of vast wisdom, you have dispelled the dark flood,
 The three and sixty doctrines of the ascetics,
 Which are false refuges,
 Dependent on perceptions and conventions. 544

You've made an end, crossed over suffering,
 I hold you as an arahant,
 Fully awakened, with corruptions ended;
 Brilliant, thoughtful, with expansive wisdom,
 You have brought me across, finisher of suffering. 545

Understanding my anxiety,
 You carried me over my doubts. Homage to you!
 Sage accomplished in the ways of silence,
 You are gentle, not callous, Kinsman of the Sun. 546

The anxieties I had before,
 You have answered them, seer;
 For sure you are a sage, fully awakened,
 You have no hindrances. 547

All of your griefs
 Are demolished and destroyed;

You are cooled, tamed,
Firm and strong in truth. 548

Dragon of dragons, great hero,
While you are speaking,
The gods all rejoice,
Both Nāradas and Pabbatas. 549

Homage to you, thoroughbred among men!
Homage to you, best of men!
In all the world with its gods,
There is no-one like you. 550

You are the Buddha, you are the Teacher,
You are the sage who overcame Māra;
You have cut all underlying tendencies,
Crossed over, you bring this generation across. 551

You have transcended all attachments,
And destroyed your corruptions;
You are a lion, without grasping,
With fears and terrors abandoned. 552

As a drop of dew
Does not smear a lotus,
Neither good nor bad smears you.
Stretch out your feet, my hero,
Sabhiya bows to his teacher! 553

And then Sabhiya the wanderer, fell at the Buddha's feet and said to him: "Amazing, venerable sir, incredible, venerable sir! It is as if someone were to turn upright what had been overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to light a lamp in the darkness, so that those with eyes could see. In the same

way the Buddha has made the Dhamma clear in many ways. I go to the Buddha for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the monastic Saṅgha. Bhante, I ask for the going forth and ordination in the Lord's presence."

"Sabhiya, anyone who was previously a follower of another sect and who asks for going forth and ordination in this Dhamma and Vinaya should stay on probation for four months. When four months have passed, the monastics, if they are satisfied, may give the going forth and ordination into the status of a bhikkhu. However, I also consider individual cases differently."

"Venerable sir, in that case I will remain on probation for four years, and after four years if the monastics are satisfied they may give me the going forth and ordination into the status of a bhikkhu."

Then Sabhiya the Wanderer received the going forth and ordination in the Buddha's presence. ... And he became one of the arahants.

(Snp 516–553)

3.7 To Sela and his Praise of the Buddha

SELA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was journeying through the lands of the Aṅguttarāpans, accompanied by a large Saṅgha of bhikkhus, twelve hundred and fifty of them and arrived at a town called Āpaṇa.

The ascetic Keṇiya of the Dreadlocked Hair heard this: “The Samaṇa Gotama, son of the Sakiyans who left home among the Sakyan people has been journeying among the Aṅguttarāpans accompanied by a large Saṅgha of bhikkhus, twelve hundred and fifty of them, and he has arrived in Āpaṇa. Now an excellent report has spread to this effect: “The Radiant One is an Arahant, fully Awakened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, whose going is auspicious, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of people to be famed, Teacher of devas and humanity, Awakened and Radiant. He declares this world with its devas, Māras, princes and people which he has realized by direct knowledge himself. He teaches Dharma good at the beginning, the middle and the end, complete with purpose and meaning, revealing the good life, that which is completely fulfilled and wholly purified.” Now, it is good to see such Arahants.

Then Keṇiya of the Dreadlocked Hair went to see the Radiant One and exchanged greetings with him and when that courteous and amiable talk was finished he sat down to one side. The Radiant One instructed, urged, roused and encouraged him with Dharma-talk after which Keṇiya said, “Let Master Gotama together with the Saṅgha of bhikkhus consent to accept tomorrow’s meal from me.”

The Radiant One replied to him, “The Saṅgha of bhikkhus Keṇiya, is large, of twelve hundred and fifty. And you have confidence also in the brahmins.”

This request was repeated a second and a third time by Keṇiya, and only on the third occasion did the Buddha accept by remaining silent.

Then Keṇiya, knowing that the Buddha had accepted, paid respects, rose from his seat and went to his own hermitage. He addressed his friends and colleagues, family and relatives, saying “Listen, my good friends and colleagues, family and relatives! I have invited the ascetic Gotama for the meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of bhikkhus. Would you assist me with the various duties?”

“Yes, sir,” agreed Keṇiya’s friends and colleagues, family and relatives. And some dug out the ovens, some chopped wood, some washed the dishes, some put out the water pot, while others prepared the seats. And in the evening, Keṇiya set up a pavilion.

Now at that time the brahmin Sela was visting Āpaṇa. He was an expert in the three Vedas, with the etymologies, the rituals, the phonology and word analysis, and fifthly the legendary histories. He was a linguist, a grammarian, a cosmologist, and an expert in the marks of a Superman. He taught the Vedic texts to three hundred young students.

Now at that time Keṇiya of the Dreadlocked Hair had confidence in the brahmin Sela. Then Sela accompanied by his three hundred students were out for a walk, and they came to the hermitage of Keṇiya. Sela saw the activity in the hermitage and said to Keṇiya, “Master Keṇiya, are your son or daughter being married, or are you preparing a great sacrifice, or have you invited Seniya Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, tomorrow together with his army?”

“No, Sela, there is no marriage, nor has the king been invited. However I am preparing a great sacrifice. There is this ascetic Gotama, who has gone forth from the Sakyan clan, and he has arrived at Āpaṇa together with a great Saṅgha of bhikkhus. Now an excellent report has spread to this effect: ‘The Radiant One is an Arahant, fully Awakened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, whose going is auspicious, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of people to be famed, Teacher of devas and humanity, Awakened and Radiant.’ I have invited him for the meal tomorrow together with the Saṅgha of bhikkhus.”

“Keṇiya, did you say ‘Awakened’?”

“Yes, Sela, I said ‘Awakened’!”

“Keṇiya, did you say ‘Awakened’?”

“Yes, Sela, I said ‘Awakened’!”

Then it occurred to the brahmin Sela: “It is hard to even hear the word ‘Awakened’ in the world today. There has come down in our sacred scriptures the thirty-two marks of a Superman, possessing which a Superman has two destinies, no other. If he dwells at home he will be a king, a just emperor, a just king, conqueror of the four directions, who has stabilized the realm, and possesses the seven treasures. And these are his seven treasures: the Wheel treasure, the elephant treasure, the horse treasure, the jewel treasure, the woman treasure, the householder treasure, and seventh, the adviser treasure. He has more than a thousand sons who are valiant, heroic, crushers of the armies of foes. Having conquered this earth to the shores of the seas he rules justly, without weapons or violence. But if he goes forth from the home life into homelessness, then he becomes an arahant, a fully awakened Buddha, one who draws back the veil from the world.” “So where now, Master Keṇiya, is that Master Gotama living, the arahant, the fully awakened Buddha?”

When he said this, Keṇiya of the Dreadlocked hair took the brahmin Sela by the right arm and said, “There, where that line of blue forest is, master Sela.” Then Sela with his three hundred students approached the Buddha. Sela addressed his students, saying, “Come quietly, sirs! Place each step one after the other! For the Buddhas are hard to approach, like lions living alone. And when I am conversing with the ascetic Gotama, don’t interrupt our discussion, but wait until we have finished.”

And then Sela approached the Buddha, engaged in polite greetings and conversation, and sat down to one side. He scrutinized the Buddha’s body for the thirty-two marks of a Superman. He saw most of them, except for two, regarding which he had doubts: whether the

You deserve to be a King who turns the wheel,
 riding in state a chariot of war,
 lord of the earth from end to end four square,
 a Conqueror of Jambudīpa chief. 558

Nobles and wealth lords your vassals be
 You Sovran Lord of lords, You King of men,
 take then your power, O Gotama, and reign. 559

BUDDHA I *am* a king, Sela,
 The unexcelled King of Dhamma;
 By Dhamma I roll forth the Wheel,
 The Wheel that cannot be turned back. 560

SELA You say you are awakened,
 The unexcelled King of Dhamma;
 “By Dhamma I roll forth the Wheel”,
 So you say, Gotama. 561

Who then is your general,
 The student who follows the teacher;
 Who keeps the Wheel of Dhamma
 rolling after you? 562

BUDDHA By me is the Wheel rolled forth,
 The unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma,
 Sāriputta keeps the Wheel of Dhamma
 rolling after me. 563

What should be Known is Known;
 What should be developed has been developed;
 What should be abandoned I have abandoned:
 That, brahmin, is why I am awakened. 564

Dispell doubts in me,
 Have confidence, brahmin;
 This sight is hard to find,
 For Buddhas arise only rarely. 565

That which is hard to find in the world,
 Manifesting only rarely;
 I, brahmin, am awakened,
 The unexcelled surgeon. 566

I am supreme, I am incomparable,
 Crusher of Māra's armies;
 Having subjugated all my enemies,
 I rejoice, afraid of nothing. 567

SELA Good sirs, listen up
 As the seer speaks,
 The surgeon, the great hero,
 Roars like a lion in the forest. 568

He is supreme, he is incomparable,
 Crusher of Māra's armies;
 Who seeing him would not be inspired,
 Unless their nature was dark? 569

What I wished for has arrived,
 What I didn't wish for has departed;
 Right now I will go forth,
 In the presence of the one of excellent wisdom. 570

PUPILS If this is your pleasure, sir,
 We too will go forth
 In the teaching of the fully awakened Buddha,
 In the presence of the one of excellent wisdom. 571

NARRATOR Then these three hundred brahmins
 Asked, with palms folded:
 “We would live the Holy Life
 In the presence of the Buddha.” 572

BUDDHA The Holy Life is well-explained,
 Apparent here and now, realizable in this very life,
 Wherein the going forth is not fruitless,
 For one who trains themselves diligently. 573

Then the brahmin Sela and his following gained the going forth and ordination in the Buddha’s presence. When the night had passed, Keṇiya of the Dreadlocked Hair, having prepared much fine food in his hermitage, had the time announced to the Buddha: “It is time, Master Gotama, the meal is ready.” In the morning, the Buddha dressed, took his bowl and robe, went to Keṇiya’s hermitage, and sat on the prepared seat together with the Saṅgha of bhikkhus.

Then Keṇiya served and satisfied the Saṅgha of bhikkhus with the Buddha at its head with fine food. Then when the Buddha had finished eating and had taken his hand from his bowl, Keṇiya sat at one side on a low seat, where the Buddha expressed his appreciation with the following verses.

BUDDHA The fire-oblation is the foremost of sacrifices;
 The Sāvitrī is the foremost of poetic styles;
 A king is the foremost of humans;
 The ocean is the foremost of rivers. 574

The moon is the foremost of heavenly bodies;
 The sun the foremost of fires;
 But for those wishing to do good,
 An offering to the Saṅgha is foremost. 575

When the Buddha had expressed his appreciation to Keṇiya with these verses, he got up from his seat and left.

Then venerable Sela and his following, living in solitude, secluded, diligent and zealous by realizing for themselves with Direct Knowledge here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the Holy Life for the sake of which clansmen rightly leave home for homelessness. They Knew directly: birth is destroyed, the Holy Life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being. And the venerable Sela and his following became arahants.

Then Sela and his following approached the Buddha, arranged their robes over one shoulder, extended their folded palms, and spoke the following verses:

SELA Eight days have passed, All-seeing Sage,
 since for refuge we have gone.
 In seven nights, O Radiant One,
 in your teaching we've been tamed. 576

 The Buddha you are, the Teacher you are,
 the Sage overcomer of Māra,
 so sheared of all evil tendencies,
 gone across and taken all others. 577

 All attachments have been surmounted,
 all inflows are removed,
 as a lion ungrasping,
 abandoned fear and dread. 578

 Here stand three hundred bhikkhus,
 with hands held out as lotuses:
 stretch forth your feet, O Hero great,
 that these now unblemished ones
 may bow at their Teacher's feet. 579

(Snp 554-579)

3.8 Dart of Death

SALLA SUTTA

Here's the life of mortals,
wretched and brief,
its end unknown,
to *dukkha* joined. 580

There's no means that those
who're born will never die.
Reached decay, then death:
the law for beings all. 581

As with what's ripe
there's always fear of falling,
so for mortals born
there's always fear of death. 582

Just as a potter's vessels
made of clay all end
by being broken, so
death's the end of life. 583

The young, those great in age,
the fools, as well the wise
all go under the sway
of death, for death's their goal. 584

Those overcome by death,
to another world bound:
father can't protect his son,
nor relatives their kin. 585

While relatives are watching,
they weep and they lament;

See mortals one by one,
led as an ox to slaughter. 586

As the world's afflicted
by death and by decay,
so the wise grieve not,
knowing world's nature well. 587

Their path you do not know
whereby they come, they go,
neither end you see,
useless your lament. 588

While lamenting,
The confused harm themselves;
If any benefit could be found,
Would not the wise do it to? 589

Not by weeping and wailing,
Can peace of mind be reached.
It just creates more suffering,
And distresses the body. 590

You become thin and discolored,
Harming yourself with your self;
And the departed are not protected by this,
Lamentation is pointless! 591

When grief is not abandoned,
A person falls into even more suffering;
Wailing over the dead,
They are overpowered by grief. 592

See how others fare,
People passing on according to their deeds;

Creatures tremble,
As they fall under the sway of Death. 593

Whatever you think it is,
It becomes something else.
Such is separation,
See the way of the world. 594

Even if a person were to live
A hundred years or more,
They would still be divided from their family,
Abandoning this life. 595

That is why having heard the arahant,
And dispelled lamentation;
When you see the dead and departed,
You don't think you can get them back. 596

Just as one would extinguish
A burning building with water;
So too a steadfast, wise one, a skilful, clever person,
Would quickly blow away
Grief when it arises,
As wind, a tuft of cotton. 597

One who is seeking happiness
should draw out the painful dart—
lamentations and longings—
the grief that is within. 598

Dart withdrawn and unattached,
the mind attains to peace,
passed beyond all grief,
griefless, fires put out. 599

(Snp 580–599)

3.9 To Vāseṭṭha on Who is a Brahmin

VĀSEṬṬHA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:³

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling at Icchānaṅgala. Now at that time a number of notable and prosperous brahmins were staying at Icchānaṅgala, that is to say the brahmins Caṅkī, Tārukka, Pokkharasāti, Jāṇussoni and Todeyya, as well as other notable and prosperous brahmins.

Then, as the young brahmins Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvaja were walking and wandering for exercise this subject of discussion arose between them. “How is one a brahmin?” The young brahmin Bhāradvaja said, “When one is well-born on both sides, of pure maternal and paternal descent through seven generations in the past, then one is a brahmin”.

But Vāseṭṭha the young brahmin said, “When one is virtuous and fulfils one’s vows, then one is a brahmin”. Bhāradvaja could not convince Vāseṭṭha while the latter failed to convince the former.

Then Vāseṭṭha said to Bhāradvaja, “Sir, the samaṇa Gotama son of the Sakyas who left home from the Sakyan clan is living at Icchānaṅgala, in the forest near Icchānaṅgala. Now the good reputation of Master Gotama has spread in this way: ‘That Radiant One is accomplished, completely Awakened, possessed of True Knowledge and conduct, well-gone for himself and others, knower of the worlds, unexcelled trainer of those who can be tamed, teacher of devas and humanity, Awake and Radiant.’ Come, Bhāradvaja, let us go to the samaṇa Gotama and ask him about this. As he replies, so will we bear his words in mind.”

“Yes, sir”, Bharadvaja replied.

So the two young brahmins approached the Radiant One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was concluded, they sat down to one side, and the young brahmin Vāseṭṭha addressed the Radiant One in verse:

³ This Sutta = MN 98

VĀSEṬṬHA Of Pokkharasāti the pupil I am,
 while student of Tārukkha is he;
 both of us have acknowledged mastery
 in the threefold Veda lore. 600

We have attained totality
 over all the Vedic masters teach;
 as philologists, grammarians,
 and we chant as our masters do. 601

The subject of “birth”, O Gotama,
 is contention’s cause with us:
 he, a Bhāradvāja, does declare
 “birth” is due to brahmin caste,
 while I say its by karma caused:
 know its thus, O One-with-Eyes. 602

Sir, to ask about this we have come,
 to you acclaimed as Wide Awake,
 each of us unable is
 the other to convince. 603

As they raise their lotussed hands
 towards the moon waxed full,
 so to you, by this world revered,
 we pay homage too. 604

So now of Gotama the Eye
 uprisen in the world, we ask:
 Is one by “birth” a brahmin,
 or a brahmin karma-caused?
 Explain to us who do not know
 how we should “brahmin” recognize? 605

BUDDHA I shall analyse for you,
 in order due and as they are,
 the types of “birth” ’mong living things,
 for many are the sorts of birth. 606

First, there’s grasses and the trees,
 though of themselves they nothing know,
 each species possessing its own marks,
 for many are the sorts of birth. 607

Next come beetles, butterflies,
 and so on to the termites, ants,
 each species possessing its own marks,
 for many are the sorts of birth. 608

Then, know of those four-footed kinds,
 both the tiny and the huge,
 each species possessing its own marks
 for many are the sorts of birth. 609

Know those whose bellies are their feet,
 that is, the long-backed group of snakes,
 each species possessing its own marks,
 for many are the sorts of birth. 610

Know too the many kinds of fish,
 living in their watery world,
 each species possessing its own marks,
 for many are the sorts of birth. 611

Then know the varied winged ones,
 the birds that range the open skies,
 each species possessing its own marks,
 for many are the sorts of birth. 612

While in those births are differences,
 each having their own distinctive marks,
 among humanity such differences
 of species—no such marks are found. 613

Neither in hair, nor in the head,
 not in the ears or eyes,
 neither found in mouth or nose,
 not in lips or brows. 614

Neither in neck, nor shoulders found,
 not in belly or the back,
 neither in buttocks nor the breast,
 not in groin or sexual parts. 615

Neither in hands nor in the feet,
 not in fingers or the nails,
 neither in knees nor in the thighs,
 not in their “colour”, not in sound,
 here is no distinctive mark
 as in the many other sorts of birth. 616

In human bodies as they are,
 such differences cannot be found:
 the only human differences
 are those in names alone. 617

’Mong humankind whoever lives
 by raising cattle on a farm,
 O Vāseṭṭha you should know
 as farmer not as Brahmin then. 618

’Mong humankind whoever lives
 by trading wares here and there,

O Vāsetṭha you should know
as merchant not as Brahmin then. 619

'Mong humankind whoever lives
by work of many arts and crafts,
O Vāsetṭha you should know
as craftsman not as Brahmin then. 620

'Mong humankind whoever lives
by serving other' needs and wants,
O Vāsetṭha you should know
as servant not as Brahmin then. 621

'Mong humankind whoever lives
by taking things that are not given,
O Vāsetṭha you should know
as a thief not Brahmin then. 622

'Mong humankind whoever lives
by the skill of archery,
O Vāsetṭha you should know
as soldier not as Brahmin then. 623

'Mong humankind whoever lives
by performing priestly rites,
O Vāsetṭha you should know
as a priest not Brahmin then. 624

'Mong humankind whoever lives
through enjoying towns and lands,
O Vāsetṭha you should know
as rajah not as Brahmin then. 625

Him I call not a brahmin, though
born from brahmin mother's line,

if with sense of ownership,
 he's just supercilious:
 owning nothing and unattached—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 626

Who fetters all has severed,
 who trembles not at all,
 gone beyond ties, free from bonds—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 627

Having cut strap and reins,
 the rope and bridle too,
 and tipped the shafts, as one Awake—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 628

Who angerless endures abuse,
 beating and imprisonment,
 with patience-power, an armed might—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 629

Who's angerless and dutiful,
 of virtue full and free of lust,
 who's tamed, to final body come—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 630

Like water drop on lotus leaf,
 or mustard seed on needle point,
 whoso clings not to sense desires,
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 631

Here who comes to Know
 exhaustion of all *dukkha*,
 laid down the burden, free from bonds—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 632

Skilled in the Path, what's not the path,
 in wisdom deep, sagacious one,
 having attained the highest aim—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 633

Not intimate with those gone forth,
 nor with those who dwell at home,
 without a shelter, wishes few—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 634

Who has renounced all force
 towards all being weak and strong,
 who causes not to kill, nor kills—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 635

Among the hostile, friendly,
 among the violent, cool,
 detached amid the passionate—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 636

From whoever lust and hate,
 conceit, contempt have dropped away,
 as mustard seed from needle-point—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 637

Who utters speech instructive,
 true and gentle too,
 who gives offence to none—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 638

Who in the world will never take
 what is not given, long or short,
 the great or small, the fair or foul—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 639

In whom there are not longings found
 for this world or the next,
 longingless and free from bonds—
 on such I say's a Brahmin then. 640

In whom is no dependence found,
 with Final Knowledge, free from doubt,
 duly went to the Deathless deeps—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 641

Here who's gone beyond both bonds:
 to goodness and to evil too,
 one who's sorrowless, stainless, pure—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 642

Vanished is all love of being,
 like the moon—unblemished, pure,
 that one serene and undisturbed—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 643

Who's overpassed this difficult path,
 delusion's bond, the wandering-on,
 who's crossed beyond, contemplative,
 craving not, no questions left,
 no clinging's fuel, so Cool become—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 644

Who has abandoned sense desires,
 as homeless one renouncing all,
 desire for being all consumed—
 one such I say's a Brahmin then. 645

Who has abandoned craving here
 as homeless one renouncing all,

craving for being all consumed—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 646

Abandoned all the human bonds
and gone beyond the bonds of god
unbound one is from every bond—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 647

Abandoned boredom and delight,
become quite cool and assetless
A hero, All-worlds conqueror,
one such I say's a Brahmin then 648

Whoever knows of being' death,
their being born in every way,
unshackled, faring well, Awake—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 649

Whose destination is unknown
to humans, spirits or to gods,
pollutions faded, Arahāt—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 650

For whom there is not ownership
before or after or midway,
owning nothing and unattached—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 651

One noble, most excellent, heroic too,
the great sage and the one who conquers all,
who's faultless, washes, one Awake—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 652

Who knows their former births
and sees the states of bliss and woe

and then who wins the waste of births—
one such I say's a Brahmin then. 653

Whatever's accepted and "name" and "clan"
is just a worldly designation—
by conventions handed down
accepted everywhere. 654

But those asleep, unquestioning,
who take up views, who do not Know,
unknowingly they've long declared:
one's a brahmin just by "birth". 655

One's not a brahmin caused by "birth",
nor caused by "birth" a non-brahmin;
a brahmin's one by karma caused,
by karma caused a non-brahmin. 656

By karma caused a farmer is,
one's a craftsman karma-caused,
by karma caused a merchant is,
one's a servant karma-caused. 657

By karma caused a robber is,
one's a soldier karma-caused,
by karma caused a priest becomes,
one's a ruler karma-caused. 658

Thus according as it is
people wise do karma see;
Seers of causal relatedness,
skilled in karma, its results. 659

Karma makes the world go on,
people by karma, circle round;

sentient beings are bound to karma,⁴
as a cart is pulled by a horse. 660

By ardour and the Good Life leading,
with restraint and taming too:
by this a Brahmin one becomes,
one's by this a Brahmin best. 661

Possessed of Triple Knowledges,
at Peace, rebirth come to an end⁵ —
know Vāseṭṭha, such a one
is Brahmā and Sakra for those who Know. 662

When this was said the young brahmins Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja exclaimed to the Radiant One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dharma has been clarified by Master Gotama in many ways, as though he was lighting what was overthrown revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes can see forms. We go for refuge to Master Gotama, to the Dharma and to the Saṅgha. May Master Gotama remember us as *upāsakas* who from today have Gone for Refuge for life.

(Snp 600–662)

Notes on the Vāseṭṭha Sutta

As the Buddha has defined what he means by the word “outcaste”, *vasala*, in the Sutta of that name (Snp 1.7), so here he discourses with two young brahmins on what makes one a true brahmin. Both outcaste and brahmin are defined according to Dharma, what one should avoid in the first case and what one should do in the second.

⁴ Sujato: LKM repeated the previous verse for these two lines, apparently by oversight. I have translated them.

⁵ Sujato: *khīṇapunabbhavo*. LKM had “repeated being wasted away”, which I felt was not very comprehensible.

In the society of the Buddha's days (still found in present Indian attitudes), the brahmins reckoned themselves the highest among all the castes having been born of a brahmin mother and father whose families were "pure" brahminical stock back through seven generations on both sides. It was enough to have such parents and families to be born as a brahmin, they reckoned. Moreover, according to legend the brahmins came from the head, the uppermost part of primeval man, while other castes originated from the lower parts of that body, the outcastes being merely the dust upon that first man's feet. Such grounds for superiority, with exclusive knowledge of Vedic rites and mysteries, endowed many brahmin men with a very inflated idea of their own importance. (Women of brahmin families, though in very early times also possessing knowledge of the Three (or four) Vedas together with ritual and correct transmission through chanting, lost this eminence, and came to be regarded by brahmin men as just mothers of their sons).

The verses of this Sutta can be divided into a number of sections, each one with distinct bearing upon the questions: What makes one a brahmin, "birth" as explained above, or karma—the results of intentional actions, speech and body. These sections are as follows:

1. Vāseṭṭha's laudatory and questioning verses (600–605).
2. The Buddha's analysis of living things (606–617).
3. His definition of who is not a brahmin (618–625).
4. His verses upon who is a true Brahmin (626–653).
5. His concluding verses upon "caused by karma" (654–662).

Vāseṭṭha's laudatory and questioning verses

The verses open with Vāseṭṭha telling the Buddha who were their respective teachers, as well as their own attainments, a sort of verbal *curriculum vitae*. With this they are communicating their attainments as brahmins, thereby informing him of the sort of people he will be

addressing. However, this is done with a great deal of politeness by inserting such laudatory titles as “One-with-Eyes”, “Wide Awake” and so on. They raise their lotussed hands, probably to their foreheads but at least to their hearts, marking their respect for the teacher they are questioning.

The Buddha’s analysis of living things

In these verses most of them have the refrain “each species possessing its own marks/for many are the sorts of birth”, except for the first one which has only the latter line. It is important to remember that the word “birth” had (and has) a very special meaning in India. Asking another person (not uncommon even in modern India) about his or her “birth”, is the equivalent to enquiring about the caste of their family. This is required before one eats or drinks with other unknown people and of course if marriage is contemplated. High caste persons (those from brahmin or noble families) can lose their status through “pollution” by eating or drinking with, or having with those of low caste according to brahminical laws. The Buddha points out in the first few of these verses (606–612), that among the groups he describes there are many sorts of birth. These verses are to highlight specific differentiation as opposed to what is found among human beings as made clear in verses 613–617. In other words, all human beings whatever their caste, colour, race or language, are the same, with the same organs and characteristics. In the last verse in this section the Buddha notes that differences are merely nominal. In India this refers to “birth” or caste, in the rest of the world to class, family, wealth, education etc. Such matters are only conventional, not of the essence.

The Buddha is thus revealed as the first person ever to reject racism in any form. All human beings are basically the same in that they can all practise the Dharma and experience the Awakened State. People are only “high” or “low” according to Dharma by their behaviour. Elsewhere, the Buddha noted that one is noble by thought, speech and

action, not by worldly ennoblement. The word for noble in Pāli/Sanskrit is *ariya/ārya* conventionally meaning a high caste person, from the clans of self-styled *āryans* invading India from around 1500 BCE onwards. But the Buddha's interpretation of this word emphasized the nobility of mind, speech and body actions. Such nobility has no boundaries of race, caste, class or language.

Notice that in verse 616 the Buddha denies that there are essential differences in "colour". This is *vaṇṇa* in Pāli, *varna* in Sanskrit, and has the general meaning in India of superior birth or inferior. High-caste people are supposed to have light colours of skin, while workers and outcasts are dark in complexion. However this myth does not always work out as many brahmins in the south of the country are very nearly black! Paired with "colour" is "sound", meaning a polished way of speech or an uneducated one. It is possible to distinguish the caste a person belongs to by listening to their speech. Some words will point out a brahmin background, others will only be used by outcastes.

The last verse in this section makes it clear that the only differences among human beings are merely nominal. A man is only by tradition a brahmin or an outcaste, there are no essential differences.

The Buddha's definition of who is not a brahmin

Verses 618–625 define by a nominally brahmin-caste man's work how he could not be a brahmin, that is, he does not live up to the high standard set by the Buddha to qualify for the title of "brahmin". As the Buddha did not accept that one could be spiritually advanced merely by being born of brahmin-caste parents, so neither was one even nominally a brahmin when one's livelihood had nothing to do with caste labels. Nominal brahmins in the Buddha's days had departed from their ancient religious ideals and had become over time farmers, craftsmen, even rulers. They should not be counted even as nominal brahmins and certainly not as Brahmins, those who are spiritually advanced.

In this book I have used "brahmin" (lower-case) to mean one of

brahmin parents and caste. Capitalized “Brahmin” refers to one who is purified by Dharma practice. In English we can, while not altering the spelling, change its meaning by using either a capital or lower-case letter. Note that this is not possible in Indian scripts, which have no such distinction.

Verse 624 could surprise many brahmins who perform rituals and ceremonies and are paid for this, as the Buddha denies that one can be a Brahmin just by carrying out traditional pujas and so on. Such a person is only a priest. Priests of this sort may recite the rituals in Sanskrit but not even know the meaning of what they chant. They have learnt by heart the sounds but not the meaning. Often these ceremonies may be marked by gabbling the words at high speed. Unfortunately such behaviour can be found also among some Buddhist monks, equally bored and ignorant of their traditions.

The Buddha’s verses upon who is a true Brahmin

These (626–653) are found also and nearly identical in the Pāli Dhammapada in the Brāhmaṇavagga. All have the refrain, “one such I say’s a Brahmin then”. This ideal brahmin, who would be either completely Awake or far along the Dharma-path to Awakening, illustrates the Buddha’s interpretation of a truly honourable and marvellously spiritual person. These verses serve in India to remind ordinary brahmins how they should behave, a high ideal indeed!

A few notes follow upon sundry matters in these verses:

- 626: The Buddha contrasts ordinary ideas of birth—“born from brahmin mother’s line” with the real Brahmin of “owning nothing and unattached.”
- 627: No fetters, no ties, no bonds equals no anxiety, no trembling, nothing to fear.
- 628: Freedom from being yoked and so a Buddha.
- 629: Abuse, torture, imprisonment all endured without anger developing patience as one’s “weapon”.

- 630: Basics for becoming a true Brahmin, truly Awake.
- 631: Water on a lotus-leaf or flower forms into beads like mercury and runs off, it never spreads out because of the saponitic surface of the whole plant. Likewise, a mustard seed drops off a needle point.
- 632: “Exhaustion of all *dukkha*” means the causes (karma, etc) producing *dukkha* in the past have been exhausted by good made in the present. “Laid down the burden” is freedom from all attachment to the notion “my body” and my mind” and every other sort of possessiveness.
- 633: if one practises Dharma one should learn what is the Path and what is not. Then one should practise accordingly. The “highest aim” is then not impossible.
- 634: A verse specially for meditative bhikkhus, *munis*, or other solitary practitioners. (Solitary practice should only be undertaken with the advice and approval of one’s Dharma teacher)
- 635: Force used against other beings, human or other, as well as its use internally against oneself, can never achieve the good results of lasting peace. Politicians who advocate violent means to “resolve” other’s violence and religious fanatics who, driven by wrong views, preach and practise violence against the followers of sects or religions differing from their own—all of them are blinded by delusion and never learn even a little from the facts of human history. No good comes of violence and even less may be expected as a result of killing.
- 636: Specially suitable for one of strong passions! Because one’s character is fiery this does not mean that one cannot practice, in fact the energies of the passions can be turned round into wisdom and compassion.
- 637: Mustard seeds which are small still cannot remain upon a needle-point, so for the practitioner there is no room for lust, hate, conceit, etc.

- 638: There are fortunately still people like this in our turbulent world. When reading this verse, I think with gratitude of Ven. Pañña-vaḍḍho ācariya, my very kind and wise teacher many years ago.
- 639: Dharma is the way of giving, generosity and letting-go, quite different to the world's way of greed, taking, hoarding and selfishness.
- 640: Longings for this world's joys and properties are common while longings for the next world are found among the followers of most religions. The latter feel they are superior to those who merely long for worldly pleasure and power but their "spiritual" longing is still an attachment. They must be longingless and free from bonds".
- 641: Until Awakening occurs there is always doubt. "Final knowledge" (*abhiññā/abhijñā*) once experienced dissolves away all doubt. The profound knowledge of deathlessness is another way of saying this.
- 642: Some are bound by their tendencies to evil and cause themselves and others much *dukkha*. But others are attached to their goodness and sometimes feel themselves superior, looking down upon those who seem to them not virtuous. This is also a bondage.
- 643: Love of being means attachment to existence, not being able to let go of life, even at the time of death. It certainly means, or implies, more *saṃsāric* existence, on and on, round and round turns the *saṃsāra* wheel.
- 644: "Wandering-on" is my old translation of *saṃsāra* which means literally "wandering and wandering". The path through *saṃsāra* is always difficult because it is guided by delusion, with greed and hatred too. This is also the fuel which keeps these three fires burning. When these fires go out (where do they go to? Do fires "go" anywhere when extinguished?) there is the Cool Peace of *Nirvāna*.
- 645: "Homeless one renouncing all": this could be as a bhikkhu or

bhikkhunis in monastic community, or as a *muni* living a solitary life. (On *munis* see Snp 1.12, 4.9, 4.10, and verses 707–729). “Renounce” means letting go from the heart, not a forced “renunciation” which will only create inner conflicts, tension and *dukkha* generally. If practised correctly then all desires subside by themselves.

- 646: Craving is consumed by itself with good Dharma practice. It does not require any force to be used.
- 647: We all know something of human limitations and attachments, our bonds in this world. But then we have to know thoroughly “the bonds of gods”—spiritual bondage such as to the delights that occur through meditation practice, even bliss. It often happens to those who devote their live to spiritual practice that they become ensnared by these extra-human experiences, especially if they follow a teaching that preaches heaven as salvation. From a Buddhist perspective this is confusion: “heaven(s)” mean the deva-worlds, some sensual and some of refined spirituality but all of them as existences in the round of birth and death. “Salvation” is something different from the deva-realms, as these verses point out.
- 648: “Without assets”: this translation of *an-upadhi* is Ven. Ñāṇamoli’s term. *Upadhi* is a Pāli word with a great range of meaning but generally refers to what is grasped at, what one is attached to. Later Commentators have expanded these varieties of *upadhi*, as any Buddhist Dictionary will make clear. Think generally of “assets” as what one assumes that one owns such as mind and body. One is an “All-worlds conqueror” not by the use of force, armies and wars, but rather by being free of any attachment to all of the possible states of existence.
- 649: This advice is continued from the last verse. Faring well means practising the Dharma. To fare is one of only two English words which can convey the meaning of the Pāli verb: *carati*, both to go

on a journey, and to practise a spiritual path. The other word is “to course”.

- 650: Those Awake, do not “go” anywhere at death, while the ordinary unenlightened persons do go—to some other existence. The state of Awakened Ones cannot be explained in words, as no language exists that has words for what is beyond all words, even all holy ones.
- 651: “Ownership before or after or midway”: this has three possible meanings. First, it has the meaning of unattachment while practising generosity, *dāna*; one has no regrets about giving either while planning it, or while actually giving or after having given. Second, “before” means past lives, “after” refers to future, while “midway” is this present life. Third refers to the Awakened person of whom it can be said: “owning nothing, and unattached”—time does not apply since its limitations have been transcended.
- 652: A list of praiseworthy qualities of those Awake. References to “heroes” and “conquerors” means those who continue to practise Dharma even in difficult situations, and who “conquer” or overcome all obstructions. “Washes” refer to one purified of all mental-emotional troubles though the Pāli word *nhātakam* originally meant the ritual purificatory bathing in rivers by brahmins.
- 653: This first line on “former births” is one of many references in the Pāli Suttas to lives before this one. Of course they have gone, they are past and we cannot practise in them. But they did exist and helped to shape our present existence. Those westerners who try not to take this into account and who obviously have no experience of previous existences, distort the Buddha’s teachings. “The waste of births” can also be translated as “exhaustion”, their cessation because karma no longer exists to cause them to appear.

The Buddha's concluding verses upon "caused by karma".

The last nine of these verses in this Sutta bring together the various strands of Dharma taught here. In the first of these verses (654) the Buddha emphasizes how names and families are only conventional descriptions having no ultimate meaning, they are the only to the extent that they are accepted within their own language, culture and convention. As these factors change so will the meaning of names. The Buddha's Awakening showed him that the accepted conventions were sometimes untruthful, even evil and then did not accord with Dharma.

This is why in verse 655 he refers to "those asleep, unquestioning" who take words and names as ultimate truth. "Taking up views" is a technical term for those who seize upon beliefs as true, whose beliefs (views) cannot be verified and upon a deeper level who blindly follow the basic view of "I am". From that flow all other views. In numerous places in the Sutta the Buddha has shown the evil results of the belief in "I am", ranging from mild conflicts, round to persecutions, wars and "racial cleansing". People, blind like this, not surprisingly by tradition uphold such views as "one's a brahmin just by birth."

Verse 656 puts the Buddhist view: that it is karma not "birth" that is responsible for one's status. Were it governed by "birth" there is nothing could be changed—just grin and bear it. This is in fact the Hindu position (particularly in the Bhagavadgīta) that those of low castes should just accept their station in life and work unquestioningly for high caste people. But the Buddha taught that there are four types of people: one who goes from dark to dark, one from dark to light, one from light to dark, one from light to light (AN 4.85). This has nothing to do with "birth", whether understood in the brahminical sense, or in "western" society. There are many historical examples in both of those who started their lives in poor families but by diligence ended up in the light, while plenty of cases can be found of those from families of high repute who yet degenerated due to their internal tendencies to greed, hatred and delusion, as well as to external conditions.

The next verse, 657, may raise questions, even eyebrows, even voices. We learn from the verse that farmers, craftsmen, merchants and servants have those occupations due to karma, not due to their societal status or “birth”. This seems to be only a very short skip to the Hindu caste position of determined occupation due to past karma. This will not seem unpleasant if one’s present fortunate birth is karma-caused. One has plenty of comforts and easy access to education and so on. But this takes on a quite different aspect if the present birth is among the poverty-stricken and down-trodden.

I suggest that the Buddha lists these common occupations of his times (to which we would add a host of types of work found in our days) to point out that people choose their preferred work (if they have that choice) on the basis of *vāsanā*: This term refers to the repetitive karma in a past life(s). To examples from my own life: I enjoyed learning from books and (when found) good teachers though my interests quite excluded sports and sciences. This *vāsanā*, tendency or predilection was part of my character from childhood. So was another tendency to interest in Ethiopia. None of my family had been there, yet throughout my teens and twenties I met continually people who had lived in the country—such as a girlfriend who had met the emperor Haile Selassie—and strengthened this interest. But then the great *vāsanā* became apparent. As a British soldier in the Suez Canal Zone doing my National Service, I read the book *Buddhism* by Christmas Humphreys (still in print!) during the course of one day, all 240 pages of it, and at the end knew without a doubt that I was a Buddhist.

So perhaps the Buddha intended to suggest that people’s occupation to some extent depends upon these tendencies which draw people towards not only being farmers, craftsmen, merchants, and servants but also (658) to being robbers, soldiers, priests, and rulers. It is no coincidence that these four are found in one Verse.⁶

⁶ Sujato: I interpret this verse differently. I think there is a play on two meanings of *kamma*: as well as meaning “ethical choices” especially in past lives, it commonly means simply “work”. So the Buddha is saying that we are not distinguished by our

Verses 659–670: Karma as a process, a very complex one, does really work in the mind and can by advanced practitioners be seen and known. This means that it is not a theory or mere belief. One of the six True Knowledges possessed by the Buddha was the Knowledge of others' karma and results, and since his time many famous Teachers have had this ability. "Seers of causal relatedness" refers to those who see Dependent Origination for themselves. "People by karma circle round" means that they continue to go round the Wheel of birth and death, while "beings are by karma bound" means that the vast majority of them have no choice about where they will go in their next existence. That has already been decided by the predominant sorts of karmas that they have "made". The only beings to have any choice in this are those upon the path—streamwinners or Bodhisattvas. The surety about this is reinforced by the simile: the well-secured linchpin that holds the chariot's wheel to the axle. New karma in a different direction can sometimes block out, though probably not dissolve, karma completely.

To encourage the young brahmins so that they did not feel that their futures were deterministically limited the Buddha spoke the next verse showing them what they had to practise. "Ardour" (*tapo*) was a word well-known to brahmins. To them it meant, and still means, some sort of austerity, sometimes very severe self-torture aimed at purification according to Hindus but disapproved of by the Buddha. In the Buddha's Dharma *tapo* means making an effort, even if this is difficult and involves renunciation. It should not involve the harm of oneself. "Good Life" (*brahmacariya*) is a life based on Dharma of moral conduct (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*, *prajñā*). It may or may not involve celibacy and the adoption of a monastic life, or a solitary one (*muni*). With this and with "restraint and taming" one becomes a true Brahmin, that is, Awakened.

To elaborate upon this, verse 662 mentions the triple true knowledges (*vijjā*, *vidyā*) which meant quite different things to brahmins and

acts in past lives, but by what we "do" (i.e. our *kamma*) in this life.

to Buddhists. Brahmins understood *tevijjā* to mean complete knowledge of the Three Vedas, their most ancient “scriptures”. (As they were learnt by heart and chanted, not written down, they should really be called “chanters”). Buddhists understood these words to mean:

1. Memory of one’s previous births (lives);
2. The divine eye—ability to see distant events, people, etc.;
3. The exhaustion of the inflows (*āsava*), the inflows of *kāma* (sensual desire), the inflow for continued existence, and the inflow of (holding) views. Sometimes a fourth inflow is added: the inflow of ignorance.

“Possessed of Triple Knowledges”, which are not “possessed” in the normal sense, as there is by that time no one to possess them, goes along with “Peace”; not merely the peace experienced by a good meditator, but Awakening’s Peace. “Repeated being”—desire for more existence—is exhausted with no desire either for it or against it.

The last part of the verse compares a person with these attainments to Brahmā and Sakra. As the two important Hindu devas would be revered by their followers, so should an Awakened one be treated. This is rather an interesting end to these verses, an end specially spoken by the Buddha to inspire them as brahmins to practise the Dharma.

3.10 To Kokāliya on the Results of Slander

KOKĀLIYA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Radiant One was dwelling at Jeta's Grove in the park of Anāthapiṇḍika near Sāvattḥī. Now at that time the bhikkhu Kokāliya approached the Radiant One, and having done so saluted him and sat down to one side. Seated there Kokāliya bhikkhu said this to the Radiant One: "Sir, Sāriputta and Moggallāna are of evil desires, under the influence of evil desires."

When this was said the Radiant One spoke to the bhikkhu Kokāliya: "Don't say this Kokāliya, don't say so! Clear your mind towards Sāriputta and Moggallāna for they are very friendly." A second time Kokāliya repeated his allegation and the Radiant One replied in the same way. An even a third time Kokāliya spoke his accusation and the Radiant One replied.

After this the bhikkhu Kokāliya rose from his seat, saluted the Radiant One and circumambulating him, keeping him on the right, departed. Only a short time after he left, Kokāliya's whole body broke out in boils the size of mustard seeds, then grew to the size of green-gram, then to chickpeas, then to jujube seeds, then to jujube fruits, then to myrobalan fruits, then to young bael fruits, then to mature bael fruits, and when they had reached this size all over his body, blood and pus was discharged and Kokāliya died. After death, he appeared in the Paduma Hell as a result of hardening his heart against Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

Then as the night passed, Brahmā Sahampati of great radiance illumining the whole of Jetavana, came to the Radiant One and after saluting him stood to one side and said this: "Venerable, the bhikkhu Kokāliya has died and appeared subsequently in the Paduma Hell as a result of hardening his heart against Sāriputta and Moggallāna."

When this was said, a certain bhikkhu spoke to the Radiant One

thus: “How long, venerable, is life in the Paduma Hell?”

“Bhikkhu, life in the Paduma hell is surely long, not easy to reckon in terms of years, of hundreds of years, of thousand of years, in tens of hundreds of thousands of years.”

“But can a simile be made, sir?”

“It can, bhikkhu. Suppose that there was a Kosalan cartload of twenty measures of sesame seed, and that from this a man might take a single seed every century. That Kosalan cartload of twenty measures of sesame seeds would be more quickly used up in that way than would a lifetime in the Paduma Hell. Moreover, bhikkhu, there are twenty lifetimes in the Abbuda Hell to equal one in Nirabbuda Hell ... twenty in Nirabbuda to equal one Ababa ... twenty in Ababa to equal one Aṭaṭa ... twenty in Aṭaṭa to equal one Ahaha ... twenty in Ahaha equal to one Kumuda ... one Sogandhika ... one Uppālaka ... one Puṇḍarīka ... one Paduma. It is in Paduma that Kokāliya bhikkhu has arisen for hardening his heart against Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

The Radiant One spoke thus and having said this spoke further (these verses).

For every person come to birth,
an axe is born within their mouths,
with which these fools do chop themselves
when uttering evil speech.

663

Who praises one deserving blame,
or blames that one deserving praise,
ill-luck does tear by means of mouth
and from such ill no happiness finds.

664

Trifling the unlucky throw,
by dice destroying wealth,
even all one’s own, even oneself as well;
compared to that greater “throw” —
the thinking ill of Sugatas.

665

Having maligned the Noble Ones
 with voice and mind directing ill,
 one then arrives at (self-made) hell,
 of millions of aeons (slow to end). 666

With one denying truth there goes to hell
 that one who having done, says “I did not”.
 Humans having made such karmas base,
 equal are they in the other world. 667

Whoso offends the inoffensive one,
 who’s innocent and blameless, both,
 upon that fool does evil fall,
 as fine dust flung against the wind. 668

That person prone to coveting
 will speak of others in dispraise—
 one faithless and ill-mannered too,
 jealous, set on slandering. 669

One foul mouthed, of baseless talk,
 ignoble, treacherous, evil, doing
 wrong deeds, luckless, ill-begotten human scum—
 Speak little here! Or else hell-dweller be! 670

Dirt do you scatter for your own happiness
 whenever you revile those who are good,
 faring through the world many evils you have done,
 in the long night falling down a precipice. 671

No one’s karma is destroyed,
 truly as Master it returns;
 so the foolish misery bring
 upon themselves in future time. 672

Bashed by bars of iron,
 iron spikes' edges bite,
 and the food appropriately is
 like white-hot balls of iron. 673

And softly speak no speakers there,
 they hasten not to help nor to safety lead,
 they enter all-directions fire,
 on burning ember-mats they lie. 674

Tangled they are in fiery nets,
 and pounded there with hammers of iron,
 and led, immersed, through darkness blind,
 spreading in all directions. 675

And enter they in iron cauldrons afire,
 in which for long they're stewed;
 rising up and sinking down,
 bubbling in masses of fire. 676

There the evil-doers cook
 in a mixed stew of blood and pus;
 to whatever direction they turn,
 there they fester at the touch. 677

Then the evil-doers cook
 in worm-infested waters;
 and cannot flee for there are sides,
 vast vessels with all surfaces concavities. 678

There looms the sharp-edged Swordleaf scrub—
 they enter and their limbs are slashed;
 and there with hooks their tongues are seized,
 pulled to and fro, they're beaten up. 679

They draw near Vetaraṇī Creek,
biting and bladed, hard to cross;
there headlong down the foolish fall—
these evil-doers evil done. 680

Then while they wail, the mottled flocks
of ebon ravens them devour;
jackals, hounds, great vultures, hawks,
and crows rend them and ravage there. 681

Misery unmitigated, this mode of life,
which evil-doers get to see,
therefore let one in life's remainder be
not careless, one who does what should be done. 682

Those who know reckon the term
of these in the Paduma Hell in loads
of sesame, five myriad lakhs of seeds
and then, twelve hundred lakhs beside. 683

Thus are Hell's many ills here told,
and terms that must be spent there too;
towards, therefore, those praiseworthy,
the friendly, pure—guard both words and thoughts. 684

(Snp 663–684)

Some reflections on “Hell”

There are a few Pāli texts on this subject, but the present Sutta is the only one found in the Sutta Nipāta. The subject of the hell-realms is rare when compared to the vast recorded teachings of the Buddha. Mention of it occurs always in the context of some serious wrongdoing, for peccadilloes do not result in the experience of hell.

Another point to consider is that as “all conditioned things are impermanent” (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*), hell certainly is conditioned by the causes that have led to its suffering, so it is impermanent, as are all other forms of existence. In this it differs from the hell of theistic religions which they sometimes have proclaimed as eternal. Buddhist teachings could not agree that impermanent cause, even the slaughter of millions of men, could have permanent results, so even such monsters as Hitler, Stalin, and Ma-tse-tun could not suffer hell forever. However, all texts are agreed that it continues for a very long time.

“Hell” is not a translation of *niraya* favoured by some because of the eternalistic overtone, which does not apply to the Buddhist meaning, and so prefer “purgatory”. I have used “hell” as it is a direct and brief term fitting well into verse, and applicable to both the great sufferings experienced by evil-doers.

The wrong-doer in this Sutta is a bhikkhu called Kokāliya (in the Sutta Nipāta), or Kokālika (in other Pāli texts). In any case his name means “one from the town of Kokāli”. His story, the essence of which is his slander of the Buddha’s chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, in the presence of the Buddha, saying that these two enlightened monks were of “evil desires, and they are influenced by evil desires”. Presumably he repeated this allegation to others as well. According to the texts this resulted in a plague of boils all over his body. We could speculate whether modern medicine could or could not find a cure for these, but the Pāli commentators presumably would deny that any cure was possible as the affliction was brought about by evil karma. Then Kokāliya died of his illness and the text relates that he went immediately in hell. As this frightful experience is usually connected with great anger and violence, though in this case it seems to be motivated by envy, and because this touches upon a doctrine of the heavy results of doing evil to the Nobles ones (*ariya*), it should be examined in brief.

This teaching, found in its fullest development in the Pāli Commentaries, assigns degrees of painful karmic results according to the

attainment of the recipients. Thus, injuring a Buddha causes in the wrongdoer the worst and longest sufferings while attacking ordinary persons, including monks and nuns will not have such bad consequences, with all shades of karma results between. This is a questionable doctrine as explained below and may lead us to doubt whether we should accept this Sutta as the Buddha-word or not.

The Buddha's teaching on Karma is clear and straightforward. A decision in the mind is mental karma, a decision to speak and one has made vocal karma and if this is followed by deliberate action this is called bodily karma, the last two are of course guided by mind. These three actions or karmas may be motivated by greed, hatred and delusion, in which case they are called "unwholesome karma", the results of which will be painful, or by non-greed (= generosity), non-hatred (loving-kindness and compassion), or by non-delusion (= wisdom), in which case such karma is called "wholesome", and the results of it to be experienced sooner or later will be pleasant. The initial decision to think, say and do is taken in the mind and the following results are experienced as happiness or suffering in both mind and body. This Sutta concerns unwholesome karma with painful results.

Then, there is also this teaching, albeit rather uncommon in the Pāli Suttas, that good karma made towards Enlightened persons has much greater results for the doer, than good expressed towards ordinary people, who of course may include beggars or other poverty stricken or ill people. Such emphasis, found in the Pāli Commentaries and much in evidence in Buddhist countries, means that those who are supposed to be enlightened or on their way to Enlightenment receive very generous donations, while care of the poor, the diseased, the criminal and the mad receive little, as the doer's merit will be insignificant because these people are not *puññavanta*—those possessing merit. This cannot be correct! Suppose a good-hearted person wishes to alleviate the sufferings of those poor people, doing this out of loving-kindness and compassion, one cannot say that his or her merit will be little. Why?

Because this person is compassionate, with good intentions.

In the case of Kokāliya he is said to have uttered envious and untruthful words about the two enlightened disciples in the Buddha's presence. Result; a frightful disease followed by a long stay in exceedingly uncomfortable surroundings. Had he uttered the same words about an ordinary fellow-monk or lay-supporter, presumably his karmic result would have been quite insignificant. Does this sound like the rational teaching of karma and its results? No, because there is an unexplained and probably inexplicable cause or condition involving the noble attainments of the great disciples, which condition has seriously lengthened his terrible karmic results.

It is proper to mention here that the other side of this doctrine, doing good towards noble disciples, such as great generosity by donors, has also a deleterious result. As they are reputed to be Awakened, such Teachers attract lay-donors who wish to make merit, sure that their gifts will bring them good results in the future. These Teachers are then showered by gifts which have no place in their lives, and which may be difficult for them to dispose of.

Summing up this point; the doctrine of variable results of karma according to the recipient's spiritual status is at least questionable though widely believed in. It may be objected that the Dharma's workings are not mechanistic or totally rational. This is true for the Dharma in some aspects transcends rationalism, as for example the presence of supernormal powers in some living teachers or the bodily relics in the ashes of some great teacher's cremation.

Hell's depictions in many religious traditions have remarkable similarities. Such murals and paintings on cloth and in books are usually explained as efforts to evoke fear of retribution among evildoers. Whether such pictures are successful or not the writer does not know, though controlling the impulses to evil by invoking fear cannot be the best way of teaching people Dharma. But he does know that the teacher Acharn Singthong, in N.E. Thailand, controlled an outbreak

of rustling water-buffalo in the locality by such means. This Teacher, highly respected by the villagers, gave to them on a Full Moon night a sermon lasting about three hours on the hell-realms. The audience of monks, nuns and laypeople, were spellbound and no one even changed position on the hard boards of the floor of Wat Pa Geow's hall. One could have heard a pin drop. Buffalo-rustling ceased immediately. Perhaps it is true then that some people will only practise the Dharma after being scared of the results of evil-doing.

As a matter related to this Sutta it should be remembered that without the operation of the senses and the assembling of knowledge by mind there are no worlds, indeed, no existences. So when people raise the question, "Hells? Where are they?" the answer is that they exist where all worlds exist, including the one that we are aware of now, in the mind. One does not have to go anywhere to reach hell, just make the appropriate karma and hell is here. It can continue to be here (where else would it be?) when an evildoer dies. Just as we make our own karmas to produce and continue with human life, so it is with other possibilities for existence, including hell. "The mind goes before all dharmas" as the famous first verse of the Dhammapada says.

Moving on now to examine the Sutta's structure, its composite nature soon becomes obvious. Kokāliya's story and some of the verses here (Snp 663-666) have been popular and are preserved also at SN 6.10 and at AN 10.89. This seems to be the earliest version around which other material has been added. For instance, Snp 667-668 are also Dhp 306 & 125, while the remaining verses, Snp 669-684, are an addition found only in Snp. These sixteen verses may be the work of one author who has written them in an unusual metre.

Particular points raised in the Sutta

In the introductory prose there is an example of a verbal convention in the Buddha's days: that of repeating a question or statement three times and receiving an answer also thrice repeated. In this case Kokāliya

repeats his allegations against the chief disciples three times while the Buddha warns him not to accuse them as they are “very friendly”. Indians in those days, not only Buddhists, according to the Pāli Suttas seemed to regard this thrice-repeated, statement or question as bringing to a head or finally resolving the matter in hand. This could be illustrated in this way:

- Statement/accusation
- Reply/warning
- x 3 = karmic result for speaker.

Another example, Sela questioning Keṇiya (Snp 3.7):

- Did you say “Buddha?”
- Yes, I said “Buddha”
- x 3 = result: Sela and disciples went to the Buddha and were awakened.

Many more may be found in other Sutta collections. After Kokāliya has spoken three times against the pair of chief disciples and been reprimanded for this by the Buddha, he is recorded to have done a rather astonishing thing. Not only does he pay his respects to the Buddha (by lotussing his hands and bowing down probably from the standing position), but also as a greater mark of respect still he departs keeping the Buddha on his right side, that is, circumambulating him in a clockwise direction. Of course we shall never know if this is merely a commonly repeated phrase in Pāli, or whether the miscreant Kokāliya actually did so. Though he could have done this out of mockery of the usual conventions of reverence, it could also be that his enmity was not at all directed at the Buddha, but an obsession directed to the chief disciples.

Kokāliya’s death through increasingly large “boils” needs a note upon the seeds and fruit they are compared to. Mustard seeds are very small, less than a thirty-secondth of an inch across. Green-grain is

one of a family of similar pulses which can be used for making dahl. Chickpeas are also a familiar ingredient of Indian cookery to this day but being covered with boils of this size—up to one half-inch diameter, would already be very serious. Jujube fruit kernels would be larger assuming that this means what is now known as “Chinese dates” are in fact *Zizyphus jujuba* and the whole fruit larger still. Myrobalan (*Terminalia* species from India) produces an astringent fruit widely used in Ayurveda, and by Buddhist monks, the green fruit exceeding at least two jujubes. Bael (*bilva* in Pāli) is a tree in the Citrus family producing a good-tasting digestive flesh which is reached only by cracking a hard shell. Fruits vary in size from small ones easily held in one hand to “two-handers”. One shudders to think of “boils” of this size.

Another matter worth noting is the use of Brahmā Sahampati as messenger of Kokāliya’s fate. He serves to reinforce the Buddha’s authority as the supposed utterer of this Sutta. He is pictured as appearing to the Buddha in the last hours of the night and telling him what had happened to Kokāliya. After his disappearance the Buddha then relays this information to the bhikkhus and explains, in answer to a question, about the length of life in the Paduma Hell.

This is then explained, supposedly by the Buddha, in a complex piece of Buddhist arithmetic, all of which may be summed up by a more convenient expression in English as “a very, very long time”. The combination of Brahmā Sahampati’s appearance and the Buddha’s “mathematical” calculations and the subsequent verses upon the horrors of hell may give us pause for thought when it comes to this Sutta’s authenticity.

Various translators introduce into these verses the term “warders of hell” for which there is no word in the Pāli text. These are perhaps assumed to exist and if this is so—certainly later Buddhist texts assume that such “warders” exist—then it raises a question. The inhabitants of the various states of existence including this human one, have appeared there (or here) due to the karma that they have created—so

much is clear. But what are we to understand about “warders” who are said to intensify the sufferings of the inmates, as though they were commercially frying fish and chips, flipping them over and stirring them round in boiling oil? Are these supposed “warders” present because they too have made much evil karma? But why should they have power over other inmates? One assumption is that they indeed have made such karma. Another, more subtle explanation is that the perception of “warders” by the inmates like the rest of the hellish landscape, is mind-made by the latter. This properly solves the presence of hellish “devils” as depicted not only in Buddhist art but in Christian murals also.

From verse 669 to the Sutta’s conclusion I have based my translation upon E.M. Hare’s verses and occasionally used whole lines of his, as he has often struck an appropriately colourful or gory note.

3.11 The Sages Asita and Nālaka and the Buddha's advice

NĀLAKA SUTTA

Prologue—Telling the story

NARRATOR

In midday meditation
brilliantly arrayed
happy and joyful
with Sakka their superior
Then when he had seen
respectfully he greeted them

the sage Asita saw
the thrice-ten deva troop,
waving flags the while,
all highly elated. 685
the devas so delighted
and questioned them like this:

ASITA

Why is this deva-Saṅgha
they've brought along banners
Even when the devas
with a win for deva-hosts,
then was no such celebration—
What wonder have they heard?
They whistle and they sing,
with dancing and with music,
O you deva-dwellers
I beg you, good sirs,

so exceedingly joyful
for brandishing about? 686
battled anti-gods
and loss for demon-hordes,
so what have devas seen?
Why devas are delighted? 687
clap hands and strum sitars;
so they celebrate.
on Meru's airy peaks,
soon dispel my doubts. 688

DEVAS

A Bodhisattva has been born
in lands along Lumbini.
for the weal and welfare
That's why we're delighted

in the Sakyans' city,
Precious gem beyond compare,
of those in the human realm.
and completely overjoyed.⁷ 689

He, best being of all,
mighty bull among men,
will revolve the wheel
likened to a roaring lion,

foremost among mankind,
of creatures all supreme,
in ancient seers' woods,
mightiest of beasts.

690

NARRATOR

Having known this news,
in mind descended to
sat he down and said:

then the sage in haste
Suddhodana's abode,

ASITA

Where then is this prince?

I wish to see him now!

NARRATOR

So Sakyans he beseeched.
Then to him Asita named
the prince in colour clear
burnished and illustrious both
Joy with rapture great
on perceiving this young prince,
pure like the lunar lord
dazzling as the sun
Sky beings all above
of many-tiered parasols
but no one saw the bearers
The sage with dreadlocked hair,
seeing then the prince—
white parasols of state
received him in his arms with
As soon as he received
he, skilled in lore of signs
exclaimed:

did Sakyans show their son,
as rays from shining gold,
of supernal hue.
filled Asita's heart
bright as crested flame,
stars herding through the sky,
on cloudless autumn days.
carried canopy of state
as well as gold-handled whisks—
of the whisks and parasols.
also Kaṇhasiri called,
golden jewel upon brocade,
held above his head—
gladdened mind and joy.
the foremost Sakyman,
and mastery of mantras,

691

692

693

694

695

ASITA

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <p>From persons having heard who Sambodhi attained, go there, then question him, Practice with that radiant lord</p> | <p>the sound of “Buddha” word practising the Dharma-path, as his disciples live with him. precepts of purity.</p> | 702 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

NARRATOR

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <p>So, instructed by him, who foresaw in future time that Nālaka, his nephew with guarded senses waited Having heard of the victor’s he went to him and saw him, and trust arose in him Then he enquired upon thus coming to fulfil</p> | <p>whose mind set on benefit, perfect purity complete, much merit stored away, in expectation of the victor. revolution of the noble wheel, that prime among the saviours, in the greatest sage. the Silentness supreme, the sages wish.</p> | 703 704 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <p>NĀLAKA</p> | <p>Having understood Asita’s speech— that it accords with truthfulness, Gotama, we question you on dharmas gone to the further shore.</p> | 705 |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <p>I came to homelessness but now I wish as a bhikkhu to behave, speak to me, Sage, as I request on the highest state of Silentness.</p> | 706 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <p>BUDDHA</p> | <p>Knowledge of Silence I’ll convey, hard to do, to master difficult, so be both firm and resolute and I’ll speak upon this thing.</p> | 707 |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

In town there's always praise and blame,
 so practise even-mindedness,
 guard against faults of mind—
 fare calm and free from arrogance. 708

As crown-fire crests
 and forest-fuel flies up,
 so do women tempt the sage—
 but be not by them tempted. 709

Refrain from sexual dharmas,
 whether pleasures fine or coarse,
 be not attached, repelled,
 for beings weak or strong. 710

Comparing others with oneself—
 “As I am so are they” and
 “As they are so am I” —
 kill not nor cause to kill. 711

Wishes and greed give up to which
 ordinary persons are attached,
 be one-with-vision and set out
 to go across this hellish state. 712

Empty-bellied, with little food,
 few in wishes, greedless too,
 the wishless he, and hungerless,
 the wishless come quite Cool. 713

The sage on almsround having walked,
 going then to lonely woods
 and drawing near the roots of a tree,
 takes a seat just there. 714

Firmly intent on *jhāna*
 and delighting in the woods;
 who at the tree-roots meditates,
 satisfies himself. 715

Until the end of night,
 when to a village he goes,
 there, by gifts not pleased
 nor by invitations. 716

The sage to village come,
 hastens not among the houses,
 but cuts off talk while seeking food,
 and refrains from hints. 717

“Good it is that I have gained”,
 “good that I have not as well”.
 One such thinks both alike
 returning to his tree. 718

Going about with bowl in hand
 not dumb but others think him so;
 he does not scorn a trifling gift,
 nor despise its donor. 719

Refined and basic practices
 the Samaṇa’s made clear;
 but Beyond with both they not go,
 nor through one only experience. 720

In whom no craving’s left—
 that bhikkhu cut across the stream,
 “should do, should not do”, given up,
 in him no fever’s found. 721

Further than this, wisdom still I teach:
 Be like a razor's edge,
 tongue-tip upon the palate,
 thus be restrained in belly. 722

Be not indolent in mind,
 but neither think too much,
 and be free from all carrion-stench:
 aim at life of purity. 723

Train yourself in solitary life,
 the way of life of *samaṇas*,
 take high delight in being one
 its called the Singleness. 724

With this you will shine forth
 in all directions ten,
 then the praises of the wise, those skilled
 in meditation—sensuality let go,
 as one loving me, you'll all the more
 grow in faith and modesty. 725

Know this from waters' flow—
 those by rocks and pools—
 such rills and beckes gush noisily,
 great waterways flow quiet. 726

What is unfilled makes noise
 but silent is what's full,
 the fool is like the pot half-filled,
 the wise one's like a lake that's full. 727

When a *samaṇa* speaks much
 full of goodness and meaning:

Knowing Dharma he speaks,
Knowing he speaks so much. 728

But who, Knowing, is self-restrained,
Knowing, he speaks not much:
That Sage is worth to Silence,
a Sage to Silence reached.⁸ 729

(Snp 685-729)

Notes upon Sundry Words

Subjects commented upon are bolded.

The Prologue

This visionary beginning to the Sutta has been translated rather into the form of alliterative Anglo-Saxon verse, perhaps not very successfully. Whether that is so or not, a few matters deserve to be explained to the reader or chanter.

The Sage Asita appears rarely in Pāli Suttas but was an important and well known person of those days. Obviously well-practised in *jhāna* he had access through his meditation to visions and other worlds. On this occasion he saw the “Thirty-three” (sometimes called the 30; for the Pāli legend about them, see the Dhammapada Commentary translated as *Buddhist Legends*, volume 3, p.315 ff.). This realm of devas had a leader usually called Sakka (Skt. Sakra, also Inda/Indra) who according to the Suttas became a devoted disciple of the Buddha. Naturally, Asita wanted to know why these devas were jubilant and so enquired.

He mentions a war with the anti-gods fought by these devas at some past time. Yes, as this is still the Kāma-world, there is war even though it is a heaven! *Kāma*, even when it is subtle, still produces

⁸ Sujato: LKM’s translation of the following verse did not bring out the subtle difference between this verse and the previous; compare Norman’s translation. I have adjusted it slightly.

conflict. “Anti-gods” is a translation of the Pāli *a + sura*, which literally means “not + god”. There are many stories about the *asuras* and their quarrelsome nature.

The Thirty-three devas are celebrating the birth of our Bodhisatta, the prince Siddhattha who later became the Buddha of our times. After his enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree, he “**revolved the Wheel**” of the Dharma (*Dhamma-cakka-pavattana*). This phrase has a definite meaning beyond the fact that he “taught Dharma”. The Wheel, seen on so many temples, images, sculptures, flags and so on throughout the Buddhist world, is a symbol of movement, something that is not static. Originally a symbol used by the greater Indian monarchs as a sign of their power and authority, it was tamed by the Buddha to represent the power for good of the Dharma which would increase both in its exterior presence in this world through such things as temples, monks and nuns, but increase also in the student’s mind for his or her comfort. Unlike the usual run of royalty (and these days, presidents), Dharma conquers not by violence but through its innate truthfulness, through its advocacy of loving kindness and compassion. The Wheel of Dharma always revolves because that truthfulness is always true though the present Buddha’s teaching of it may in time be forgotten. Hence it is known as the *Saccadhamma*—the truthful Dharma which applies everywhere and at all times. A Buddha may be said to give the wheel a heave to keep it running!

The phrase under discussion here occurs three times in this Sutta and has been rendered as “**revolve the wheel**”, “**turn the Dharma-wheel**” and “**revolution of the noble wheel**”.

Lunar Lord a few verses further on is a fancy name for the moon and his herding of the stars through the sky—charming poetry.

The panoply of state, the **parasols** held above rulers and the yak-tail fly-whisks and so on that traditionally accompany a rajah—possibly now found only in Thailand—are pictured in these verses, an ancient tradition indeed. The author was a bhikkhu in Thailand at the time of

King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Fourth Cycle; 4 x 12 = 48 years old) when he processed round the capital with right royal traditional splendour. All shops were closed and no one gazed out from upstairs windows or balconies but pavements were packed and silent with no cheering or clapping. The procession of elephants with the king mounted upon the first accompanied by royal retainers in traditional Thai costume was very impressive. Such precious articles as parasols and whisks, as described in the Sutta, were much in evidence and solemnity of the occasion emphasized by the crowd's silence. It was broken only by a single walking official playing a tiny instrument, the high notes of which were punctuated every few steps by the single beat together of twenty-four drums. Altogether an awe-inspiring event, with the monarch dismounting from his massive elephant to visit the various temples upon his route and pay homage there.

Returning more strictly to the Sutta, note that the Buddha throughout Snp is referred to as a **Jina** (Victor or Conqueror) of whatever it is in ourselves which prevents the Seeing of things-as-they-really-are. This occurs here in a passage of narrative, as the Buddha generally does not call himself by this title. (*Jina* is also used by Jains, that is "followers of the Jinās", as a title for their supreme teachers). The Buddha however does refer to himself as a Tathāgata (One who has come from/gone to Thusness), or a Samaṇa (One who's at peace/equanimous).

In the same narrative passage Asita enquires about the **Silentness supreme**. This one translator's effort to render *moneyyaṃ*, an abstract noun connected with *muni*, a sage. Other renderings are "best of sagehoods", "highest wisdom" and "still wisdom's crown", while the Pāli has *moneyyaṃ uttamaṃ padam*. *Muni* is a tricky word to translate into English. Its best known context in English is as an epithet of the Buddha: Śākyamuni or Shākyamuni. In Pāli it is Sakyamuni and usually translated as Sage of the Sakiyas. It is also well-known in a Sanskrit mantra: *Om muni muni mahāmuni śākyamuniye svaha*. In this book *muni* is translated, "Sage".

But to say this does not exhaust the meaning of *muni* which cannot in fact be translated by one word. This is because the root of this word is also connected to silence—the deliberate Hindu practice of not-speaking, and hence to the development of wisdom. In the Vinaya-piṭaka an incident is recorded in which some bhikkhus make a pact not to speak to each other during their three months of Rains-retreat. When this was finished and they journeyed to meet the Buddha he enquired how they had practised and they told him of their deliberate silence: he reproved them for this, calling their practice acting like animals. They should not behave so but should communicate, he said, gladdening each other with Dharma.⁹ This silent practice in Skt. is called *mauna* or in Pāli *mona*. It seems that the Buddha disapproved of this common Indian practice counting it as an extreme action not fitting those who practised the Middle Way. It is obviously different if solitary meditators practise silence. This sort of silence, *moneyyam* or *mona*, is really inner silence, not struggling with oneself not to talk, naturally not talking if there is no good reason to do so, and it arises from a kind of wisdom gone beyond words. This kind of wisdom is expressed through the verb *munāti*—to be one-with-silent-wisdom, or a mum, a silent sage. All this should be borne in mind (!) when the word “sage” is seen in this translation.

Coming to verse 711, note its last line, “**kill not nor cause to kill**”. A similar theme and the same refrain is found in Dhp 129–130.

The next verse in Pāli contains the word *cakkhumā* or “one-with-vision” which is literally one-with-eyes. See AN 3.29.

Shortly after we arrive at verse 720, which is accompanied in my manuscript translation with an exclamatory, “Note!” This is a warning that this difficult verse is translated in different ways by E.M Hare, H. Saddhatissa, K.R. Norman with I.B Homer, as well as W. Rahula, and N.A. Jayawickrama. Some of these versions, though they have been printed, make no sense or are mere literal versions word by word. One

⁹ Sujato: See my note to Snp 1.12.

or two of them resort to the Pāli Commentary's involved "explanation". The present translation tries to make sense of the Pāli, (could there be an ancient corruption?) just as it stands.

The first line contains the word *uccāvaṃ* which most of the above translators have rendered "high and low". However, as this refers to Dharma practices, while "high" ones does not sound out of place, surely it is inappropriate to talk of "low" ones. Hence my translation of "refined and basic".

The *Samaṇa* in the second line is the Buddha talking modestly of himself, since *samaṇa* was a common term for wandering monks. But this *samaṇa* did not just teach these two types of practices but made them clear, clarified them or illuminated them. The Pāli verb *pakāsita* has this meaning of shining, clarifying.

The second two lines have confounded all the above translators and the only advantage of this one is that it does make sense, though whether it represents the original meaning will be for future scholars to decide. The words *digunaṃ* and *ekagunaṃ* have, in the previous translations, been rendered "twice" and "once" but I have used "both" and "one" which makes better sense. Now, I assume that the verse concerns the two sorts of practice mentioned in the first two lines. The second two seem to mean that practitioners, only referred to with "they", do not go to the Beyond, that is Liberation or Nirvāṇa, by means of either, both sorts of practices, nor with only one sort. What does this mean? This explanation seems best: some people think that only one sort of practice is needed—either the refined or the basic; others assume that both are required, the refined and the basic. Both these people hold a view about practice and while they do so neither will successfully find the Beyond. They will not find it as they have not let go of their views.

But even this explanation still begs the question: what is basic practice and what, refined? Asking this question assumes that *uccāvaca* has this meaning of high/low, or basic/refined. It can also mean "vari-

ous”. Basic (or “low”) might refer to the various ways of making merit (*puñña*)—for these see Ten Ways of Making Merit (*dasa-puñña-kirya-vatthu*) in the Commentary to the Udāna, or in the fifth chapter of the Upāsakajanālamkāra. Both works can be obtained from the Pāli Text Society, but neither has been translated. In any case, no practitioner of Dharma can dispense with making good karma which of course involves kindness and compassion.

If making good karma, (*puñña*) or merit, counts as basic practice what then would be the refined? Many would think that the more subtle types of practice would qualify, such as *vipassanā* or insight meditation or, outside Theravāda, refined *samādhi* experience in Ch’an/Zen, or tantric methods mostly found in Tibetan Buddhist sects, or of course Dzogchen. But then if these are designated as “refined” practices, and thought of in that light with respect to oneself, will it not sound like conceit? Selfless practice would be best.

“**In all directions ten**” (*dasa-disa*) is often used in verse to mean everywhere, all round, in every direction (verse 725). In the same verse there is “**growing in faith and modesty**”. Modesty (*hiri*) has been commented on in the Notes following the Hiri Sutta (Snp 2.3). Upon *saddhā* it needs only be said that the English translation of this as “faith” is not very accurate. The English word is, after all, used in Christian contexts where one is expected to believe, in some cases without question, whatever the church asserts to be true. But Buddhists call such beliefs “views” which unqualified by any adjectives always means “wrong views”—simple because they are not or cannot be questioned. So *saddha* in Buddhist teachings means more like “confidence” which deepens with practice and is balanced by wisdom (*pañña/prajña*). *Saddhā* would be ill-translated by “belief”.

In the line before this there is the word *māmaka*, literally “one who make mine” but meaning “one who loves me” or is “devoted to me”. The person with *saddhā* makes the Buddha his or her own and cannot be shaken from his teaching.

3.12 Observation of Dualities

DVAYATĀNUPASSANĀ SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattihī at the eastern Monastery, the mansion of Migāra's Mother. Now at that time the Buddha was seating in the open, surrounded by the the Saṅgha of bhikkhus. It was the *uposatha* day, the night of the fifteenth day full moon. Then the Buddha, having surveyed the Saṅgha of monks sitting silently, addressed the bhikkhus:

“Bhikkhus, if they ask you, ‘What is the purpose of learning those skilful principles that are noble, emancipating, leading to full enlightenment?’ You should say to them, ‘Only for the sake of knowing in accordance with reality the duality of principles.’

“What duality should you speak of?

“‘This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering’, this is one observation. ‘This is the end of suffering, this is the practice leading to the end of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Those who do not understand suffering,
Or suffering's origination;
Or where all suffering
Ceases without remainder;
They do not know the path
Leading to the stilling of suffering.

730

They lack the release of the heart,
And the release by understanding;

They are incapable of making an end,
They go again to birth and old age. 731

Those who do understand suffering,
And suffering's origination;
And where all suffering
Ceases without remainder;
They know the path
Leading to the stilling of suffering. 732

They possess the release of the heart,
And the release by understanding;
They are capable of making an end,
They do not go again to birth and old age. 733

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by attachments’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all attachments there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Sufferings come to be because of attachments
Of many kinds in this world.
Whoever, unknowing, makes attachments,
That dull person goes to suffering again and again.
Therefore, understanding,
One should not make attachments,
Observing how suffering comes to be. 734

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by ignorance’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all ignorance there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Those who transmigrate
Through birth and death, again and again;
In this form of existence or some other,
They go under the sway of ignorance alone. 735

This ignorance really is the great deluder,
Because of which we have transmigrated for a long time,
Those beings who have arrived at understanding,
Do not go to future lives. 736

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by kammic choices’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all kammic choices there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Whatever suffering arises in the world,
All is caused by kammic choices.

With the cessation of such choices,
There is no arising of suffering. 737

Knowing this danger,
That suffering is caused by kammic choices,
With the settling of all choices,
There is the stopping of perceptions;
Thus suffering comes to an end,
Knowing this as it is. 738

Rightly seeing, the ones who know,
Rightly understanding, the clever ones,
Overcoming the fetters of Māra,
Do not go to future lives. 739

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by consciousness’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all consciousness there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Whatever suffering arises in the world,
All is caused by consciousness.
With the cessation of consciousness,
There is no arising of suffering. 740

Knowing this danger,
That suffering is caused by consciousness,
With the stilling of consciousness,
One is wishless, quenched. 741

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by contact’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all contact there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Struck by contacts,
They flow down the stream of lives,
Practising the bad path,
They are far from the ending of fetters. 742

But those who fully understand contact,
And with final knowledge have stilled desire,
By comprehending contact,
They are wishless, quenched. 743

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by feeling’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all feeling there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Whatever feelings there are,
Whether pleasant or painful,

And even including neutral,
Internal and external; 744

Knowing this as suffering,
Confusing, disintegrating;
Seeing feelings fall away with each touch,
One understands this matter.
With the ending of feelings,
One is wishless, quenched. 745

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by craving’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all craving there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Craving is a man’s partner,
In this long journey of transmigration;
In this form of existence or some other,
One does not escape transmigration. 746

Knowing this danger,
That craving is caused by craving;
Free of craving, without grasping,
Mindful, a bhikkhu would go forth. 747

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?

“Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by grasping’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all grasping there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Grasping is the cause of rebirth into a new life,
 Living, one runs into suffering.
 Those who are born must die,
 This is the origin of suffering. 748

Therefore, with the ending of grasping,
 Rightly knowing, a clever one,
 Directly knowing the ending of birth,
 Does not go to future lives. 749

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by kammic activity’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all kammic activity there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Whatever suffering arises in the world,
 All is caused by kammic activity.
 With the cessation of kammic activities,
 There is no arising of suffering. 750

Knowing this danger,
 That suffering is caused by kammic activity,
 Letting go of kammic activity,
 One is freed from kammic activity. 751

With craving for rebirth cut,
 A bhikkhu has peace of mind;
 Transmigrating through rebirths has ended,
 They have no future lives. 752

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by intake’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all intake there is no arising of suffering’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Whatever suffering arises in the world,
 All is caused by intake.
 With the cessation of intakes,
 There is no arising of suffering. 753

Knowing this danger,
 That suffering is caused by intake,
 By fully understanding all intakes,
 One is not dependent on any intake. 754

Rightly knowing true health,
 With the complete ending of corruptions,
 Discerning, the practitioner stands firm in Dhamma,
 The knowing one cannot be classified. 755

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“‘Whatever suffering arises, all is caused by commotions’, this is one observation. ‘With the complete ending of all intake there is no arising of commotions’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Whatever suffering arises in the world,
All is caused by commotions.
With the cessation of commotions,
There is no arising of suffering.

756

Knowing this danger,
That suffering is caused by commotions,
Therefore one should relinquish commotions,
And uproot conditioned activities;
With no commotions, not grasping,
Mindful, a bhikkhu would go forth.

757

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?”

“‘The dependent are vulnerable’, this is one observation. ‘The independent are not vulnerable’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

One who is independent is not vulnerable,
But one who is dependent and grasping,

In this form of existence or some other,
Does not escape transmigration.

758

Knowing this danger,
That dependencies are the great fear,
Independent, not grasping,
Mindful, a bhikkhu would go forth.

759

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?

“‘The non-physical realms are better than the physical realms’, this is one observation. ‘Cessation is better than the non-physical realms’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

The beings in the physical realms,
And those committed to non-physical realms,
Not understanding cessation,
They go on to future rebirth.

760

Those who understand the physical realms,
And are not committed to non-physical realms,
They are freed by cessation,
And leave death behind.

761

“If, bhikkhus, they ask you, ‘Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?’ you should say, ‘There is’. And how is there?

“‘That which is regarded as truth by this world together with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, in this generation together with its ascetics and priests, its princes and people, that the noble ones, having

clearly seen with correct wisdom in accordance with reality, understand to be false', this is one observation. 'That which is regarded as false by this world together with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, in this generation together with its ascetics and priests, its princes and people, that the noble ones, having clearly seen with correct wisdom in accordance with reality, understand to be true', this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return."

This is what the Buddha said. Having said this, the Teacher, the Sublime One, said further:

Look at this world with its gods,
 Enmeshed in the physical and the mental,
 Thinking not-self is self,
 It thinks, "This is truth". 762

Whatever they think it is,
 It becomes something else;
 That is false for them,
 For transient things are delusory. 763

But quenching is not delusory,
 That the noble ones know to be true;
 By comprehending the truths,
 They are wishless, quenched. 764

"If, bhikkhus, they ask you, 'Might there be another way of rightly observing duality?' you should say, 'There is'. And how is there?

"That which is regarded as pleasure by this world together with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, in this generation together with its ascetics and priests, its princes and people, that the noble ones, having clearly seen with correct wisdom in accordance with reality, understand to be suffering', this is one observation. 'That which is

regarded as suffering by this world together with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, in this generation together with its ascetics and priests, its princes and people, that the noble ones, having clearly seen with correct wisdom in accordance with reality, understand to be pleasure’, this is a second observation. Rightly observing this duality, a monk who meditates diligent, ardent, and resolute may expect one of two results: final knowledge in this very life, or is there is anything left over, non-return.”

Sights, sounds, tastes, and smells,
 Touches, mental phenomena, the lot;
 Are wished for, desirable, pleasing,
 As long as it is said: “They exist”. 765

These are agreed by the world
 With its gods to be pleasurable,
 But when they cease,
 That, they agree, is suffering. 766

The uprooting of identity
 Is seen by the noble ones as pleasurable;
 But this contradicts
 What the whole world sees. 767

What others see as pleasure,
 The noble ones see as suffering;
 What others see as suffering,
 The noble ones see as pleasure. 768

See this principle, so hard to understand,
 Which confuses the ignorant.
 Shrouded in darkness,
 Blind, they cannot see. 769

The good can see as by a light
 When the curtain is drawn back.
 But beasts who are unskilled in Dhamma,
 Do not understand, even when it is right there. 770

Overcome by desire for new life,
 Flowing down the stream of rebirth,
 They are reborn in Māra's realm:
 This is not the Teaching of the Buddha. 771

Who beside the noble ones
 Is worthy of waking up to that state?
 Fully understanding that state,
 One is quenched, without corruptions. 772

This is what the Buddha said. Pleased, the bhikkhus rejoiced in the Buddha's words. And while this explanation was being spoken the minds of sixty bhikkhus were freed from the corruptions without grasping.

(Snp 730-772)

CHAPTER 4

The Chapter of Eights

4.1 Objects, Desires and Pleasures

KĀMA SUTTA

If one with a desiring mind
Succeeds in gaining sensual pleasure,
A mortal such is pleased in mind
With wishes all fulfilled. 773

But if from this person passionate
all of these pleasures disappear,
then does this pleasure-addict feel,
as though by arrows pierced. 774

The one who shuns these pleasures of sense,
like treading not on a serpent's head,
such a one with mindfulness
this tangled world transcends. 775

Obsessed with fields and property,
with money, estates and those employed,
with many pleasures, women and kin,
such a person greedily— 776

Do weaknesses bring down indeed,
 by dangers is that person crushed,
 and then by *dukkhas* stuck against—
 as water into broken boat.

777

So let a mindful one avoid
 at every turn these sense-desires,
 with them abandoned, cross the flood,
 as boat is baled for the Further Shore.

778

(Snp 773-778)

The famous word *Kāma*

First, we can consider its range of meaning, a range which no one word in English can cover. As it is a very important word, used in so many different ways, there are only two choices to make in its translation. We may choose not to translate it, letting the context of its use bring out its sense, but this has the disadvantage that its meaning may not be revealed in full. In this Sutta Nipāta translation I have not chosen this alternative. The second of these is to use appropriate and different English words to render the various meanings of *kāma*. This also has a disadvantage as the full range of this word is not apparent if one reads only English. This note, then is to bring out these varied meanings of *kāma* as well as drawing attention to compound words in Pāli of which *kāma* is part.

***Kāma* meaning “desire”.** This means “desire based on the senses”. A sense-object is seen (heard, etc.), by way of the organ of the eye or ear (no problem so far!), it registers in the mind and is identified with a name (this is the operation of *saññā* which includes memory as part of perception (still no trouble!). Then desire—*kāma*—may arise wanting that which has been perceived. This is where we may have difficulties—maybe we get what we want but still are not satisfied (though all sense-objects are impermanent), or we don’t get it and so

suffer in another way. *Kāma* as sense-desire is very much tied up with my idea of my self, so even its fulfilment is a limitation. Desires of this kind, as we learn from so many places in the Pāli Suttas, are compared to a blazing fire. Stoke up the fires of desire and suffer even more!. Our materialistic culture with its unending advertisements stokes these fires and in doing so feeds the fires, so that no peace, satisfaction, or true happiness can be had in the long run.

Of course, as with the English word “desire”—it may be used in good beneficial contexts—so the word *kāma* also stretches to cover beneficial matters. One may desire the Dharma and in Pāli one would be spoken of as *dhammakāmo*. One may also desire the benefit of others, even their Liberation—this desire also falls under the word *kāma*. People sometimes ask, “But can I say that I desire Nirvāṇa?”. A reply to this might be that at the beginning of Buddhist study and practice one may desire to experience Nirvāṇa but as practice progresses the desire for that fades away as the Path to it and Nirvāṇa meld together.

Sense-desires are very varied, some very refined (as desire for sublimely peaceful states of mind), and some much grosser (as with eating delicious food, or of course for sex). In the latter contexts it is appropriate to use the words “sensual” and “sensuality” as translations of *kāma*, and when *kāma* is part of the compound *kāmarāga*, sex and sexual are definitely indicated. *Rāga* by itself and combined with *kāma* indicates “lust”.

Kāma as sense-objects, the world of kāma. So far *kāma* as a component of mind has been mentioned, but the word also stretches to include the variegated nature of sense objects. In this translation of Snp 50 in *The Rhino’s Horn* you will find—

Sense-desires so varied, sweet,
 in divers forms disturb the mind,
 Seeing the bane of sense-desires,
 fare singly as the rhino’s horn.

This translation emphasizes sense-desires as an aspect of *kāma*. But it can also be translated—

Things of sense so varied, sweet,
in divers forms disturb the mind,
When danger's seen in things of sense,
fare singly as the rhino's horn.

“Things of sense” (*vatthukāma*) emphasizes the array of objects known by the way of eye, ear, nose, tongue and sense of touch. For a person with no sense-restraint they disturb the mind. English has no one word which will stretch over both the interior sense-desire and the exterior sense-objects. There are many examples of translators using the wrong meaning of the work *kāma* in their works.

Beyond desires and things of sense there is also *kāma* as enjoyment, sense-pleasure, sensuality/sexuality. In general, Theravāda Buddhist teachings counsel that one should restrain one's senses and not indulge in this aspect of *kāma*. However, the Suttas have been preserved by bhikkhus and emphasize their attitude to sense-restraint. Lay people in traditional Theravāda countries tend to disregard this and enjoy life, unless there are secluding themselves for Dharma-practice as on the *Uposatha* days (full moon or new moon) or on a longer meditation retreat.

Turning away from *kāma*, as in a monastic life, is very different from its natural enjoyment. The first is emphasized by the Pāli *Kāma Sutta*, the second by the Hindu (Sanskrit) *Kāma Sūtra*. In this book and other Hindu works on *kāma*, the meaning of this word is not confined, as some think, to sexual enjoyment. In fact they have treatises on civilized and refined enjoyment of all the senses: music fit for the time of day and the persons present, gardens and flower-arrangements, food and different sorts of incense, and so on. None of these things from a Buddhist viewpoint are in any way wrong or evil—they are just beautiful parts of this world—“things of sense so varied, sweet.”

Whether they disturb the mind or not depends on how much Dharma-practice one has done. One who has gone far on the Path according to Theravāda sources seems to be a person no longer interested in sense-objects, having few desires and little or no enjoyment in the different aspects of *kāma*. This suggests a rather dour character, serious and unsmiling. But the monastic Teachers that I have met usually had an excellent sense of humour, and some of them with their very earthy stories, had their audience roaring with laughter.

A rather different approach to *kāma* is found in some Tibetan Buddhist teachings such as Dzogchen. Here the array of sense-objects are looked upon as the ornaments of the world we live in. These ornaments are to be offered (which implies we let go of them, thus not controlling them but not renouncing them), along with everything else: form (= body), sound, smell, taste, touch, the whole range of dharmas (= mind). The five great nectars, blood, that which arises from the fusion of the last two, the Awakened Heart, the “wheel” of practice—all offered infinitely. In this tradition, all aspects of *kāma*, within the mind as desires outside in the world as sense-objects, and the enjoyments depending on them are to be integrated without the usual judgements—of this is good or that is bad. This allows what is repressed in mind to be liberated along with all the Qualities praised in the Dharma. Actions which would bring about the suffering of others through this process of integration are avoided by the *samaya* or relationship one has with Teachers and fellow-practitioners.

4.2 The Eight on the Body as a Cave

GUHAṬṬHAKA SUTTA

The person who's to their body-cave
Clouded by many moods, and in delusion sunk,
Hard it is for that one, far from detachment,
To abandon sensual pleasures in the world. 779

Bound the worldly pleasures of the past,
And hard to liberate are they in future time,
From others they're not free, not liberated—
They're attached to past and the future too. 780

Those who are niggardly, who hank after pleasures,
infatuated they are, all their things—losses all!
But subjected to pain they lament their losses—
For how can all this be taken away, they wail? 781

Therefore should a person train,
Seeing the roughness of the world,
To take not to a wicked way,
For the wise say, life is short! 782

I see here trembling, fearful in the world,
These people gone under the sway of craving for births¹—
Base people floundering in the jaws of death,
Not free from craving for repeated birth. 783

Look at them trembling with their egotistic selfishness,
Like fish in a stream fast drying-up,
Seeing it so, fare unselfish in this life,
And cease worrying on different states of being. 784

¹ Sujato: LKM had “That these people variously desiring different being”, which is barely intelligible.

No longer longing towards either extreme
Having understood touch, together with letting go,
One should do what others will praise and not blame,
A wise one is not stained by what is seen and heard. 785

The sage has known perception and crossed the flood,
So with nothing tainted, nothing wrapped around,
They fare on in diligence with the arrow drawn,
Neither longing for this world nor for another. 786

(Sn̄p 779–786)

4.3 The Eight on the Corruptions of the Mind

DUṬṬHAṬṬHAKA SUTTA

Some speak with wicked intent,
while others are convinced their words are due,
but whatever talk there is the sage enters no debate,
therefore nowhere barren is the silent sage.² 787

But a person led by his own desires,
and then continuing accordingly finds it hard,
to let them go, accepting his own thoughts as true,
becomes one who speaks as a believer. 788

So if a person without being asked,
having practiced and praised virtues,
even those of himself, invented by himself,
the good say this is an ignoble act indeed. 789

But that bhikkhu who's serene at heart
and praises neither his own practices or virtue,
not labelling himself "I" in "this", the good praise him:
"No arrogance has he for anything in the world". 790

Who's thoughts, imagined and put together, then prefer
even though their source is not purified,
seeing advantage for himself, he relies upon this,
depending on what is imagined,
constructed and conventional. 791

When one has grasped
from among many Dharma-doctrines,
after due considerations one clings to a View,

² Sujato: LKM's rendering of the last line, "And yet...", is misleading. The Pali does not express disjunction but consequence, *tasmā* = therefore.

or condemns those of others,
 hence it's not easy to transcend those Dharmas. 792

There is not in the world such a purified person
 who continues in these views about existential states,
 for this person of purity, let go of illusion and conceit,
 how can he be in any way reckoned? 793

Who is not attached still enters into doctrinal debates,
 but one unattached, how could he take sides?
 For him nothing is taken up or put down,³
 With all views shaken off, relying on none. 794

(Snp 787–794)

³ Sujato: Here the Pali word *atta* means “taken up”, and is not the well-known *atta* meaning “self”. See Norman’s note on this verse. I have corrected the translation accordingly

4.4 The Eight on Purity

SUDDHAṬṬHAKA SUTTA

“A pure one I see”, free completely from disease,
so by “seeing” such (it is said) one attains to purity.
Convinced about this and holding it highest
that one relies on this knowledge
while contemplating purity. 795

But if a person by seeings’ purified
or if through such knowledge could leave *dukkha* aside
then one with assets still by another could be purified:
this view betrays one who speaks in this way. 796

The Brahmin says not that “by another, one is purified” —
not by sights or by sounds, rites and vows and what’s sensed.
Such person’s not stuck upon merit or evil,
with selfishness renounced, constructing nothing here. 797

Former (things⁴) let go, then to other (things) attached,
following craving, their bondage, they do not overcross,
so they (continue) with grasping and discarding,
as monkey letting go a branch to seize upon another. 798

A person undertaking (holy) vows goes high and low —
they waver, fettered by conditional perceptions.
But one who has learnt well and the Dharma penetrated
goes not up and down —
that one of wisdom profound. 799

Within all the dharmas whether seen or they’re heard,
or otherwise sensed, this one fights not at all,
that one who sees them nakedly while faring to the end,
by whom in the world could he be described? 800

⁴ “Things”: teacher, lover, view, objects etc.

They neither form views, show nothing's preferred,
nor do they claim a purity supreme,
having loosened craving's knot with which they were bound,
no longer they have longing for what's in the world. 801

Having Known, having Seen, there's nothing to be grasped
by a Brahmin gone beyond all limitations,
neither lustful with lusts nor to lustlessness attached—
in this there is nothing that's grasped as the highest. 802

(Snp 795–802)

4.5 The Eight on the Ultimate

PARAMATṬHAKA SUTTA

Whoever should take to himself certain views,
thinking them best, supreme in the world,
and hence he proclaims all others as low—
by this he does not become free from disputes. 803

In whatever is seen by him, heard, and cognized,
vows and rites done—he sees profit in these;
and so from his grasping at that very view
all others he sees as worthless, as low. 804

Intelligent people declare it a bond,
if relying on one he sees others as low;
therefore should a bhikkhu rely not on rites,
on vows, on the seen, the heard, and cognized. 805

And so in this world let him fashion no views
relying on knowledge⁵, rites and vows done,
nor let him conceive that he's on a par,
nor think himself low, nor higher than them. 806

Abandoning own views, not grasping (at more)
and even in knowledge not seeking support,
'mong those who dispute he never takes sides,
to the various views he does not recourse. 807

Having no bias for either extreme—
for being, or not, here, the next world,
for a bhikkhu like this there's no settling down,
'mong dharmas seized and decided (by them). 808

⁵ Traditional knowledge.

Concerning the seen, the heard and cognized,
not the least notion is fashioned by him,
that one who's perfected grasps at no view,
by whom in the world could he be described? 809

Neither they're fashioned nor honoured at all—
those doctrines, they're never accepted by him:
Perfected, not guided by rites or by vows,
One Thus, not returning, beyond has he gone. 810

(Snp 803–810)

4.6 Ageing and Decay

JARĀ SUTTA

Short indeed is this life—
within a hundred years one dies,
and, if any live longer
then they die of decay. 811

People grieve for what is “mine”:
though possessions are not permanent
and subject to destruction—
see this and homeless dwell. 812

In death it’s all abandoned,
yet still some think “it’s mine”;
knowing this, the wise to me devoted
should stoop not making it “owned”. 813

As one who’s waking then sees not
the things that happened in sleep;
so the beloved are not seen—
departed and done their time. 814

People now are seen and heard
and this are called by name,
but alone will the name remain
in speaking of those gone. 815

In “mine-making” greedy, they do not let go
of sorrow, lamenting and avarice,
therefore sages leaving possessions
freely wander, seers of security. 816

For a bhikkhu practicing in solitude,
keeping company with secluded mind,

of such a one are all agreed:
 “In being he’ll not be seen again”. 817

In all matters the sage is unsupported,
 nothing that makes dear, nor undear,
 sorrow and avarice do not stain that one,
 As water does not stay upon a leaf. 818

As a water-drop on lotus plant,
 as water does not stain a lotus flower,
 even so the sage is never stained
 by seen, heard, or whatever’s cognized. 819

Certainly the wise do not conceive
 upon the seen, the heard, and cognized,
 nor wish for purity through another,
 for they are not attached nor yet displeased. 820

(Snp 811–820)

Reflections on the Jarā Sutta

811: “Short indeed is this life.” When young the days are long and life has infinite possibilities, we think. Death then is something that happens to others, not to us. As we grow older, life passes by more rapidly, filled with many pleasures, pains and responsibilities. But when really old we remark that “I don’t know where that week (or month or year) has gone”. So even with modern medical facilities “within a hundred years one dies”. Some do live longer but the Buddhist emphasis, contrary to the medical view which supports only that the body should be kept alive as long as possible, is that *āyu* (long-life) should be accompanied and guided by *ñāṇa* (clarity of mind or wisdom).

- 812: “Seeing” impermanence is very important, not just occasionally through the loss of dear people or possessions but deeply and thoroughly in one’s heart through the arising and passing of thoughts whether they are holy ones or those based on greed, hatred and delusion—all should be known as impermanent. Whether this experience results in dwelling homeless or not depends upon one’s circumstances. And the homelessness of the bhikkhu or bhikkhunī will not suit everybody. A kind of homelessness may be lived in a household life when there is little or no “mine-making” (*mamaṅkāra*). This however presupposes that there is no longer the tendency to “I-making” (*ahaṅkāra*).
- 813: People often think that their possessions, in which they may include their bodies and some aspects of their minds which they are glad to own, are really theirs in spite of the message of the death of uncountable trillions of human beings in the distant and recent past. “You can’t take it with you when you go” is a piece of valuable folk-wisdom, though many try to exercise control of their wealth from beyond the grave. Buddhist tradition is to give away wealth and possessions before one dies. At least one makes some good karma by such generosity, while “western” traditions generally emphasize making a will, which leaves to executors the task of allotting bequests to friends and relatives of the deceased. This is not the best way of disposing of so called “possessions”.
- 814: Seeing life as a dream, not as real and substantial, is a very helpful practice. Even when it is regarded as real, solid and so on grasping is possible even through one is grasping at more illusions, as is said in the Diamond-cutter *Vajracchedika* Sutra:

As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp,
 A magic show, as rain-cloud, as a bubble,
 as dream, a lightning-strike, as drops of dew,
 like this should be viewed all that is conditioned.

The illusive is less easily grasped and letting-go becomes easier. “Departed and done their time”: those departed (*peta*) have literally “done their time” (*kālakatam*), so it is not only those in gaol, but all of us captured by the desires and pleasures of *samsāra* — we are still doing our time.

- 815: This well-known verse used in obituaries and the like in Buddhist countries underlines how frail our self-importance is. As we live now we have so many connections with others, and perhaps our names are well-known, even famous. After death our fame fades away and as generation succeeds generation others’ knowledge of us grows less and less, till even mighty rulers are little more than half-forgotten names. Who now knows what sort of person King Asoka was and how he conducted his court and treated his wives? We know him mostly from his famous Edicts carved upon rocks, while even Buddhist legends about him are less reliable and open to question in many ways. If such a mighty ruler’s fame will fade in only two thousand years or so, what remembrance will there be of our own small doings in a tenth of that time?
- 816: No one is truly secure because of many and expensive possessions. Security comes from letting-go, both of persons and possessions “out there”, and to grasping “one’s own” body and mind.
- 817: “In being he’ll not be seen again” means that as a bhikkhu practicing Dharma in solitude with a non-roaming mind, one which is secluded from distractions, he (but this applies equally to female practitioners) will not reappear in birth and death free from the Wheel of being or becoming.
- 818: “The sage is unsupported” — he or she has no need of supports, no need to lean on anything, not even persons, on institutions, upon dogmas or sectarian commentaries, not even upon the wise and Enlightened. And why? No props are necessary for those who have reached the Further Shore and no raft either. Such unstained sages are compared to the leaves of tropical plants

which shed the rain falling on them immediately and so are not ravelled in sorrow and avarice.

- 818: Lotus plants, both leaves and flowers, have a soapy covering so water does not lay upon them at all. This is the basis for many references in the Buddha's teachings to lotuses and their purity. Hence they are never stained, not by the mud in which they grow nor by any pollution in the rain or atmosphere. All that rolls off and does not adhere to the surface. Sages are like that.
- 820: "Not conceiving upon the seen, heard and sensed"; since this is a common human activity, relying on no senses at all must seem strange. Even stranger is the fact that they do not "conceive", meaning that they have no conceit. (This play upon related words occurs also in Pāli with the verb *maññati* and the noun *māna*). So in the sage there is no measuring of him or herself against either people—there is no "I am superior", "I am equal" or "I am inferior" for this is what conceit means in the Buddhadharma. The sage knows that purity comes from the heart and so could be neither attached, on the side of greed, nor displeased, on hatred's side.

4.7 To Tissametteyya on the Disadvantages of Sex

TISSAMETTEYYA SUTTA

TISSA Attached to sexual intercourse:
 Sir, tell its disadvantages,
 having heard your Teaching then,
 secluded we will train ourselves. 821

BUDDHA Attached to sexual intercourse,
 forgetful of the Teaching then,
 wrong things that person practices,
 and does what is not Noble. 822

 Who formerly fared on alone
 but now in sex indulges,
 “Low” they say’s that common worldly one,
 like vehicle swerving off the track. 823

 That one who had renown and fame—
 that, for sure, diminishes,
 having seen this, train yourself,
 renouncing sexual intercourse. 824

 Overcome by (lustful) thoughts,
 that one broods as a beggar does,
 and hearing reproach of others, then
 such a person is depressed. 825

 For yourself creating “arms”
 of others reprimanding words,
 so with great entanglement
 sinks down into untruthfulness. 826

 Well-known as “one who’s wise”
 when vowing to the single life,

but later then engaged in sex
will be “a fool defiled”. 827

The disadvantage having known,
the sage, at start and afterwards,
should stablish fast the single life,
having no recourse to sex. 828

So train yourself in solitude,
for that’s the life of Noble Ones,
but not conceive oneself as “best” —
them near indeed to Nirvāṇa. 829

The sage who’s rid of sense-desires,
who to them’s indifferent,
who’s crossed the flood, is envied then,
by those enmeshed with pleasures of sense. 830

(Snp 821–830)

Verse by verse commentary on this Sutta.

821: This Sutta’s “disadvantages” of sex for a Dharma-practitioner makes a rather strange list:

- one becomes forgetful of the teachings;
- others blame a celibate who later turns or returns to sex;
- less of fame and reputations due to the last;
- fantasies and brooding increase (= more *moha*-delusion).

These are dealt with below. My list of disadvantages is rather more practical:

- possible entanglements which are difficult to get out of;
- less opportunity for (meditation) practice in a relationship;
- exhaustion from work and family.

It is much better to emphasize the advantages of the Good Life as a celibate rather than listing supposed or real disadvantages:

- time and place available for practice if a monk/nun;
- livelihood comparatively easy;
- celibate practitioners are honoured and supported;
- mind may be unburdened from many worldly problems.

The Pāli word used in this verse, *methuna*, means both sexual intercourse and sexuality generally.

822: Why would a person in a relationship necessarily be “forgetful of the Sāsana” (teaching)? This is a bit similar to present day Thai ideas of a bhikkhu who is believed to have lost or cast aside his Dharma knowledge at the time of his disrobing, a sort of “lose robes, lose Dharma”. Such a person is said to practice wrongly and does what is not Ariyan. This word presumably means “what is not of the Noble Ones”, and is not a racial reference. Still, these Noble Ones include all who have true insight into the Dharma from Stream-winners to Arahats. In the later list of the ten fetters (*samyojana*) the first two of these, stream winner and once-returner, still have lust and so can have sex, while the Non-returner cannot due to lack of sexual desire, while Arahats are well beyond such worldly matters. This scheme of listing which fetters disappear with each attainment seems very artificial and inadequate. Now in the present verse since sex is labelled as ignoble and no reference made to the (later?) four stages of Noble insight, it seems that any sexual relationship must, by anyone, be looked down upon.

823: That Dharma cannot include the love of a partner is emphasized in this verse. “Fared on (the verb *carati*—see introductory section) alone” means the celibate life either as a lay person, or as a monk/nun. Judgement by others that one is now “low” having given this up, is still very much alive in Sri Lanka. “Swerving off

the track” might be true for some: a young American bhikkhu who disrobed after some years as a forest monk comes to mind. He plunged into the varied fleshpots of Bangkok. But this would not be the pattern for most people whose progress in the Dharma may need a partner. Rather than denigrating sex, as this Sutta tries to do, it would be an improvement to admit that the path of many great and noble people in this world has been made possible through the support that they receive from their partners. After all, love must be an ingredient, a very important one, upon every spiritual path. Certainly there can be love without sex, but the combination of the two is even more powerful. Not all Buddhist traditions involve celibacy, notably of course tantric varieties of the Dharma. Their approach is conceivably saner and lacks the rather shrill tone of this Sutta’s denial of sexuality. This verse is an appeal based on love of status: having reached “renown and fame” as a celibate practitioners, perhaps as a Chao Khun (Thailand), Sayadaw (Bunna), Mahathera Sri Lanka), suddenly by disrobing one becomes ordinary. The argument seems to be: remain celibate, have no sex, so that “renown and fame” are preserved. What kind of argument is this!

- 825: This is a verse of warning: think lustful thoughts and as a result brood upon the conflict of having these within a life of celibacy, leading to guilt and depression. But this practitioner seems not to know much Dharma. There are all the contemplations of the impermanence of the body and its inevitable decay, eventually becoming a fearsome sight with an indescribable stench (see Snp 1.11, the Vijaya Sutta), as well as reflections on non-self and emptiness. All thoughts whether wholesome or unwholesome are empty of any essence, they have no owner, so who is getting depressed or feeling guilty? They arise and pass away due to conditioning and there is no one who can force them to disappear. Obsession with thoughts of sex and guilt for thinking them are

signs that one needs to practise more the methods mentioned above. As for others' reproach, well, some even people always criticize the most virtuous, an even slander them. Remember! The Buddha said that there is no one who cannot be blamed for even he himself was an object of blame (See Dhp 227). If one listened to every slur and took it to heart, one would never practice Dharma.

- 826: Creating "arms" or weapons for punishing oneself on the basis of others' reprimands continues the topic of the last verse. These reprimanding words uttered by other people, instead of letting them go, are used by self-hatred as "weapons" to beat oneself up, to lower one's self-esteem. In this case, one's conceit of oneself, the way one conceives of oneself, is "I am inferior" and my inferiority compared with others is increasing. Others are viewed as "superior to myself" or perhaps as "equal to myself". Having low self esteem makes it easier to do things which as they multiply drag my self-conceit even lower. "Sinking down into untruthfulness" means that one's actions (karmas) of mind, speech and body depart increasingly from the truth of the Dharma. Cure: an effort to make all sorts of good karma beginning with simple things: offerings of food to teachers and to the poor, speaking kind words to those who suffer, being helpful to those who need it, etc. Then pages of chanting Dharma every day, and eventually begin to practice meditation. Do not try to do the difficult meditation practices first.
- 827: Another warning verse about losing reputation. Same person, with robes or other marks of celibacy and one is praised as wise, without them and sexually active and one's a fool. Like the last verse this one is concerned with the Eight Worldly Dharmas, principally the dark sides of the pairs: loss, disrepute, blame and suffering (*dukkha*). For these see, the Maṅgala Sutta (Snp 2.4) Commentary. The author of this verse assuming that it is not the

Buddha, has not considered that the subject here is “well-known as wise” so he or she will not be at all upset by others derision. A truly wise person has equanimity (*upekkhā*) so that his or her mind could not be shaken.

- 828: This verse continues from the last and is another appeal to self-pride and cherishing one’s image—not the most Buddhist attitude surely!
- 829: The training of oneself in solitude is good for some people at some times. In Buddhist traditions it has never been compulsory and it is nonsense to assert, as this verse does, that the Noble Ones’ life is solitary or always spent in the woods. Some who are ennobled by the Dharma may chose to spend their lives in the forest, but others may dwell in cities to help those who have difficulties there. The second two lines of the verse are very true indeed: the Noble Ones have no conceit of themselves as the “best”, but then they have no conceit at all, hence the mention of *Nirvāṇa*.
- 830: The last verse is another appeal for celibacy: that one will be envied “by those enmeshed with pleasures of sense”. That a practitioner should stand firm in celibacy for this reasons strikes on as very peculiar.

This odd Sutta could only have originated from the Buddha if one allows that he could have “off” days. But this would mean that he was only Buddha sometimes, while at others he would have been unenlightened! Not a Buddhist consideration! It is better to regard this Sutta as the work of some rather unenlightened monks, defending their own status but despising those Dharma-followers who led a household life. How it got included in the Sutta Nipāta is a problem now insoluble.

We are told by the Pāli Commentary that this Tissa Metteyya and the young Brahmin of the same name who appears at Snp 5,3 are not the same person. The Commentary does relate a story as the background for this Sutta, though its details do not sound very convincing.

4.8 Being Overbold, the Disadvantages of Debate

PASURA SUTTA

They say: “In our Dharma purity’s found”
but deny that it is found in the Dharma of others.
On what they depend they say “it’s the best”,
and so settle down in their individual truths. 831

Those disputants into the assembly rush,
and perceive opposedly “the other” as a fool.
But in disputes, on others they rely—
these so-called experts ever-loving praise. 832

Engrossed in conflict midst the assembly,
fearing defeat, they wish only for praise,
having been refuted, that one’s truly confused,
angry at blame seeks weakness in the other. 833

“Through investigation is your argument
refuted and destroyed”—so they say.
That one grieves and laments—that mere arguer,
“Oh! I am overcome” that person wails. 834

Arisen among monks—those controversies
among them cause both elation and depression.
Refrain therefore, from disputation!
No meaning’s in it save the prize of praise. 835

Praised in the midst of the assembly
for the presentation of arguments,
then that one laughs, or else is haughty.
So they say, “Conceited by winning debate”. 836

Though haughtiness will be ground for a downfall,
still proudly that one speaks, and with arrogance:

this having seen, refrain from disputations—
not by that is there purity, so the skilled say. 837

Just as a strong man, fed
upon royal food, might roar forth,
wishing for a champion rival,
but finds from the first there's nought to fight. 838

Those holding a view and disputing, say thus:
“This alone is the truth”, so they aver;
then reply to them: “But no one's here
to retaliate through disputation”. 839

They continue with their practice, offering no opposition
against others, offering no view opposed to view.
But then, Pasūra, what would you obtain?
For them there is nothing to be grasped as the highest. 840

As you've come here, in your mind
thinking and speculating on various views,
you have met with a Washed One
But will not be able to make progress with him. 841

(Snp 831–841)

then I think that this is very deluded Dharma,
for some depend on views as the source of purity. 847

BUDDHA Questioning repeatedly dependent on views,
grasped at again, you've arrived at delusion,
not having experienced even a tiny perception of peace,
so therefore you see this as very deluded. 848

Who as "equal" considers, "greater" or "less",
conceiving others thus would dispute because of this;
but who by these three never is swayed,
"equal", "superior" does not exist. 849

Why would this Brahmin declare "this is the true",
with whom would he argue that "this is false",
in whom there is not "equal", "unequal",
with whom would he join another in dispute? 850

With home let go, faring on in homelessness,
in villages the Sage having no intimates,
rid of sensual desires, having no preference,
would not with any arguments people engage. 851

Unattached, one wanders forth in the world,
a Nāga, ungrasping, would not dispute those,
just as the water lily, thorny-stemmed species,
sullied is not by water or mud,
even so is the ungreedy Sage proclaiming Peace,
unsullied by desires and pleasures in the world. 852

The Wise One's not conceited by view or by intelligence,
for that one there is no "making-it-mine";
and cannot be led by good works or by learning,
cannot be led away by mind-shelters of view. 853

For one detached from perception, there exist no ties,
 for one by wisdom freed, no delusions are there,
 but those who have grasped perceptions and views,
 they wander the world stirring up strife.

854

(Snp 842–854)

Notes on the Māgandiya Sutta

The two opening verses

In the first line of the first verse we are presented with a statement that sex and lust with longing had been seen—but by who? And in what way had they been seen? This Sutta does not identify who has spoken these words. The verse continues with some very scornful words about someone’s body though we are not told whose.

The second verse is obviously spoken by another person who concludes with an interesting question, or rather, a series of them. The Pāli still fails to identify either of these persons. Only in the third verse do we discover that the first verse is supposed to be spoken by the Buddha and the second by his supposed questioner, Māgandiya.

These two verses are worthy of closer examination as they present a number of puzzling questions. The first of these concerns the three nouns: craving, longing, and lust which as aspects of mind must always concern those living a celibate life. So are they just that—three troublesome mind-states? The answer to this is that in a few Suttas and Pāli Commentaries these three have become a potent aspect of Māra’s assault upon the potential Buddha while he was seated under the Bodhi tree just before his Awakening. This assault is mentioned in Snp 3.2 where such mind-aspects and sense-desires, fear and hard heartedness are personalized into soldiers in Māra’s army. In the same way, craving, longing and lust are transformed into the famous Daughters of Māra. “Famous” because generations of Buddhist artists have delighted in portraying their seductive forms and alluring gestures upon

walls and in manuscripts, while monks have also enjoyed elaborating upon this story. Of course, in the various accounts of this incident in both Pāli and Sanskrit, the Daughters of Māra are defeated because the Buddha cannot be seduced by them. If we understand this line to refer to the three gorgeous girls, we must capitalize their names, but not do the same for the verb “seen”, which would mean that the Buddha had only seen them—been aware of them as sight-objects—but taken no interest. On the other hand if they are personalized mind-states then they do not merit capitalized names but the verb “Seen” should have a capital letter to indicate that insight or *vipassanā* regarding lust and so on. It is worth noting that though the Daughters of Māra legend occurs in the classic Pāli Commentaries, it is rarely found in the Suttas. So much for the first line!

According to the Suttas, supported by the Commentaries, sexual desire is eliminated with the attainment of refined aspects of the paths and fruits. The Buddha and his Arahats disciples are depicted in the Vinaya and Sutta as having gone beyond sex and so having no longer to struggle to maintain celibacy, having in fact none of the problems that most people have with sexuality. This systematized view, slowly becoming known as “Theravāda”, promoted the growth of celibate Saṅghas of monks and nuns, some of whom emphasized that only those in robes could reach the more refined stages of liberation. Ordinary practitioners could not become Arahats; and if by some strange collection of causes they did, either they would have to be ordained on that very day, or they would die! Though this seems most unlikely, it is opposed by the presence at AN 6.119–139 of a list of lay practitioners “who have Gone to the End, Seen the Deathless”. Some of them are familiar and others more obscure but in any case these present-day Buddhists who are not ordained should take heart and remember these heroes from so long ago. Their names “Tapussa, Bhallika, Sudatta Anāthapiṇḍika, Citta Macchikāsaṇḍika, Hatthaka Ālavaka, Mahānāma Sakka, Ugga Vesālīka, Sūrambaṭṭha, Jīvaka Komārabhacca, Nakulapitā, Tavakaṇṇika,

Pūraṇa, Isidatta, Sandhāna, Vijaya, Vijayamāhika, Meṇḍaka, Vāseṭṭha, Ariṭṭha, Sāragga”. There are no women in this list. The survival of these men’s names among Pāli Suttas very full of teachings to and about the monastic Saṅghas with Liberation limited to only ordained people, is a small indication that in the Buddha’s days liberation was available to all.⁶

The last two lines of this verse contain words of scorn said to be uttered by the Buddha upon being presented with the beautiful Māgandiyā, daughter of the brahmin Māgandiyā. The Dhammapada Commentary provides details of this story which does not appear in any Sutta. The essence of this is as follows: Māgandiyā rejected many offers of marriage for his daughter made by wealthy and powerful princes. However, upon seeing the footprints of the Buddha (note the connection with the Signs of the Superman—DN 30 and the remarks following Snp 1038), was sure that he would be a suitable husband. After meeting the Buddha and offering him his daughter well-adorned the story continues with the popular account of the Buddha’s Awakening in which Māra and his three daughters, Taṇhā (craving), Aratī (longing) and Rāgā (lust)—whose bodies are rumoured to surpass all human beauty try to upset the Bodhisattva’s intention. This encounter is made the excuse for the future Buddha to scorn a mere human girl—Māgandiyā, with these words—

“what then about this filled with piss and shit,
that even with food I’d not wish to touch!”

Now, all Buddhists hold that their Teacher was remarkable for his Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) towards every human being, and the accounts of this life confirm this. The scornful words quoted above are said to have been spoken in the presence of Māgandiyā herself and

⁶ Sujato: This list is of lay ariyans, mostly stream-winners, not arahants as suggested by LKM. See Bhikkhu Bodhi’s note to AN 6.119 in the *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*.

hardly sound like compassionate talk! As it turned out in the Dhammapada Commentary story these insulting words caused Māgandiyā—not surprisingly—to hate the Buddha and to seek her revenge on him by burning alive many of the ladies of the local king who were his disciples. So Māgandiyā showed herself as a very nasty piece of work who came to a grisly end. But could a Buddha act in such a way as to bring this about?

As there are a number of Māgandiyās in the Suttas and Commentaries it may be that these have been confused so that fragments of their legends have been patched together by a misogynist monk who has put the above words in the Buddha's mouth. After this tangle, Māgandiyā the Brahmin addresses to the Buddha a number of questions quite unrelated to what has gone before.

Miscellaneous notes

- 842: The first verse of this Sutta is also found in the story-cycle of King Udena in Dhammapada Commentary vol. 1, p.199ff. of the English translation, *Buddhist Legends*.
- 843: “in what kind of life”. “Life” translates *bhava*, literally “being”, “existence”.
- 852: “*Nāga*”, literally a serpent or serpent-spirit connected with water. Worshipped to bring rain. Also an elephant, but here means a mighty Teacher.

4.10 “Before Breaking-up”: a *Muni*’s Qualities

PURĀBHEDA SUTTA

- QUESTION Please Gotama, do you speak to me
upon the person perfected:
how’s their insight and their conduct
so that they can be called “Peaceful One”? 855
- BUDDHA One who is craving-free
before the body’s breaking-up,
not dependent on the past
in the present is prepared,
(and in future) has nought preferred, 856
- gone anger and gone fear as well,
gone boasting, gone remorse,
wise-speaker with no arrogance,
a Sage restrained in speech, 857
- no hopes for what’s to come,
no mourning for the past,
not led astray by views,
the singled seer “mid senses” touch 858
- one not concealing, not deceitful,
not hankering and neither mean,
not stuck-up, nor contemptuous,⁷
and not to slander given, 859
- to pleasures not addicted
and not to pride inclined,

⁷ Sujato: This line had an unintelligible note, and was translated by LKM as “not rough with others, not causing disgust”, but I am pretty sure the actual meaning is as I’ve given here. Since the note indicated uncertainty in how the line should be translated, I think the change is justified.

gentle, ready witted, not
credulous and not attached, 860

training not in hope of gain,
nor disturbed by getting none,
by cravings unobstructed,
hankering not for tastes, 861

ever mindful and equanimous,
so, who as “equal” thinks not of themselves,
nor as better nor as worse,
has no of inflation any sense. 862

And for whom there’s no “dependence”,⁸
not dependent, Dharma having known,
for such exists no craving for
existence, non-existence.⁹ 863

That one I call the Peaceful,
who no sensual pleasures seeks;
who therefore has no ties,
crossed entanglement. 864

He does not bring up any sons,
and has no fields or lands;
for him there is nothing at all
that is taken up or put down 865

on account of which, the people
with monks and Brahmins might accuse.
That one is undisturbed,
and by such words unmoved, 866

⁸ Attachment to view.

⁹ Being and non-being, the two extreme views.

gone greediness and never mean,
not speaking of themselves as “high”
not “equal”, nor “inferior”
so the unfittable does not fit,

867

for whom is nothing owned in the world
and having nothing does not grieve,
who ’mong Dharmas ventures not
is truly called a Peaceful One!

868

(Snp 855–868)

4.11 Arguments and Disputes

KALAHAVIVĀDA SUTTA

- QUESTION Whence so many arguments, disputes
and sorrow, lamentation, selfishness,
arrogance, pride and slander too?
Whence come all these? Please upon them speak. 869
- BUDDHA Much love of arguments, disputes,
means sorrow, lamentation, selfishness,
with arrogance, pride and slander too.
Inclined to selfishness, arguments, disputes;
quarrels, slander also come to birth. 870
- QUESTION From what causes in the world there's dearness, love,
these various greeds that wander in the world,
from these causes, hopes and their ends as well,
these bring about a human being's future. 871
- BUDDHA From desires in the world as causes of the dear,
these various greeds that wander in the world,
from these causes, hopes and their ends as well,
these bring about a human being's future. 872
- QUESTION From what causes in the world is there desire,
and much deliberation on this—whence it comes?
And anger too, false-speaking, also doubtfulness,
and dharmas such as these by the *Samaṇa* declared 873
- BUDDHA “It's pleasant, unpleasant”, so in the world they say
and depending on these arises desire,
but having seen forms, their arising and decay,
then a person in this world certainly deliberates. 874
- With¹⁰ anger, false-speaking, also doubtfulness,

¹⁰ Pleasant/unpleasant = duality

and all such dharmas, this quality exists.

The doubting person

in the knowledge-path should train

for the *Samaṇa* has declared dharmas

after having Known.

875

QUESTION The pleasant, the unpleasant, originate from what?

In the absence of what do these cease to be?

That which is being,¹¹ non-being as well,

what their origination, do tell me of this?

876

BUDDHA “Touch”,¹² the origination of pleasant, unpleasant,

“Touch” being absent these cease to be.

That which is being, non-being as well,

its origin’s thus, I tell you of this.

877

QUESTION From what causes in the world does touch come to be

And whence does possessiveness also arise?

in the absence of what is “mine” making not?

When what exists not are no “touches” touched?

878

BUDDHA “Touches” depend upon mind, upon form,

possessiveness caused by longing repeated,

when longing’s not found, possessiveness’s gone,

When form¹³ is no longer, no “touches” are “touched”. 879

QUESTION For one in what state does form cease to be,

how bliss and *dukkha* come to cease as well,

please do you tell me how these come to cease?

For this we would know—such is my intent.

880

¹¹ Being (*bhava*) = existence.

¹² *Phassa* = (roughly) “touch”.

¹³ *Nāma-rūpa*: name and form.

BUDDHA Neither one of normal perception nor yet abnormal,
neither unperceiving no cessation of perception,
but form ceases for one who (has known) it thus:
Conceptual proliferation has perception as its cause. 881

QUESTION Whatever we've asked of you, to us you've explained,
another query we'd ask, please speak upon this,
those reckoned as wise here, do they say that
"purity of soul is just for this (life)"
or do some of them state there's another beyond? 882

BUDDHA Here some reckoned as wise do certainly say:
"Purity of soul is just for this life";
but others who claim to be clever aver
that there is an occasion
for what has nothing leftover.¹⁴ 883

And Knowing that these are dependent on views,
having Known their dependence, the investigative Sage
since Liberated Knows, so no longer disputes,
the wise one goes not from being to being.¹⁵ 884

(Snp 869-884)

¹⁴ Sujato: I added this line, which was omitted by LKM.

¹⁵ Existence to existence.

4.12 Smaller Discourse on Quarrelling

CŪLAVIYŪHA SUTTA

QUESTION Each attached to their own views,
They dispute, and the experts say,
“Whoever knows this understands the Dhamma,
Whoever rejects it is imperfect.” 885

Arguing like this, they disagree, saying
“My opponent is a fool, and is no expert”
Which of these doctrines is the truth,
Since all of them say they are experts? 886

BUDDHA If by not accepting another’s teaching
One became a fool of debased wisdom
Then, honestly, all are fools of debased wisdom,
Since all are attached to views. 887

But if people are washed by their own views,
With pure wisdom, experts, thoughtful,
Then none of them has debased wisdom,
For their views are perfect. 888

I don’t say, “This is how it is”,
Like the fools who oppose each other.
Each of them makes out that their view is the truth,
So they treat their opponent as a fool. 889

QUESTION What some say is the truth,
Others say is false.
So they argue, disagreeing;
Why don’t the ascetics teach one truth? 890

BUDDHA Indeed the truth is one, there’s not another,
about this the One who Knows

does not dispute with another,
 but the *Samaṇas* proclaim their varied “truths”
 and so they speak not in the same way. 891

Why do they speak such varied truths,
 these so-called experts disputatious—
 Are there really many and various truths
 Or do they just rehearse their logic? 892

BUDDHA Indeed, there are not many and varied truths
 differing from perception of the ever-true in the world;
 but they work upon their views with logic:
 “Truth! Falsehood!” So they speak in dualities. 893

Based on what is seen, heard,
 On precepts and vows, or what is cognized,
 They look down on others.
 Convinced of their own theories,
 pleased with themselves,
 They say, “My opponent is a fool, no expert.” 894

They consider themselves expert for the same reasons
 That they despise their opponent as a fool.
 Calling themselves experts, they despise the other,
 Yet they speak the very same way. 895

And since perfected in some extreme view,
 puffed with pride and maddened by conceit,
 he anoints himself as though the master-mind,
 likewise thinking his view’s perfected too. 896

If their opponent says they are deficient,
 They too are of deficient understanding.
 But if they are wise and knowledgeable,
 Then there are no fools among the ascetics. 897

“Anyone who teaches a doctrine other than this,
 Has fallen short of purity and perfection.”
 This is what followers of other paths say,
 Passionately defending their very different views. 898

“Here alone is purity,” so they say,
 “There is no purity in the teachings of others.”
 This is what followers of other paths strongly assert,
 Each entrenched in their own different path. 899

Strongly asserting their own path,
 What opponent would they take to be a fool?
 They would only bring trouble on themselves
 By calling an opponent a fool of impure teachings. 900

Convinced of their own theories,
 Comparing others to oneself,
 They get into more disputes with the world.
 But by leaving behind all theories,
 They don’t have any problems with the world. 901

(Snp 885–901)

4.13 Greater Discourse on Quarrelling

MAHĀVIYŪHA SUTTA

QUESTION Regarding those people who hold to their views,
Arguing, “Only this is true!”
Should all of them be criticized,
Or are some praiseworthy also? 902

BUDDHA This is a small thing, not enough for peace.
I say there are two outcomes of dispute;
Seeing this one should not dispute,
Recognizing that safety is a place without dispute. 903

Regarding these widely-held opinions,
One who knows does not get involved with any of them.
Why would the uninvolved become involved,
Since they have no preferences
In what is seen or heard? 904

Those who consider ethics to be the highest
Say that purity comes from self-restraint.
They undertake a vow and stick to it,
Thinking that only training in this way is there purity,
Declaring themselves experts,
They go to future rebirths. 905

If he falls away from virtuous conduct and vows,
He is anxious, having failed in his task.
He yearns and longs for purity, as one far from home
Who has lost his travelling companions. 906

But one who abandons all virtue and vows,
and deeds both blameless and blameworthy,
Does not long for either purity or impurity;
he lives detached, fostering peace. 907

Dependent on ascetic practices,
 Or on what is seen, heard, or thought,
 They say that purity comes from continual transmigration,
 They are not free of craving for life after life. 908

One who yearns has longings,
 And is anxious regarding their aspirations;
 But for one here who has no falling away or reappearing,
 Why would they be anxious,
 Or for what would they long? 909

QUESTION The doctrine that some people call the ultimate,
 Others say is deficient.
 Which of these speaks the truth?
 For all of them say they are experts. 910

BUDDHA They say their own doctrine is complete,
 While that of others is deficient.
 Thus arguing they dispute,
 Each taking what they agree upon to be the truth. 911

If by criticizing an opponent
 Their doctrine became deficient,
 There would be no distinguished doctrines,
 Because it is common for people to speak
 In defence of their own doctrines,
 While making the other's out to be deficient. 912

Indeed, the honoring of their own teachings
 Is nothing other than praise of themselves;
 If each doctrine were valid,
 Then purity would be just a personal matter. 913

The brahmin is not led by another,
 Considering wisely, they do not grasp any teaching;

Therefore they go beyond disputes,
 Since they see no other doctrine as best. 914

Thinking, "I know, I see, this is how it is!"
 Some fall back on view as purity.
 Even if one has seen, what use is that to them?
 Overstepping, they say purity
 Comes by some other means. 915

A person with vision sees mind and body,
 And then knows only that much;
 Let them see much or little,
 The experts say purity does not come from that. 916

One who speaks dogmatically,
 Who's settled down in view,
 Will not be deferent, one not easily trained.
 To that attached, his own views "pure",
 "pure path" according to what he's seen. 917

The paragon with wisdom comes not near
 To following views, by partial knowledge bound.
 Having known opinions of common people,
 He's equanimous, though others study them. 918

The sage lets go of all ties to the world,
 And when disputes come up they do not take sides;
 Peaceful amid the agitated, they are equanimous,
 They don't hold on, thinking, "Let them hold on". 919

Former corruptions are abandoned,
 While new ones are not created,
 They have no biases, and are not dogmatic.
 The sage is freed from commitment to views,
 Not clinging to the world, nor reproaching themselves. 920

They have no enemies in the doctrines,
Whether seen, heard, or thought;
The sage is freed, having put down the burden,
Not planning, not wanting, not wishing.

921

(Sn̄p 902–921)

4.14 The Quick Way

TUVATAKA SUTTA

QUESTION I ask the Kinsman of the Sun, the great seeker,
About seclusion and the state of peace.
Seeing what is a bhikkhu quenched,
Not grasping at anything in the world? 922

BUDDHA One should completely extract
The root of proliferation and reckoning—
The notion, “I am the thinker”.
One should train to dispel whatever craving
There is inside, ever mindful. 923

Whatever principle they have known for themselves,
Whether internally or externally,
They would not be stubborn about that,
For good people say that this is not quenching. 924

You shouldn't, on that account, think you are better,
Or worse, or even the same;
Though affected by many different things,
You should not keep thinking of yourself. 925

Totally calm within himself,
A bhikkhu would not seek peace from another;
For one who is at peace with themselves,
There is nothing to hold on to, still less to put down. 926

As in the middle of the ocean,
There are no waves, but all is still,
So they would be still, unmoving;
A bhikkhu is not haughty at all. 927

QUESTION You have taught me, with your eyes open,
 Seeing principles for yourself, dispelling dangers;
 Venerable sir, tell me the practice,
 The rules of conduct and also meditation. 928

BUDDHA Not letting their eyes wander,
 Turning their ear from crass conversations,
 Not greedy for flavors,
 And not thinking of anything in the world as “mine”. 929

When things afflict him,
 A bhikkhu would not whinge at all;
 He would neither long for rebirth,
 Nor tremble at dangers. 930

He would not store up goods that he gets,
 Whether food and drink,
 Other edibles or cloth,
 And he would not be afraid of not getting anything. 931

Practising *jhāna*, not footloose,
 Not remorseful, nor negligent;
 That bhikkhu would stay in quiet
 Places for meditation and sleep. 932

They would not sleep much,
 But be ardent, developing wakefulness;
 They would abandon laziness, deceit, jokes, games,
 And sex, together with other frivolities. 933

One of my followers would not cast spells,
 Or interpret dreams,
 Nor would they practice astrology,
 Prognosticate animal sounds,

Practice fertility magic,
Or [earn money] as a healer. 934

A bhikkhu would not be anxious when criticized,
Nor puffed up when praised;
But would get rid of greed together with
Stinginess, anger, and slander. 935

They would not continue at a trade,
A bhikkhu would not incur blame at all;
They would not linger in a village,
Nor cajole people hoping to get stuff. 936

A bhikkhu would not be boastful,
Nor speak with an ulterior motive;
He would not practice impudence,
Nor say things that were argumentative. 937

He would not be carried away by lies,
Nor deliberately betray anyone;
Nor would he look down on anyone for their
Way of life, intelligence, virtue, or vows. 938

Even if provoked by different sayings,
Of ascetics or of ordinary people,
He would not answer harshly,
For good people make no enemies. 939

Fully understanding this principle,
An inquiring bhikkhu would always train mindfully;
Knowing quenching as peace,
He would not be negligent in Gotama's teaching. 940

He overcomes, he is not overcome,
Seeing the Dhamma with his own eyes, not by hearsay;

Therefore he would always respectfully train in accord,
Diligent in the teaching of the Buddha.

941

(Snp 922–941)

4.15 “Assuming Forcefulness” and so on

ATTADAṄḌA SUTTA

Fear’s born assuming forcefulness¹⁶ —
see how the people fight!
I’ll tell you how I’m deeply moved,
how I have felt so stirred. 942

Seeing how people flounder
as fish in little water
attacking one the other
its fearfulness appeared. 943

Once I wished a place to stay,
but all the world is essenceless,
turmoil in every quarter,
I saw no place secure. 944

Folks’ never-ending enmity
I saw, took no delight,
but then I saw the hard-to-see,
the dart within the heart. 945

Affected by this dart
one runs in all directions
but with the dart pulled out
one neither runs nor sinks. 946

On this, the training’s chanted thus:
Whatever bonds within the world¹⁷
they should not be pursued
knowing in depth all sense-desires
for Nirvāṇa train. 947

¹⁶ Taking/grasping weapons.

¹⁷ Kāma: pleasure/desire.

Truthful and not arrogant,
 deceit none, slander, hate,
 rid of greed's evil, avarice
 beyond them all's the sage. 948

Not sleepy, drowsy, slothful not,
 living not with negligence,
 taking no stand on arrogance:
 that mind inclines to Nibbana. 949

Be not into lying led,
 for forms have no affection,
 know thoroughly conceit,
 violence avoid fare thus. 950

Delight not in the past,
 nor be content with newness,
 sad not with disappearance,
 nor crave for the attractive. 951

Greed I say's "the great flood",
 its torrent the rush of lust,
 lust's objects an imagining,
 the swamp of lust is hard to cross. 952

The sage on firm ground stands,
 not swayed from truth, a paragon,
 having relinquished All,
 "peaceful" that one's called. 953

The wise indeed, all wisdom won,
 on dharma not dependant,
 wanders perfected in this world,
 and envies none herein. 954

Who sense-desires has crossed beyond,
 undone worldly ties
 and bondless, cut across the stream,
 no longer grieves or broods. 955

Let what's "before" just wither up,
 "after" for you be not a thing,
 if then "between" you will not grasp,
 You will fare at peace. 956

For whom with mind-and-bodily forms
 there is no "making-mine" at all,
 grieves not when they are not,
 and suffers here no loss. 957

For whom there is no "this is mine"
 nor no "To others it belongs",
 in whom "myself" cannot be found,
 Grieves not that "I have none". 958

Asked upon one unshakeable,
 I tell of this one's goodness:
 Not harsh, not covetous at all,
 Steadfast, impartial everywhere. 959

For one who's steadfast, Knows,¹⁸
 That one does not accumulate,
 Unattached to making effort,
 Sees security everywhere. 960

A sage speaks not as though¹⁹
 'Mong equal, low or high,

¹⁸ Capital "k" = enlightened.

¹⁹ No conceits or dialects of caste.

Serene, devoid of avarice,
Does not accept or reject.

961

(Snp 942-961)

4.16 Sāriputta asks the Buddha

SĀRIPUTTA SUTTA

SĀRIPUTTA Not seen before by me,
nor heard by anyone:
such sweetly-spoken Teacher
from Tusita came to lead a group. 962

One by himself attained to bliss,
all darkness he dispelled,
so that the One-With-Eyes be seen
by world together with the gods. 963

One's who's "Thus", the unattached,
that Buddha undeceptive,
with many disciples, devotees,
for them I ask a question.²⁰ 964

For a monk avoiding society,
seeking out a lonely place—
bone yards, at the base of trees,
or caves within the mountain wastes— 965

Living-places high or low,
How many are the terrors there,
that a monk in his silent place
trembles not at all? 966

How many are the troubles here
for a monk to overcome,
while living in a place remote,
or going to the Ungone-Point. 967

²⁰ Although Sāriputta is asking a question "for them", it seems to be a question for monks.

What ways of speaking would be his?
 What place should he frequent?
 What sorts of rules, kinds of vows,
 For the monk with mind intent? 968

What is the training he adopts,
 one-pointed, mindful, wise;
 to blow away all blemishes,
 as does a smith with silver? 969

BUDDHA As One who Knows I'll explain to you,
 what's pleasant for you practicing avoidance,²¹
 who live and who rest in a lonely abode,
 wishing Awakening in keeping with Dharma. 970

Within limits the mindful monk practices,
 then of five fears is this wise one not afraid:
 March-flies and mosquitoes, of slithering snakes,
 of men's assaults, and fierce four-footed beasts. 971

Nor be disturbed by those with differing Dharma,
 even having seen their many perils,
 further then, this seeker of the good
 will overcome all fearfulness too. 972

Afflicted by sicknesses, hunger as well,
 the cold and strong heat he should endure,
 by these many touches should he be unmoved,
 having energy stirred and striving with strength. 973

Neither should he steal, nor should he tell lies,
 but let love suffuse the fearful and the unafraid,
 and when his mind is agitated let him know
 "This should be removed" —it's on the Dark One's side. 974

²¹ It is difficult to find a verb to translate *vijiguccha*.

Into the power of anger and of arrogance
 he shouldn't fall, but firm, eradicate their roots,
 all being attached he overcomes complete,
 all that is dear to him, all that repels. 975

With wisdom esteemed, with joy purified,
 removing supports for all fearfulnesses,
 let him conquer dislike for his lone lodging-place,
 and conquer the four that cause him to lament: 976

“Alas, what shall I eat” and “where indeed eat it”,
 “last night I slept badly” and “where sleep today” —
 one-in-training, a wanderer, of no flag the follower
 should such thoughts let go, leading to lamentation. 977

Satisfied, receiving timely food and clothes,
 knowing moderation in them, and
 protected by them, in a village he's restrained
 though roughly he's addressed, speaks no harsh word. 978

With eyes cast down, feet not longing-guided,
 to *jhāna* devoted, very watchful he should be,
 let him grow in equanimity with mind composed,
 check his scruples, how he inclines to doubt. 979

With words of reproof let the mindful one rejoice,
 and shatter his scorn for his fellow-celibates;
 and utter skilful words at the proper time,
 and think not upon views and beliefs of common folk. 980

And then in the world, there are the dusty five
 in which the mindful one guided, trains himself well,
 lust overcoming to bodies and to sounds,
 to tastes, to perfumes and touches too. 981

And when in these things he has guided²² desire,
 mindful, that bhikkhu of a well-liberated mind,
 then he in due time thoroughly examining Dharma,
 with mind become one he shall the darkness rend. 982

Thus the Master spoke.

(Snp 962-982)

²² *Vineyya*: better translation than “dispel”, “disciplined”, “subdued” etc.

CHAPTER 5

The Way to the Beyond

5.1 The Prologue Telling the Story

VATTHUGĀTHĀ

NARRATOR A brahmin who'd mastered all mantras,
Desiring the state of no-thingness,
From Kosalans' fair city he left then
Towards the southern parts. 983

By Godhāvarī river he sojourned
In Assaka's realm near Alaka's border,
Surviving on gleanings and fruit. 984

Close by to him a village large,
With revenue derived from there,
Great the sacrifice he performed. 985

With ritual offerings made
For the sacrifice, he returned
To his hermitage again,
And there another brahmin came. 986

Footsore and thirsty, he,
with teeth unclean, dust-covered head,

then approached him begging for
at least five hundred coins. 987

Having seen him, Bāvarī
invited him to take a seat
and asked about his comfort, health—
then to the stranger spoke these words: 988

BĀVARĪ Whatever was given for me to give,
All this I've given away,
So brahmin please forgive me,
I've not five hundred coins. 989

BRAHMIN If your honour will not give
To me who begs from him,
Then let your head be split apart
In seven days from now. 990

NARRATOR Having done preparatory rites
That charlatan a fearful curse pronounced,
So that having heard his words
“one-with-*dukkha*” did Bāvarī become. 991

He took no food and withered up,
afflicted with the dart of grief;
and then with mind of such a kind,
his heart enjoyed no *jhāna*. 992

Seeing him suffering, terrified,
a deva there who wished his good,
on drawing near to Bāvarī,
to him she spoke these words: 993

DEVĪ He doesn't know about the head,
that charlatan desiring wealth;

- of heads, and splitting heads apart,
in him no knowing's found. 994
- BĀVARĪ If my lady knows of this,
when asked, please tell me too;
let me hear your words on this,
on heads and splitting heads apart. 995
- DEVĪ I do not know about this thing,
in me no knowing's found,
on heads and splitting heads apart
but by Victors it has been Seen. 996
- BĀVARĪ Who, then knows about this thing?
Who on this sphere of earth?
On heads and splitting heads apart,
O deva, tell me this. 997
- DEVĪ From out of Kapilavatthu town
came lately, Leader of the world,
a Sakyan son bringing light,
a scion of Okkāka king. 998
- He is indeed a Wakened One
all dharmas gone across,
all straightly-knowing's power won,
in all dharmas, Seer,
to exhaustion of all dharmas won,
freed by all assets' wearing out— 999
- One Awakened, lord of the world,
the Seer who teaches Dharma,
go to him and then enquire—
that matter he'll explain. 1000

- NARRATOR On hearing “Sambuddha” —that word,
 Bāvarī was overjoyed,
 and grief diminished too,
 while rapture then arose in him.
 Glad at heart, overjoyed, in awe,
 spoke Bāvarī to that devatā: 1001
- BĀVARĪ In which village, in which town,
 in which state is the world’s lord found?
 Where should we go to honour him,
 the All-awakened, best of men? 1002
- DEVĪ In Kosala’s kingdom he dwells,
 the greatly wise truly of Knowledge profound,
 of Sakyas the scion, burdenless, from inflows free,
 the eminent among men knows splitting the head. 1003
- NARRATOR Addressing then his brahmin pupils,
 those who had mastered the mantras:
- BĀVARĪ Come here, young brahmins, listen well
 for I shall speak to you. 1004
- Whose rare appearance in the world
 is hard then to experience,
 has appeared for us today,
 acclaimed as All-awakened One,
 quickly now go to Sāvattihī,
 to see this Best of men. 1005
- PUPILS How, O brahmin, shall we know
 on seeing him that he’s Awake?
 Tell us, who are so ignorant,
 that him we’ll recognize? 1006

- BĀVARĪ In mantra-hymns come down to us,
the signs of Superman—
two and thirty there complete,
in order are described. 1007
- Upon whose body these appear—
these signs of the Superman—
two possibilities are there for birth,
a third bourn is not found: 1008
- So should he choose the household life,
this world he'll conquer weaponless,
non-violently, without a sword,
by Dharma rule it righteously. 1009
- But if he go forth from home
to the state of homelessness,
he'll be Awake, removed the veils,
one of worth, the unexcelled. 1010
- Question in your mind alone
my birth, my caste, how I appear,
my mantras, pupils and so on,
with heads and splitting heads apart. 1011
- If he's indeed the One Awake,
who, lacking obscurations, Sees;
to Questions asked in mind alone,
he will reply with words. 1012
- NARRATOR The voice of Bāvari they heard,
those brahmin pupils—all sixteen:
Ajita, Tissamettayya,
Puṇṇaka, then there's Mettagu, 1013

Dhotaka, Upasīva then
 Nanda, also Hemaka,
 Todeyya, Kappa—just those two,
 Jātukaṇṇa the learned one, 1014

Bhadrāvudha, Udaya and
 as well the brahmin Posala,
 Moghāraja the very wise
 and Piṅgiya the greatest sage— 1015

All of them with their pupils' groups
 in all the world they're famed—
 enjoyers of *jhāna*, meditators Wise,
 patterned by past good karmas made. 1016

Having bowed down to Bāvarī
 and circumambulated him,
 then in deer-skins clad, with dreadlocks all,
 they headed for the north: 1017

From Patitṭhāna in Aḷaka's land,
 then to the city, Māhissati,
 from there to Ujjeni and Gonaddha,
 to Vedisa and to Vana town, 1018

Next to Kosambi and Sāketa,
 and Sāvattḥī of cities best
 on to Setavya, Kapilavatthu,
 Kusināra and surrounding lands, 1019

To Pāvā and to Bhoga town,
 to the Māgadhans' city of Vesāli,
 to the rocky Pāsāṇaka Shrine—
 delightful, mind-delighting place. 1020

As a person thirsty for water,
 or merchant for profit great,
 or a sunburnt person seeks for shade,
 so they hastily climbed the Rock. 1021

The Lord on that occasion was
 in honour seated with the *bhikkhu-Saṅgha*,
 teaching Dharma to all the monks,
 as lion roaring in the jungly woods. 1022

Ajita saw then the Sambuddha
 as the sun's brilliance devoid of rays,
 or as the moon completely full,
 arrived at its fifteenth day. 1023

Then standing to one side he saw
 the set of signs complete
 upon the Buddha's body, so
 joyful, in his mind he asked: 1024

AJITA Speak now about my Master's age,
 tell of his clan and body-marks,
 say how far he's mastered the mantras
 and how many the brahmins he instructs. 1025

BUDDHA His age is a hundred and twenty years,
 by clan he is a Bāvarī,
 upon his body appear three signs,
 Three Vedas he has mastered all. 1026

In lore of signs and legends in tradition—
 in the glossaries and the ritual treatises—
 in his own Dharma to perfection he's arrived,
 and five hundred students he instructs. 1027

- AJITA O highest of men, with craving cut,
describe in detail all the signs
upon the body of Bāvarī,
so there may be no doubt in us. 1028
- BUDDHA Cover his face with his tongue he can,
hair grows between his brows,
ensheathed is the cloth-concealed:
Know this, O brahmin youth. 1029
- NARRATOR Now none there heard the questions asked,
but all the answers heard;
then the people, overjoyed,
with lotussed hands they thought: 1030
- What deva indeed, whether Brahma
or Indra or Sujampati—
these questions asked in mind,
to whom are they addressed? 1031
- AJITA Bāvarī has questioned you
on heads and splitting heads apart.
O Lord, do you explain this,
dispel our doubt, O Sage. 1032
- BUDDHA Know ignorance as “head”,
gnosis as that which “splits the head”,
with mindfulness, meditation, faith
by determination, effort too. 1033
- NARRATOR Then the young brahmin overawed,
with great emotion overcome,
(respectfully) with his deerskin (cloak)
over one shoulder (placed),
put his head at (the Buddha’s) feet. 1034

AJITA Sir, the brahmin Bāvarī,
with all his pupils too,
overjoyed, glad-minded,
to the great Seer's feet bowed down. 1035

BUDDHA May all be well with Bāvarī,
with his brahmin pupils too,
and you as well be happy,
live long O brahmin youth! 1036

Bāvarī, yourself as well
and all the rest have many doubts,
ask now whatever's in your minds—
you have the opportunity. 1037

So permitted by the All-awake,
Ajita sat, and with lotussed hands,
asked the initial question,
addressed to the Tathāgata. 1038

(Snp 983–1038)

The Signs of a Superman: A commentary on verses 1007, 1024, and 1029

Before this strange subject is examined, its cultural background needs reflection. Brahmins of the Aryan peoples who settled at first in N.W. India had a great opinion of themselves. Though in times more ancient than that there had been women among them who were experts in rituals, knowing all the mantras, by the times of the Buddha all brahmin priests were men. As many of these priests after listening to the words of the Buddha became his disciples and many ordained as bhikkhus, they brought with them their underlying sense of male superiority. This has been transferred by them through chanting, to

the Suttas. Among these brahminical relics are the strange legends of the Superman which within the Buddhadharmā apply to only perfectly Awakened Buddhas and Dharma-wheel turning emperors. Within Snp it is interesting to notice that the verses we are concerned with appear in connection with brahmins. We should also be aware that there are other Suttas, for instance MN 115 or AN 1.268–295, which raise the related subject of the Impossible, that lay down the law that women cannot be either Supermen as a Buddha, or as Dharma-emperor, ruling the entire world. The reasons why this is said to be is not made very clear. The Dharma is said to be “just like this and not otherwise”.

The list of 32 signs upon the bodies of a Superman (*mahā-purisa-lakkhaṇa*) were, for those who knew how to read them, clear evidence of their spiritual attainment—a view in sharp contrast to the Buddha’s actual teachings. That they have survived for such a long time even into the present, is shown by newly-made images of the Buddha whose feet often have lotus-flowers upon their soles. The prime source of the list of the 32 is found in the Long Discourses (DN 30, Lakkhaṇa Sutta). This Sutta tries to explain in terms of cause (karma), effect (the physical “signs”) the various and sometimes curious marks of the Superman. The order of these signs in the following list differs from their explanation later in the Lakkhaṇa Sutta. There appears to be little reason in this so-called cause and effect. Scholars have suggested that the Lakkhaṇa Sutta is a later production by bhikkhus after the passing of the Buddha.

I have followed the translation of this list by Maurice Walshe in his *Dīgha-nikāya, Thus Have I Heard*, later re-issued as *Long Discourses of the Buddha*. My own explanations and exclamations follow in brackets.

1. He has feet with level tread. (This sounds like flat footedness.)
2. On the soles of his feet are wheels with the thousand spokes, complete with felloe and hub. (Seen on Buddha-images seated in Vajra-positions/full-lotus.)

3. He has projecting heels. (Occasional standing Buddha-images in Thailand have this.)
4. He has long fingers and toes. (Sometimes in Buddha-images this is taken to mean that fingers are of the same length, the same with toes.)
5. He has soft and tender hands and feet. (Thus making him of high caste.)
6. His hands and feet are netlike. (Reticulation of veins under the skin.)
7. He has high-raised ankles. (Short legs? Long feet?)
8. His legs are like an antelope's. (Slender and well-shaped.)
9. Standing and without bending he can touch and rub his knees with either hand. (Results in ill-proportioned ape-like images.)
10. His male organs are enclosed in a sheath (The first of Bāvari's signs commented on below. Literally the Pāli says: "ensheathed is the cloth-concealed"—devoid of meaning unless one knows what this euphemism hides.)
11. His complexion is bright, the colour of gold.
12. His skin is delicate and so smooth that no dust can adhere to his body.
13. His body-hairs are separate, one to each pore. (Is this not usual for humans?)
14. His body-hairs grow upwards, each blue-black like collyrium. (Used as a cosmetic.)
15. His body is divinely straight.
16. He has the seven convex surfaces.
17. The front of his body is like a lion's.
18. There is no hollow between his shoulder blades.
19. He is proportioned like a banyan tree. (The height of the body is the same as the span of his outstretched arms.)
20. His chest is evenly rounded.
21. He has a perfect sense of taste. (But how did others know this?)

22. He has jaws like a lion's. (But such jaws are for piercing and tearing!)
23. He has 40 teeth. (But how could a normal human jaw accommodate them?)
24. His teeth are even.
25. There are no spaces between his teeth.
26. His canine teeth are very bright.
27. His tongue is very long. (The second of Bāvarī's marks.)
28. He has a Brahma-like voice. (Like that of a *kāravika*-bird.)
29. His eyes are deep blue.
30. He has eyelashes like a cow's.
31. The hair between his eyes is white and soft like cotton-down. (The third of Bāvarī's marks.)
32. His head is like a royal turban. (That is, his head rises to a protuberance at the top of his head—see many Buddha-images.)

A superman with even a few of these marks would be freakish to our eyes, even if only a male child. When grown it would hardly impress by its strange appearance, even though this was supposed to signify superior spirituality. The meanings of some signs are obscure, though the Pāli Commentaries try to provide convincing explanations.

An example of this, which is rather important, is No. 10: “ensheathed is the cloth-concealed.” Even when Pāli Dictionaries have been consulted and “cloth-concealed” is revealed as male genitalia, we are no further towards understanding what “ensheathed” refers to. Saddhātissa's translation is rather coy with “the foreskin completely covers the phallus”. But such a rationalist rendering fails to make clear what could be wonderful about this! As marks of a Superman, all of these thirty-two should be exceptional in some way, while to say that the male organ is sheathed by the foreskin is no more than indicating the ordinary man's equipment. Presumably both penis and testes are meant to be covered by a flap of skin but then how could the former be used, even for urination? Do they have to be “ensheathed” because the supposed

brahmin authors of this list were shy about making their meaning clearer? Or were the authors, Buddhist monks, similarly shy? The literal meaning sounds as though the Superman had some sort of sexual abnormality which could not be discussed, which is puzzling when we remember that prior to Buddhahood, he procreated a son, Rahula, apparently normally. It could be that celibate monks who suffered conflicts between a code of rules (the Pāṭimokkha) and their own sexuality thought it best to mystify the Buddha's body. But then, this effort to see as though through fog—"ensheathed is the cloth-concealed"—hardly agrees with the Buddha's occasional revealing of his sexual organs to convince doubtful brahmins that he possessed all of the signs of a superman (see for example MN 91). Whichever way this is regarded it is an unsolvable problem.

Bāvari's two other marks or signs present lesser problems. In the above translation of Snp 1029 the first line reads "Cover his face with his tongue he can," certainly not an ordinary feat. If an explanation is needed then it may be noticed that some practitioners of yoga as part of a practice for limiting the ordinary way of breathing restrain this by cutting the ligament under the tongue, a frenum, so that the tongue can be turned back into the throat. This would enable also the tongue to be extended further over the face.

As for the second of these, "hair grows between his brows", this seems to be a hairy male. Buddha-images are found with this mark between the eyebrows. This is certainly not as special as the other two signs.

The list remains the only Sutta passage to give an all-round account of what the Buddha may have looked like, apart from occasional references, mostly in verse, to his handsome features. See for instance verses 554-557 in this book which also mention "the signs peculiar to the Superman".

AJITA Who have the Dharma measured up,
 who train themselves, the multitude,
 how, sir, do they behave themselves?
 please answer what I speak. 1045

BUDDHA No greediness in pleasures of sense,
 having a tranquil mind and clear,
 skilled in all the Dharma's ways—
 that mindful bhikkhu who's left home. 1046

(Snp 1039–1046)

5.3 Tissamettaya's Questions

TISSAMETTAYAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

- TISSA Who has contentment in the world?
Who is not agitated?
Who has experienced both extremes,
but wise, in the middle does not stick?
Who do you say's a person great?
Who, seamstress-craving's gone beyond? 1047
- BUDDHA A pure life leading 'mid pleasures of sense,
ever mindful and craving-free,
a bhikkhu cool, after reflection deep,
agitation's none in such a one. 1048
- Who has experienced both extremes,
who wise, in the middle does not stick,
he, I say, is a person great,
who the seamstress-craving's gone beyond. 1049

(Snp 1047-1049)

5.4 Punṇaka's Questions

PUNṆAKAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

PUNṆAKA I have come with a question for you,
The immovable, seer of the root;
Subject to what do the sages, people,
Nobles, and brahmins offer many kinds of sacrifices
To gods here in the world?
Lord Buddha, please tell me this. 1050

BUDDHA Whatever sages, people,
Nobles, and brahmins offer many kinds of sacrifices
To gods here in the world,
Do so wishing to be reborn, Punṇaka;
Subject to old age they offer their sacrifices. 1051

PUNṆAKA Whatever sages, people,
Nobles, and brahmins offer many kinds of sacrifices
To gods here in the world,
Did they, diligently following the way of sacrifice,
Cross over birth and old age, sir?
Lord Buddha, please tell me this. 1052

BUDDHA Hoping, praying, longing, and sacrificing,
Longing for sensual pleasures
That are dependent on getting things;
I declare that they, devoted to sacrifice
And besotted by rebirth,
Did not cross over birth and old age. 1053

PUNṆAKA If, sir, those devoted to sacrifice
Did not thereby cross over birth and old age,
Then who in the world of gods and men

Has crossed over birth and old age?
 Lord Buddha, please tell me this.

1054

PUṆṆAKA Having scrutinized the world near and far,
 One who has no disturbances at all in the world,
 Peaceful, clear, without affliction or desire,
 Such a one has crossed over
 Birth and old age, I declare.

1055

(Snp 1050–1055)

5.5 Mettagū's Questions

METTAGŪMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

- METTAGŪ Reached Vedas' end, I deem, developed yourself,
so I ask the Lord thus, please tell me of this:
how then have resulted these various *dukkhas*
of various forms found in the world? 1056
- BUDDHA On *dukkha's* arising you've asked me indeed,
so as I have Known, I impart it to you:
The diverse-formed *dukkhas* come to exist
from attachments to asset of whatever kind. 1057
- That ignorant one attached indeed to assets,
stupidly reaches to *dukkha* repeatedly,
therefore that one in seeing *dukkha's* birth and arising,
such attached-to assets should not be created. 1058
- METTAGŪ Whatever we asked, to us you explained,
another thing I ask, please speak upon that:
how do the wise ones cross over the flood
of birth and decay, lamentation and grief?
O Sage, do well declare this to me now,
for certainly this dharma has been known by you. 1059
- BUDDHA This Dharma I'll explain to you,
Seen-now and not traditional law,
knowing which the mindful fare,
and cross the world's entanglements. 1060
- METTAGŪ I am delighted, Seeker Great,
with this Dharma ultimate,
knowing which the mindful fare,
and cross the world's entanglements. 1061

- BUDDHA Whatever you cognize above,
 below, across and in between,
 consciously dispel delight in them,
 and settling-down—in “being” you’ll not stand. 1062
- Mindfully who live like this, aware,
 such bhikkhus, let go of “making-mine”
 with birth and decay, lamenting and grief:
 just here do the wise all *dukkha* let go. 1063
- METTAGŪ With the Great Seeker’s speech I am overjoyed,
 well explained, O Gotama, is “assets unattached”,
 for surely the Lord all *dukkha* has let go,
 for certainly this Dharma has been Known by you. 1064
- Those who the Sage always advises,
 surely they’re able to let go of *dukkha*,
 to the Nāga drawn near, to you I bow down;
 maybe the Lord will advise me as well. 1065
- BUDDHA Knowing well that brahmin true to Love’s end¹ reached,
 having nought and unattached to sensual being,
 for certain that one this flood has overcrossed,
 crossed to the Far Shore, free of doubts and harshness. 1066
- This is one who Knows, reached Love’s end just here,
 cut bondage to any being, either high or low,
 free from craving and desire, free from distress,
 I say such one’s crossed over birth and decay. 1067

(Snp 1056—1067)

¹ Sujato: The term translated by LKM in this and the next verse as “love’s end” is *vedagū*. This is a Brahmanical term referring to one accomplished in the three Vedas, and interpreted by the Buddha as one perfected in liberating knowledge. Perhaps LKM renders *veda* as “love” rather than “knowledge” due to the speaker’s name, *mettagū*. In some cases *veda* and its derivatives, such as *vedanā*, extend in meaning to “emotion”.

5.6 Dhotaka's Questions

DHOTAKAMĀṆAVAPUCCHĀ

- DHOTAKA O Seeker Great, I long to hear your word,
then having heard your speech,
for Nirvāṇa train myself—
I ask the Lord thus, please tell me of this. 1068
- BUDDHA Ascetically exert yourself,
just wise and mindful here,
then having heard my words,
for Nirvāṇa train yourself. 1069
- DHOTAKA In the world of devas and humanity I see
the with-nothing brahmin who wanders about,
to the All-seeing Seer, to you I bow down:
free me, O Sakya, from consuming doubt. 1070
- BUDDHA I am not able, O Dhotaka, to liberate you
from consuming doubt of whatever kind in the world,²
but, having Known this Dharma best
beyond this flood you go across. 1071
- DHOTAKA Teach me, O Brahma, out of your compassion,
the State of Seclusion that I may know it well,
so that I may live just like the sky,
kind-minded, peaceful, also clinging-free. 1072
- BUDDHA This Peace I shall explain to you,
Seen-Now and not traditional lore,

² Sujato: LKM had “To liberate, O Dhotaka, from consuming doubt, I do not go about the world”, which relied on the variant reading *gamissāmi*. This however appears to be incorrect, and I have adopted the reading *sahissāmi* as used in the Mahāsaṅgīti text; see Norman’s note on page 410 of the *Group of Discourses*.

knowing which the mindful fare,
and cross the world's entanglements. 1073

DHOTAKA I am delighted, Seeker Great
with this Peace that's ultimate,
knowing which the mindful fare,
and cross the world's entanglements. 1074

BUDDHA Whatever you cognize above,
below, across, and in between;
Here having Known clinging just to this,
form no craving for high or low. 1075

(Snp 1068-75)

5.7 Upasīva's Questions

UPASĪVAMĀṆAVAPUCCHĀ

- UPASĪVA Alone, O Sakya, unsupported too,
the mighty flood I do not dare to cross,
All-seeing One, please tell me of the means
using which I may overpass the flood. 1076
- BUDDHA Mindfully do you no-thingness regard,
rely on “there-is-not” to go across the flood,
abandon conversation, let go of sense-desires,
See craving's exhaustion by night and by day. 1077
- UPASĪVA That one who's unattached to sense-desires,
relying on no-thingness, left others aside,
freed in the highest of consciousness's freedom,
will that one be established, or fall away from this? 1078
- BUDDHA That one who's unattached to sense-desires,
relying on no-thingness, left others aside,
freed in the highest of consciousness's freedom,
that one will be established, not fall away from this. 1079
- UPASĪVA Should that one remain even for a heap of years,
O all-Seeing One, but still not fall away?
Would that one liberated cool-become just there,
consciousness ceased in that very state? 1080
- BUDDHA As flame blown out by force of wind
has gone to its “goal”, cannot be described,
likewise the Sage “in mind and body” freed:
gone to the Goal and cannot be described. 1081
- UPASĪVA Does one not exist who's reached the Goal?
Or does one dwell forever free?

O Sage, do well declare this to me now,
for certainly this dharma's known by you. 1082

BUDDHA Of one who's reached the Goal, no measure's found,
there is not that by which one could be named,
when dharmas for that one are emptied out,
emptied are the ways of telling too. 1083

(Snp 1076–1083)

5.8 Nanda's Questions

NANDAMĀṆAVAPUCCHĀ

- NANDA People say that in the world
 there are sages — how is this?
 Do they say “sage” for knowledge won,
 or for a certain way of life? 1084
- BUDDHA The intelligent ones say not “a sage”,
 for view, tradition, knowledge won;
 those foeless, desireless and free from distress
 who so fare along are sages, I say. 1085
- NANDA Some of these monks and brahmins they say
 that purity comes from the seen and the heard,
 from rites and from vows and from other things too,
 have they, O Lord, while practising thus
 crossed over birth and crossed decay, sir?
 I ask the Lord thus, please tell me of this. 1086
- BUDDHA Some of these monks and brahmins they say
 that purity comes from the seen and the heard,
 from rites and from vows and from other things too
 and even though they have practised thus,
 I say they've not crossed over birth and decay. 1087
- NANDA Some of these monks and brahmins they say
 that purity comes from the seen and the heard,
 from rites and from vows and from other things too,
 if you say, O Sage, they've not crossed the flood,
 who fares through the world of devas, mankind,
 crossed over birth and crossed decay, sir?
 I ask the Lord thus, please tell me of this. 1088

BUDDHA Of these monks and these brahmins I do not say
that all are shrouded by birth and decay:
those who've let go of the seen, heard, and known,
of rites and of vows and others—all,
completely craving Known and from the inflows free—
those persons I say have crossed over the flood. 1089

NANDA By the Great Seeker's words I'm truly delighted
well-explained, O Gotama, is "to assets unattached",
those who've let go of the seen, heard and known,
of rites and of vows and of other things—all,
completely craving Known and from the inflows free—
also I say they've crossed over the flood. 1090

(Snp 1084-1090)

5.9 Hemaka's Questions

HEMAKAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

HEMAKA Those elders outside Gotama's teaching-path
explained their doctrines in this way:
"so it was and so will be"—
all that was but traditional lore,
all that increased uncertainty,
And I took no delight in it. 1091

Please, O Sage, explain to me
Dhamma destroying craving now,
knowing which the mindful fare,
and cross the world's entanglements. 1092

BUDDHA Here among all those pleasing things—
the seen and the heard, the sensed and thought—
whose wants removed and passion too—
this the unchanging Nirvāṇa-state. 1093

With Final Knowledge those mindful ones,
now-seen the Dharma, cool-become
and ever they at peace remain,
they've crossed the world's entanglements. 1094

(Snp 1091–1094)

5.10 Todeyya's Questions

TODEYYAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

- TODEYYA In whom do sense-desires dwell not
and craving can't be found,
crossed beyond consuming doubt—
what's freedom for this one? 1095
- BUDDHA In whom do sense-desires dwell not
and craving can't be found,
crossed beyond consuming doubt—
than this, is freedom not apart. 1096
- TODEYYA No inclinations or with longings still?
One with wisdom wanting, or with wisdom won?
Explain to me please, O All-seeing Sakya,
how I may well discern a sage. 1097
- BUDDHA No inclinations at all and no longings left,
not one with wisdom wanting but one with wisdom won
know as a sage, Todeyya, one who nothing owns,
one who is to sensual being unattached. 1098

(Snp 1095–1098)

5.11 Kappa's Question

KAPPAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

KAPPA In midstream standing there,
 in flood's fearsome surge—
 oppressed by age and death,
 of the island tell me, sir,
 do tell me of this isle,
 where this will be no more. 1099

BUDDHA In midstream standing there,
 in flood's fearsome surge
 oppressed by age and death, Kappa,
 of the island I shall tell. 1100

 “Owning nothing and unattached”
 that's the isle of no-beyond,
 Nirvāṇa do I call it
 death-decay destroyed. 1101

 With Final Knowledge these mindful ones,
 Now-seen the Dharma, cool-become,
 they're neither under Māra's sway
 nor Māra's followers. 1102

(Snp 1099–1102)

5.12 Jatukaṇṇi's Questions

JATUKAṆṆIMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

- JATUKAṆṆI I've heard of the heroic one
from desires free for pleasures sensuous,
with Question I come for the flood-crosser,
from desire free
O Lord with Eye innate, tell me the Peaceful State—
how truly it is, tell me of this. 1103
- The Lord comports himself as the senses' conqueror
as the hot sun the earth by its heat,
of small wit am I, Thou of wisdom great,
explain to me Dharma that I may understand. 1104
- BUDDHA The abandonment here of birth and old age,
greed for sensual pleasures curb,
and safety see in letting-go,
let there not be found in you
grasping or rejection. 1105
- Dry up whatever's gone "before",
while "after" have no thing at all;
if in the "middle" you don't grasp,
you'll fare in Perfect Peace. 1106
- O brahmin, from greediness free
for every sort of name-and-form,
the inflows are not found by which
one'd go beneath death's sway. 1107

(Snp 1103-1107)

5.13 Bhadrāvudha's Question

BHADRĀVUDHAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

BHADRA With home let go, craving cut and undisturbed,
delight let go, crossed the flood and free,
time let go and truly wise—I beg of you—
various people here from provinces assembled; 1108

O Hero, they're longing for your words,
do well declare these to them now,
for certainly this Dharma has been Known by you,
then having heard the Nāga they'll depart from here. 1109

BUDDHA Beyond all acquisitive craving you should train,
above, below, across and in between,
whatever is grasped at in the world,
with that does Māra that person pursue. 1110

Knowing this, therefore the mindful bhikkhu
in all worlds grasps not anything,
understanding well those acquisitive beings,
those people adhering to the realm of death. 1111

(Snp 1108–1111)

5.14 Udaya's Questions

UDAYAMĀṆAVAPUCCHĀ

- UDAYA To the contemplative seated free of dust,
done what should be done, with inflows none,
to the one beyond all dharmas gone,
to him with a question have I come:
Please say by shattering ignorance
how Final Knowledge's free. 1112
- BUDDHA Let go desires for pleasures of sense,
with all bad-mindedness as well,
sloth dispel and check remorse, 1113
- poised mindfulness completely pure,
forerun by Dharma-distinguishing:
I say by shattering ignorance,
there's Final Knowledge free. 1114
- UDAYA What's the fetter of the world?
and what the world's wandering?
By abandonment of what
is it Nirvāṇa named? 1115
- BUDDHA Enjoyment: the fetter of the world,
while thinking, the world's wandering,
the letting-go of craving—
it's Nirvāṇa named. 1116
- UDAYA How is consciousness broken up
in one who practises mindfully?
To the Lord we come with this question,
we wish to hear your words. 1117

BUDDHA Feeling both within, without—
 in that do not delight,
 thus consciousness is broken up
 in one who practises mindfully.

1118

(Snp 1112–1118)

5.16 Mogharāja's Question

MOGHARĀJAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

MOGHAR. The Sakyan I've requested twice
but the Seer has not replied;
I have heard tell that questioned thrice,
a Sage divine explains. 1123

I do not understand the view
of the renowned Gotama
upon this world, the other world,
on Brahma's realm, the deva's world. 1124

So to the One of vision supreme,
with this query have I come:
how should one regard the world
that the Death-king sees one not? 1125

BUDDHA Be ever mindful, Mogharāja,
and as empty, view the world,
with view of self pulled up,
and thus crossed over death—
who sees the world like this
the King of Death sees not. 1126

(Snp 1123–1126)

5.17 Piṅgiya's Question

PIṄGIYAMĀṄAVAPUCCHĀ

- PIṄGIYA Aged am I, feeble and my beauty fled,
my eyes no longer clear, my hearing weak,
let me not die confused along the way,
teach me the Dharma so that I shall know
how to let go of birth and of decay. 1127
- BUDDHA Having seen them smitten by (the sight of) forms,
by bodily forms those careless folk are beaten down,
therefore, Piṅgiya, you should be aware:
let go this bodily form so as not to be reborn.³ 1128
- PIṄGIYA There's nothing in the world: four directions chief,
four intermediates, above, below, ten in all—
unseen, unheard, not felt or known by you;
teach to me Dharma so that when I've known it
birth and ageing are both abandoned here. 1129
- BUDDHA Seeing humanity by cravings afflicted—
burnt by being born, overcome by age,
therefore, Piṅgiya, you should be aware:
let go of craving so as not to be reborn. 1130

(Snp 1127–1130)

Notes on Verses 1039–1130

1039: The world (*citta*) in first line. The world as exterior is more often *loka* in Pāli. But *loka* and *citta* are closely interrelated in Buddhist Suttas.

³ Sujato: LKM had “let go these forms for not again becoming”, which I found barely intelligible; I similarly changed the last line of verse 1130. In addition, this verse contains a grammatical mistake, as *rūpa* here is singular.

- 1043: Namer-mind: in Pāli this is *nāma*, that which gives names to things. These two words, from Pāli, and from English, are etymologically related.
- 1047: The Tissametteyya who asks this question is unlikely to be the one who is addressed in Snp 4.7.
 Line 3: Extremes (in views and practices) never approved by the Buddha. In Pāli *anta* (close to English “end”) is usually translated “extreme”.
 Line 5: A “great person” in the Buddhist sense, rather than the Hindu.
 Line 6: *Sibbani*—seamstress. The seamstress who sews together *saṃsāra*, the round of birth and death.
- 1053: Some brahmins made offerings to gods in order to procure the results of sense/sex enjoyment.
- 1069: Live a frugal life without indulgence or bodily self-torture—either extreme.
- 1068–75: The Buddha does not teach Dhotaka what he asks, so there are two possibilities; The text is lost or corrupted, or, the Buddha taught with these few words, which were accompanied by a mind-transmission.
- 1077: Nothingness: the nature of all that can be conceived—no essence, and no views about permanence.
- 1081: “Mind and body” in Theravāda; translated as “body-group” by some authors.
- 1083: “Emptied” is better translation than “removed, destroyed or abolished” as used by Ven. Ñāṇamoli.
- 1084: *Muni* was used by all practitioners of Dharma, not only Buddha.
- 1085: “Fare” is the only English word meaning both journey/travel as well as practice Dharma which is regarded as a journey. The verb *carati* also has the two meanings of ordinary and spiritual journeys.
- 1086: The seen and the heard is placing reliance upon the ways that

unimportant things are done (such as putting on robes) and not paying attention to really important matters (such as ageing and death).

1090: The last line of this verse: is this Nanda's agreement with the Buddha or does this contain his conceit that he too has the same view?

1091: Teaching or path or generally meaning religion. It is hard to find an English word to fit all the meanings of *sāsana*.

1107: Name and form: *nāma-rūpa*. *Nāma* is mind generally, while *rūpa* is body.

1112: "seated free of dust" refers to mental-emotional dust.

1122: no-thingness: does not mean the *arūpa* (formless) attainment in meditation.⁴ "Brahmin" here in the Buddhist sense.

1123: Twice the Buddha did not reply to Mogharāja. But the third time this mind had settled down. *Suñña* means emptiness of persons, ego, selfhood, ownership etc. It does not mean "nothing".

⁴ Sujato: I am not sure why LKM says this. Both here and elsewhere in these verses it seems clear that the Brahmin students are in fact referring to the formless attainments. It will be recalled that these were the same attainments which, in the story of the Bodhisattva's period of seeking before enlightenment, were attributed to various (probably Brahmanical) teachers.

5.18 Epilogue: In Praise of the Way to the Beyond

PĀRĀYANATTHUTIGĀTHĀ

The Radiant One said this while he stayed among the Magadhese at the Pāsānika Shrine. There he was asked, then he questioned, the sixteen brahmin pupils, answering their questions. If one should understand the meaning of even one question, and then practise the Dharma according to the Dharma, then one would go to the farther shore beyond ageing and death. As this Dharma leads to the farther shore it is known as the Teaching leading to the Farther Shore (*pārāyana*).

NARRATOR Ajita, Tissametteyya,
Puṇṇaka, then there's Mettagū,
Dhotaka, Upasīva then
Nanda also Hemaka, 1131

The pair Todeyya, Kappa, then
Jātukaṇṇi the learned one,
Bhadrāvudha, Udaya, and
the brahmin who's called Posāla,
Mogharāja the very wise
and Piṅgiya the seer so great— 1132

All these approached the perfect Seer,
the Buddha who practised perfectly,
to question him on subtle points,
to the Buddha-best they journeyed. 1133

Having been questioned the Buddha replied
with Dharma according to how it really is.
In answering their questions the Sage
delighted those brahmins. 1134

Being delighted by the Seer,
The Buddha, Kinsman of the Sun,

They lived the Holy Life in his presence,
He of such magnificent wisdom. 1135

One who practices in accordance
With each and every question
As taught by the Buddha
Goes from the near to the far shore. 1136

One developing this unexcelled path
would go from the near to the far shore;
This path goes to the far shore, which is why
It's called the "Way to the Far Shore". 1137

5.19 Piṅgiya’s Song of the Way to the Beyond

PĀRĀYANĀNUGĪTIGĀTHĀ

PIṄGIYA “Going to the Further Shore”, I’ll chant—
As He had Seen so did He teach,
that pure One of wisdom profound,
rid of desire and (interior) jungle—
falsehood—for what reason would he speak? 1138

Now therefore I shall eulogize
those words profoundly beautiful,
of One who has renounced the stains
of delusion, pride, hypocrisy. 1139

All-seer, Awake, Dispeller of dark,
beyond all being gone, gone to world’s end,
with no inflows left, let go of all *dukkha*-causes,
that one is “brahmin” rightly named: him do I serve. 1140

As bird that leaves behind a copse,
might then in fruit-filled forest live,
so have I left those of wisdom lean,
as swan to a great lake arrived. 1141

Those who explained to me before,
I heard the Buddha’s utterance,
said “thus it was”, “thus will be” —
all that was only oral lore,
all that promoted more disputes. 1142

Dispeller of darkness, seated alone,
the well-born, him the maker of Light,
Gotama, him profoundly wise,
Gotama, greatly intelligent— 1143

the Dharma to me he pointed out,
 which can be seen right here and now,
 by time, not limited at all,
 craving's exhaustion, troubles' end,
 with which naught can compare. 1144

BRAHMIN How can you live apart from him,
 Even for a minute, Piṅgiya?
 Gotama of such profound wisdom,
 Gotama of such profound sagacity. 1145

Who pointed out the Dhamma to you,
 Apparent in this very life,
 The ending of craving, free of distress,
 With which naught can compare. 1146

PIṄGIYA I never live apart from him,
 Even for a minute, brahmin
 Gotama of such profound wisdom,
 Gotama of such profound sagacity. 1147

Who pointed out the Dhamma to me,
 Apparent in this very life,
 The ending of craving, free of distress,
 With which naught can compare. 1148

I see him with my mind's eye, brahmin,
 Being heedful night and day;
 I spend the night revering him,
 So I think I am never apart from him. 1149

The mind of faith and rapture, mindfulness,
 from Gotama's teachings never does depart,
 for in whoever way the Deeply-Wise One goes,
 to that very direction do I bow down. 1150

I am old, my strength is gone,
 So my body cannot carry me there.
 But my thoughts always travel there,
 For my mind, brahmin, is devoted to him. 1151

Floundering in the mud, I lay,
 Swimming from island to island,
 Then I saw the Awakened Buddha,
 Crossed over the flood, free of inflows. 1152

BUDDHA Just as Vakkali was sure in faith,
 Bhadrāvudha, and Ālavigotama, too,
 In the same way, you too should be sure of your faith,
 And, Piṅgiya, you will go to the far shore of death. 1153

PIṄGIYA Thus my inspiration grows even more,
 Hearing the voice of the Sage;
 The Buddha, who drew back the veil of the world,
 Without heartlessness, of inspired speech, 1154

Knows what is beyond the gods,
 Knows all, both high and low,
 The Teacher who puts an end to questions
 Of those who declare their doubts. 1155

The immovable, unshakeable,
 That to which there is no compare:
 For sure, I will go there,
 I have no doubt of that.
 You may remember me
 As one whose mind is made up. 1156