

Linked Discourses

Bhikkhu Sujato

LINKED DISCOURSES

A plain translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya



translated and introduced by

BHIKKHU SUJATO

VOLUME 1

SN 1–11

THE GROUP OF LINKED DISCOURSES WITH
VERSES

SAGĀTHĀVAGGASAMĪYUTTA



SUTTACENTRAL

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Truth itself is the undying word:
this is an ancient principle.
Good people say that the teaching and its meaning
are grounded in the truth.

“WELL-SPOKEN WORDS”

Subhāsitasutta

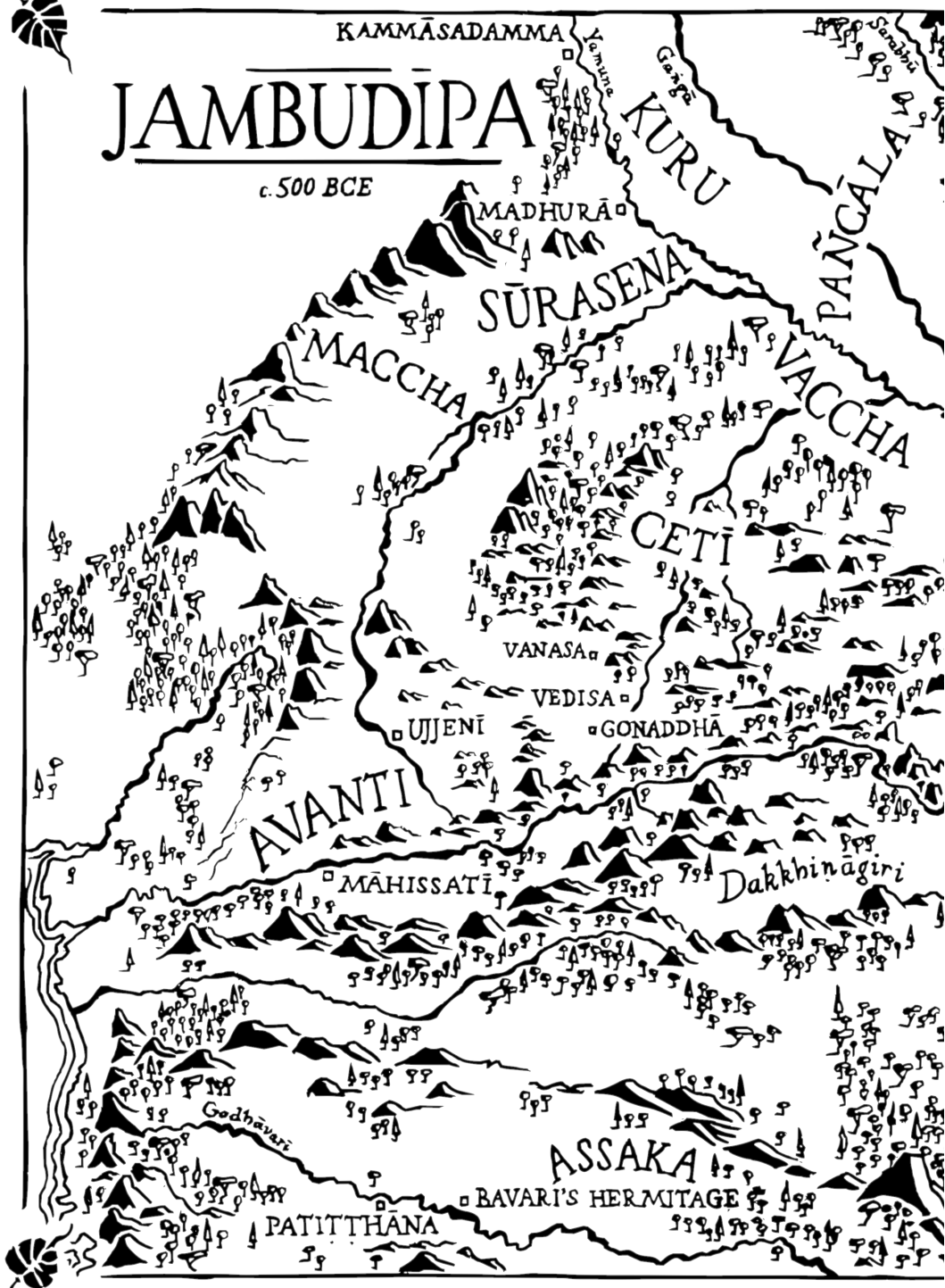
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KAMMĀSADAMMA

JAMBUDĪPA

c. 500 BCE





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Preface to the Saṃyuttanikāya

I was introduced to Buddhism through the Theravāda tradition. I found my way to it through meditation and pursued my studies so I could more deeply understand my experiences in meditation. It didn't take me long to notice the rather odd fact that, while meditation was supposed to reveal direct, experiential truths, there was a lot of disagreement about what these things were and what they meant. It seemed that even direct experience was filtered by beliefs and expectations.

I found that, while many modern teachers dismissed the role of theory, insisting that experience alone was the standard, this was not the case in the Suttas. The Buddha placed right view at the start of the path, insisting that the framing of our ideas is what gives meaning to our experiences.

Living in Thailand, I was surrounded by Thai-flavored Theravada. My English-speaking monastic community at Wat Pa Nanachat was somewhat more eclectic. There were monks and visitors from all over, and while the "official" teachings were mainstream Theravada and forest tradition, behind the scenes there was a whole range of spiritual ideas and priorities. I learned about different flavors of Buddhism, but I didn't have a way of understanding how it all fit together, or how it related to my meditation. Many of the things I heard about seemed quite silly or far from the Buddha's teaching, and I confess, I became quite dogmatic, convinced that Theravada

was the one and only original and true way. It was the great Sri Lankan monk K. Sri Dhammananda who checked this impulse, gently reminding me of the respect we owe to all practitioners of Dhamma.

I read some books on Buddhist history, notably A.K. Warder's *Indian Buddhism*, and from them learned that there were early discourses in languages other than Pali, especially Chinese. This was at once exciting and a little disturbing. One monk said to me that when he thought of the existence of parallels, it was like a nervous, lurking anxiety: what if we're wrong? What if the things we take to be true turn out to be no more than an institutional dogma, or an accidental artifact of history? Some modern schools of interpretation take this doubt as a starting point to dismantle the very idea that we can know what the Buddha taught, replacing knowledge with destructive nihilism.

Some years later, I met Rod Bucknell, from whom, during our discussions when starting SuttaCentral, I learned of a different approach. The Taiwanese monk Master Yin Shun (印順) had developed a powerful theory of the origins and shared teachings in Buddhism. His insight was based on a comparative reading of all the texts (he read the Pali canon mainly from the Japanese translation) and was sparked by one of the great Mahayana treatises, Asaṅga's *Yogācārabhūmi*.

Yin Shun posited that the Saṁyutta was the first and primary collection of texts in Buddhism. By this, he meant the original Saṁyutta, not the developed forms we have today in the Pali Saṁyuttanikāya, multiple Chinese Saṁyuktāgama, and various portions in Sanskrit and Tibetan. These are, like all extant collections, the outcome of a redaction process that left its discernable fingerprints. Nonetheless, the close relationship between all these texts suggests that changes have been minor.

Once you take this idea on board, the signs leap out from everywhere. For example, some accounts of the First Council speak of the Saṁyutta being recited first, and we find that the first three

sermons are in the Saṁyutta. Most convincing, however, is the observation that the list of topics found in the Saṁyutta is central to the Buddha's teaching: the aggregates, the senses, dependent origination, the elements, the path, and the four noble truths. When the Suttas list the Buddha's essential teachings, they do so with topics from the Saṁyutta. And when later generations organized the Buddha's teachings into coherent wholes, the same list of topics provided a handy scaffold.

This is far from a complete theory of early Buddhist texts; it is a complex situation, and there are many factors at play. But Yin Shun's fundamental thesis offered a compelling framework to make sense of the vast mass of texts and their interrelations.

The Saṁyutta theory suggests a simple guideline for interpreting Suttas: look for the main understanding of key teachings in the simple Suttas of the Saṁyutta and see other discourses, especially those of the Majjhima and Dīgha, as being built upon these foundations. The theory doesn't mean that all Saṁyutta discourses are earlier than others. It simply means that they were organized in this collection before other collections. It clarifies priority and perspective.

This was a revelation for me, and I pursued this insight in my book *A History of Mindfulness*. And ever since, I have found it to be a reliable means of sorting out what the Buddha taught.

It was challenging. Over and over again, I had to confront my expectations and biases. The anxieties of my friend turned out to be not completely baseless. I found that I could no longer believe in Theravada as the one true source of Buddhism: it was, rather, one of many schools, and like all schools, it preserved much and changed much. I could see the many different flavors of Buddhism—some quite alien to me—while recognizing that underneath them all lie the same fundamental teachings of the Saṁyutta.

At a deeper level, this helped me realize how my own biases and expectations had been shaping my understanding of my meditation experiences, and hence what I did in meditation, and hence the nature of those experiences. If you think meditation is a certain way,

you will meditate in accord, and your experiences will confirm your ideas. And if you tell yourself, “This is my personal experience, and has nothing to do with theory”, then you’ll never find a way out of the cycle. For that, we need critical inquiry based on the best available facts.

The truth was right in front of my nose all along, yet for years I did not see it. I was practicing “mindfulness” in the belief that this was the way of insight (*vipassanā*). But along the way, I found that mindfulness led to serenity (*samatha*). This wasn’t what I had learned to expect from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as explained by modern teachers, for whom mindfulness and insight are intrinsically linked.

Studying the Saṃyutta closely I noticed that the teachings on insight—hundreds of Suttas—seldom mention mindfulness. And the teachings on mindfulness emphasize how it leads to serenity. It is serenity—the deep, immersive peace of mind called *samādhi* or *jhāna*—which then leads to liberating insight.

Suddenly my own experiences made sense. And so I changed the way I approached meditation in all sorts of subtle ways. I had thought of meditation as “noting” various “objects” with “momentary concentration” that would give rise to “dry insight”. But I realized that none of these words or ideas was found in the Suttas at all. It simply isn’t how the Buddha taught. Rather, he spoke of breathing mindfully, of the natural process of settling the mind, of how when one is informed by right view, wisdom emerges from a mind at peace.

This is my experience, and yours is different. It is not that the traditions, schools, and methods are wrong. They are fine for what they are, but what they are not are carbon copies of the Buddha’s teachings. Think of them as degrees of approximation. It is in the Suttas, and especially the Saṃyutta, that we find the closest thing to the Buddha’s words. I found that those words matched my experiences and informed my practice in ways that the schools and methods did not. And I am always grateful for those teachers who have made it possible for me to learn from the greatest teacher of them all.

The Linked Discourses: the blueprint for Buddhist philosophy

Bhikkhu Sujato, 2019

The Saṃyutta Nikāya is the third of the four main divisions in the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali Canon (*tipiṭaka*). It is translated here as *Linked Discourses*, and has been previously translated as the *Connected Discourses* or the *Kindred Sayings*. As the title suggests, its discourses are grouped thematically. These thematic groups of texts are called *saṃyuttas*, and the Saṃyutta Nikāya is the collection of such *saṃyuttas*.

The Saṃyutta Nikāya consists of 56 *saṃyuttas* collected in five large “books” (*vagga*), containing over a thousand discourses. The Mahāsaṅgīti text as used on SuttaCentral contains 2837 discourses; but the total number is somewhat arbitrary, as it depends on how the abbreviated texts are expanded, which differs in different editions. This variation, however, applies only to the way the texts are counted and does not affect the content, which is virtually identical in every edition.

It is in the Saṃyutta Nikāya that we find the core doctrines that have formed the basis for all subsequent Buddhist philosophy. It is largely structured around major doctrinal sections that correspond with the template of the four noble truths.

Suffering Aggregates (SN 22); six sense fields (SN 35).

The origin of suffering Dependent origination (SN 12)

The cessation of suffering Dependent cessation (SN 12); the unconditioned (SN 43).

The practice that leads to the end of suffering The chapters of the final book, the Mahāvagga (SN 45–54).

The four noble truths themselves are treated in the final chapter, the Sacca Saṃyutta (SN 56).

Not all the *saṃyuttas* fit so easily into this scheme. There are many minor *saṃyuttas*, which are sometimes connected with a major *saṃyutta*, and sometimes not. In addition, the first book, the Sagāthāvagga, is not organized by subject. Rather, the thematic linking here is the type of person involved in the discourse. These texts are also unified in literary form; they are in mixed prose and verse.

This collection has a full parallel in the Saṃyuktāgama (SA) of the Sarvāstivāda school in Chinese translation. In addition, there are two partial collections in Chinese (SA-2 and SA-3) as well as several miscellaneous or fragmentary texts in Chinese, Sanskrit, and Tibetan. Much of the organizational structure of SN is shared with SA, suggesting that this structure preceded the split between these two collections.

How the Saṃyutta is Organized

The Saṃyutta Nikāya is conveniently divided into five large *vaggas* or “books”. As noted in the General Guide, the Saṃyutta is an example of the “nested *vagga*” structure, where the (unusual) *vagga* as “book” includes many of the normal kind of “small” *vagga*, i.e. groups of about ten suttas.

Within each of the five “big” *vaggas* there are several *saṃyuttas*, each containing a set of discourses that are linked by person or theme (sometimes both). For example, each of the discourses in SN 5

features a nun (*bhikkhuni*), while each discourse in SN 24 deals with the subject of “views” (*diṭṭhi*).

In SuttaCentral, the discourses of the Saṃyutta are referenced by *saṃyutta* and *sutta*. Thus SN 1.1 is the first discourse of the first *saṃyutta*, while SN 56.11 is the eleventh discourse of the fifty-sixth *saṃyutta*. The SuttaCentral system is the same as that used by Bhikkhu Bodhi in his *Connected Discourses of the Buddha* and on Access to Insight.

The five books are named according to various principles:

- Vol. 1 Sagāthāvagga contains sets of discourses that contain verses, as indicated by the title.
- Vols. 2–4 are each named after the first and largest *saṃyutta* of the book.
- Vol. 5 is called the “Great Book” (*Mahāvagga*) due to its size. The Chinese version is called, appropriately, “The Book of the Path” (*Maggavagga*).

In this essay I will give an overview of each of the five books. However, I will not summarize each of the 56 *saṃyuttas*, for that would make it far too long. For such summaries, see the lists of suttas on SuttaCentral, which include explanations of the various structural levels of the *saṃyutta*, as well as individual discourses. Here I will focus more on general questions of content and interpretation.

The Book With Verses

The “Book With Verses” (Sagāthāvagga) is divided into eleven *saṃyuttas*, with a total of 271 suttas.

While most of the Saṃyutta is organized around subject matter, here the organizational principle is *people*. Each *saṃyutta* depicts a conversation involving the Buddha or his disciples with a different person or kind of person, such as gods, kings, nuns, or brahmins.

A typical sutta has a bare narrative framework, where someone comes to the Buddha and utters a verse, and the Buddha replies

with a better one. In some cases, notably the Sakka Saṃyutta, the narrative element is developed into a lively exchange.

Verse & Prose

Each of the suttas in this collection contains verse with a prose narrative background, although in many cases the prose has been omitted through abbreviation. This kind of literary form is common in Indic literature, so it is worth spending a little time to understand it.

The oldest Indic literature is the Ṛg Veda, a collection of about 10,600 verses. These were passed down in the oral tradition of the brahmins for thousands of years. One of the keys to the accurate transmission of this sacred lore was the use of meter: rhythmic patterns of long and short syllables. Such meters provide a scaffolding that organizes words, and hence knowledge, in a form that is as memorable as a song; indeed, they would have been sung in a simple melody. In this way, the verses become set in a precise and defined form, one that may be preserved and passed down unaltered through the generations.

But poetry is not just technically complex; it is ecstatic, inspired, divine. The brahmins did not see the Vedas as being authored in the normal sense, but channeled as the divine word of god (Brahmā) through human sages (Pali: *isi*; Sanskrit: *ṛṣi*). The Vedic verses constantly allude to stories, myths, and events—for example, the slaying of the dragon Vṛtra by the god-hero Indra—that were well known to their audience, and thus did not require spelling out in the text itself. The verses are hymns, invoked in ritual to heighten the emotional response, to inspire awe, fear, or devotion. They are given meaning and context by the background understanding of the mythology. Thus the verses imply a story, of which they are the emotional and narrative climax.

So we can think of a verse as the seed crystal around which a more flexible prose narrative grows and evolves. The prose may be adjusted to time and place, presented in greater or lesser detail, or

adapted for the audience. It may comment on contemporary events or express a personal perspective, but the verse is (in theory) always the same.

We are speaking here of the verses found in the *Sagāthāvagga*. But it is worth bearing in mind that there are plenty of verses in the *nikāyas* outside the *Sagāthāvagga*, and they are not all of the same type. Here is a summary of the main verse types you will encounter. This is just to help a reader get a rough orientation, and exceptions and blurred lines are easily found.

Climactic verse As in the *Sagāthāvagga*, such verses appear at the climax of a narrative. The narrative may be very thin, or even absent, yet it is always assumed. Sometimes it is supplied in later commentaries. This form is used outside the *Sagāthāvagga* in such texts as the *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*, and *Jātakas*. We might also consider under this head longer devotional verses such as those of *Sela* (MN 92, Snp 3.7).

Independent poems A set of verses that makes up a unified literary and thematic whole, and is independent of a prose narrative. There are relatively few of these in the four *nikāyas*, but they dominate the *Sutta Nipāta*. The last *vagga* of that book contains a series of such independent poems, all united within a narrative set in verse. Some of the verses of the *Sagāthāvagga* might be considered under this head, if the prose narrative is dismissed as negligible.

Devotional invocations Such texts as the *Mahāsamaya Sutta* (DN 20), the *Āṭaṇṭiya Sutta* (DN 32), or the *Isigili Sutta* (MN 116) occupy an unusual place in the early Buddhist corpus. Thin in their doctrinal content, they appear more as incantations for protection or blessings.

Summary verse Like the climactic verses, these accompany prose. But rather than being an emotional highlight, they serve as a mnemonic device to help preserve the content of the prose. These are most familiar in the *uddānas* that appear at the end of *vaggas* and other sections throughout the EBTs, typically listing a key-

word from each text and thus acting as a kind of table of contents. These are not to be confused with the genre of climactic verse known as *udāna*, “inspired saying”, which, despite the similar spelling, is a completely different word. In addition to the formal *uddānas*, we can consider under this head many of the verses of the *Āṅguttara*, especially in the Fours, which often serve purely to summarize the content of the prose, although occasionally they are developed into a more satisfying poetic reflection on the theme. Occasionally a longer sutta will contain mixed portions of prose and summary verse, notably the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* (Sn̐ 3.12). A much later development of this style is found in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* (DN 30).

In my translations, I have rendered verse as prose broken into lines, rarely attempting poetic virtue. To render these highly didactic verses, dense with doctrinal terms, into genuine English verse is no easy task. In many cases, especially with the summary verses, the text in Pali has little in the way of literary merit. Other texts, especially the later verses, display a learned command of complex and sophisticated literary forms such as is rare to find, even among writers of English poetry. Combined with the often obscure vocabulary, rare and archaic grammatical forms, and syntactic flexibility of Pali verses, the task of rendering them in readable and accurate English is hard and time-consuming, even without aspiring to poetic beauty. So my verse is workmanlike, and I can only hope that poets take up the task of rendering selected verses with the beauty they deserve.

The Play of the Gods

In the Book With Verses we see the ancient Vedic pattern adopted to serve a Buddhist purpose. It is no coincidence that here we meet various deities, many of whom hail from Vedic mythology, in contexts that sometimes directly respond to specific Vedic or Brahmanical passages.

The casual appearance of deities throughout these texts is, of course, problematic. These days, we don't normally see gods manifesting with glorious light at spiritual gatherings. So how are we to understand this?

One obvious answer is that such texts are literally true: gods of these names did appear in exactly the way depicted and have these exact conversations. If so, why are such things not seen in our day? One might be tempted to point regretfully to the decline of religious and ethical life in modern times. But this is just another unverifiable claim: how could we possibly know such a thing? And it creates an even bigger problem. For when we see the past as a uniquely privileged era, one blessed with a degree of purity and wholesomeness that is lost to us, then what is the point of practice? Are we not better off pining for the glories of old, and wishing for the renewal of the Dhamma under the future Buddha Metteyya? Such views forget a basic principle of the teaching: it is *akāliko*—we can realize it here & now, no matter when we live.

So perhaps we are better off adopting a skeptical view: such deities do not exist, and such events did not happen. They are simply religious propaganda, fictions whose purpose is to convert simple people by importing a familiar Indic cosmology. If there is any reality at all to them, it is purely psychological; such beings represent different aspects of the mind. Despite its scientific appearance, this reductive view, too, is unsustainable. The ideas of rebirth and the existence of multiple dimensions of existence are not found just in popular narratives, but are central to core teachings such as dependent origination and the four noble truths—the second noble truth is precisely “the craving that leads to future rebirth” (*yāyam taṇhā ponobbhavikā*). They can't be simply written off as an uncritical inheritance from Indian culture.

These views are polar opposites; and like all pairs of opposites, they share more in common than they like to admit. Both of them are concerned with *facts*, with whether these events were true or not. But the texts as we have them are not collections of facts: they are

stories. And the significance of a story lies in its meaning. Whether a story is real or not is at best secondary, and often beside the point entirely. It serves to engage an audience, provoking wonder, surprise, awe, or joy.

The Buddhist traditions understood this well, as evidenced by the textual situation. While in some cases the verses and story are tightly linked, it is very common for the same verse to be accompanied by completely different background narratives, or by no background at all. The verses, which convey the essential Dhamma teaching, the core of meaning and emotion, remain the same, while the story varies. To insist on the factuality or otherwise of the story is to miss the point. The story provides a context that brings the teaching in the verses to life for an audience.

Thus the best lens through which to see such texts is neither as history nor as propaganda but as sacred story; that is, as myth. Each of the short suttas tells a story that conveys a timeless spiritual truth in a way that spoke to the audience of that time and place. They take place within a wider mythology that helps people find their place in a vast and unknown cosmos.

As always, the early Buddhist response to the earlier religious traditions is complex and nuanced. And, while it is true that many of the details of both literary form and subject matter are drawn from the Vedas, it is in the differences that the distinctively Buddhist character of the texts shows itself.

In the Vedas, the human agents are merely the transmitters of the sacred word of the gods. Exactly how this happened is unclear, but it probably involved a combination of drugs (*soma* is one of the great Vedic deities), ritual, creative inspiration, traditional lore, devotion, and communal empowerment, all of which inspired the sacred poets to heights of ecstatic visioning through which the words of the gods manifested. But regardless of the details, the key point is that the traditions regarded the human agent in the relationship as incidental, and the real value of the texts as stemming from the divine.

In the Buddhist texts, the situation is reversed. The gods do not inspire human hosts, they speak for themselves. And they are no infallible reserves of Truth; they may be right or wrong, skillful or foolish, just like anyone else. While the magnificence of their presence is emphasized, the ultimate effect is to show the worthlessness of such displays, for the gods are constantly being schooled by the Buddha. The most characteristic form of dialogue is where a god presents an idea that is pretty good, within a limited, mundane (i.e. Vedic) worldview, but which the Buddha elevates to an entirely new level.

It is an elementary axiom of Buddhism that the gods are not metaphysical, in the sense that they do not exist in a separate realm governed by different principles than our own. On the contrary, they are impermanent and suffering, trapped in the cycle of transmigration just like us. It follows from this that they do not have access to any special form of knowledge or wisdom. Buddhists do not look to the gods for teachings; rather, the Buddha is “teacher of gods and humans”.

I have focused on the interactions with divine beings in this collection, as these require the most contextualizing. But not all of the collections feature divine beings. Many of the *samyuttas* feature kinds of people familiar from other texts of the time. And even when divine beings are involved, in the majority of cases, the verses themselves do not require a divine setting, as there’s nothing about the gods and their divine dramas in the verses themselves.

Some of the texts in this collection are well-known and widely quoted, such as the invitation of Brahmā or the nun Vajirā’s simile of the person as a chariot. Most of the suttas here have parallels in the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama translations; the partial translations SA-2 and SA-3 include Sagāthāvagga material. In addition, many of the verses have parallels elsewhere throughout the Buddhist literature in all languages.

The Book of Causation

The Book of Causation (Nidānavagga) is the second of the five books of the Linked Discourses. It is named after the first and longest section, the Nidāna Saṃyutta. This deals with causation through the core Buddhist teaching of dependent origination, which explains how rebirth happens without a soul. The next three *saṃyuttas* can be seen as appendices to the Book of Causation, dealing with the elimination of the suffering of transmigration (SN 13), various sets of conditioned elements (SN 14), and the unknowability of the extent of transmigration (SN 15). The remaining six *saṃyuttas* are not related thematically. Instead, they are mostly grouped by person rather than subject.

The theme of causation runs through all the Buddha's teaching. We find it in contexts such as meditation practice, societal ills, biological evolution, medicine, psychological stress, and many more. However, when we refer to dependent origination we are not speaking about a general principle of causality—although such a principle is presented at SN 12.21—but of a specific series of conditional links laying bare how suffering originates and how it ends. As such, it is an extended treatment of the second and third noble truths (SN 12.27). It integrates psychological and existential aspects of suffering, showing how, when bound by craving, we make choices that bind us to transmigrating into future lives (SN 12.38). The reason why we have not escaped the process of rebirth is that we do not understand dependent origination (SN 12.60). Thus one of the core purposes of the teaching is to explain how rebirth takes place without speaking in terms of “me” or “mine” (SN 12.37).

It is a deeply human need to want to understand how things came to be. Virtually every religious or spiritual path feels the need to offer some kind of explanation of where this world came from and what is our place in it. Such creation myths are found all over the world, and bear striking resemblances. They speak of a time when the world was formless, covered in watery darkness, before light

appeared and the world took shape. In the usual way of myths, these stories work at multiple levels, reflecting both the physical evolution of the planet (macrocosm) and the growth of an individual in the womb (microcosm).

Long before the Buddha, the Nasadiya Sukta of the R̥g Veda (10.129) told the story of creation in a radically new way. It drew upon the motifs of the classic creation myth—water, darkness, formlessness—but showed their development with a new emphasis on desire and agency. Creation evolved not from divine decree, but due to the energies found within. And we cannot know what came before this process; even the highest God came afterward.

The Buddha shared the epistemological humility of the Nasadiya Sukta, insisting that the ultimate origin of things was unknowable (SN 15.1). Dependent origination, indeed, took things much further, entirely dispensing with both theology and mythology. However, it retained the richness and depth of the mythology, encapsulating within its sparse formulation both immediate experience and cosmic transmigration.

The Nidāna Saṃyutta begins by stating (SN 12.1) and defining (SN 12.2) each of the terms in the standard 12-linked chain, definitions which are assumed to apply throughout. Remaining discourses iterate on this theme, introducing new perspectives and formulations. These sometimes vary the standard 12 links, and so can shed light on unexpected nuances and hidden depths. Here's a summary of the definitions given for the 12 links, together with some explanatory notes.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) Not understanding the four noble truths. This does not, of course, mean ignorance of everyday facts and details.

A Buddha or an arahant is not omniscient.

Choices (*saṅkhārā*) Intentional acts (*kamma*) of good or bad, which are expressed through body, speech, or mind. The Indic term *saṅkhāra* may refer to any kind of activity that generates a result. It is used in a mundane context for such things as construc-

tion work. The Vedic ritual is a *saṅkhāra*, which was intended to produce a result of benefit in this life or the next. In Buddhism, *saṅkhāra* is sometimes used in a general sense of “conditioned (and conditioning) phenomena”. In dependent origination, however, it is defined as moral choices or intentions to do good or bad (SN 12.51). A *saṅkhāra* is a force or energy in the mind that propels consciousness towards rebirth in a particular state. This may be consciously formulated as a wish or aspiration (see MN 120), but is normally unconscious, i.e. born out of ignorance.

Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) The six kinds of sense consciousness. In the suttas, all forms of consciousness are regarded as making up the “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇasota*) that is established both in this life and the next (DN 28). This consciousness is empowered and directed by the choices that we have made.

Name & form (*nāma-rūpa*) “Name” is various mental factors (feeling, perception, contact, intention, and application of mind), while “form” is the four material elements that make up the body. This is a tricky concept. It stems from Upaniṣadic usage, where it refers to the various individuated entities in the world, each with their own “form” and “name”. Each of the rivers on the earth, to take a metaphor from the Prasna Upaniṣad (6.5), has its own shape, and is called by its own name; but when they return to the ocean they lose their names and shapes and are just known as the great ocean. The ocean in this metaphor stands for consciousness, which in the Upaniṣads is taken to be the eternal and infinite divinity of the cosmos. The Buddha directly rebuts this idea by showing that consciousness and name & form are dependent on each other. In DN 15 *The Great Discourse on Causation* (*Mahānidānasutta*), name & form is described as the embryo taking shape within the mother’s womb, while MN 38 *The Longer Discourse on the Ending of Craving* (*Mahātanhāsankhaya*) speaks of how the child then grows and matures. Thus it primarily means the individual organism with its mental and physical attributes. Since *nāma-rūpa* stands in mutual dependence with conscious-

ness, however, it is not correct to translate it as “mind & body”—mind/body dualism has no place in early Buddhism. It was only in much later Abhidhamma texts that *nāma-rūpa* came to be used as an umbrella term for all mental and physical properties, in which context the translation “mind & body” is appropriate.

Six sense fields (*saḷāyatana*) The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are treated in detail in SN 35 *Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta*. In dependent origination they are said to develop and evolve as the individual grows up, enabling them to experience the world in ever more sophisticated ways. This is the first of four links that, like consciousness, are six-fold following the six senses. These integrate the process of immediate sense experience within the broader context of dependent origination.

Contact (*phassa*) This is the operation of sensory stimuli, when the six sense organs are activated and perform their function. It occurs with the coming together of the inner sense organ, the outer sense stimulus, and the corresponding consciousness. The conscious individual does not exist in isolation, but can only live and grow in an environment that provides them with stimulation.

Feeling (*vedanā*) The pleasant, painful, or neutral tone that accompanies all conscious experiences. Certain kinds of experience are enjoyable, others are unpleasant, while some have no particular affect. Note that *vedanā* in Buddhism does not refer to feelings in the sense of “emotions”, which are far more complex. *Vedanā* is a fundamental property of all experience, and is treated in detail in SN 36 *Vedana Saṃyutta*.

Craving (*taṇhā*) Craving or desire for the six sense stimuli. Here the definition follows the theme of the six senses, rather than the definition given in the four noble truths, which is craving for future rebirth, i.e. sensual craving, craving to continue existence, and craving to end existence. In both cases, craving refers to a primal instinct that responds to sensory stimuli, seeking to get more pleasure or to avoid pain.

Grasping (*upādāna*) Grasping at sensual pleasures, views, religious observances, and theories of self. Apart from the first factor, the kinds of grasping are more sophisticated than the primal desires of “craving”. They require the development of thought and language. This represents a further stage in the growth of a person, as they mature and become fully responsible for their actions. It is for this reason that in Buddhism it is primarily mature humans who perform the deeds that generate rebirth and shape the course of future lives. Animals or children may indeed perform such deeds, but they are less weighty in effect.

Continued existence (*bhava*) Existence may be in the sensual realm (*kāma-bhava*), the realm of luminous form (*rūpa-bhava*), or the formless realm (*arūpa-bhava*). *Bhava* may be translated as “existence” or “life”. It refers to the ongoing process of existence. By grasping at various aspects of the present life, beings generate kammic energy in accordance with that. Most beings are attached to the sensual realm, but those who have practiced advanced meditation may become attached to the realms of luminous form (through the four absorptions) or the formless (through the formless attainments). Such attachment or grasping stimulates and activates these aspects of existence, creating a corresponding rebirth. *Bhava* is therefore like a thread that runs through the various steps of dependent origination; and indeed, the whole of dependent origination is sometimes called the *bhavacakka*, the “Wheel of Existence”. *Bhava* is a countable noun, so the older rendering as “becoming” is incorrect: you can’t speak of multiple “becomings”. Nevertheless, *bhava* has a distinctly pregnant sense. While we might long for a life of stable and eternal joy, it is the nature of existence that, even as it passes away, it contains the seeds for a new life in the future. Thus in AN 3.76 the Buddha explains *bhava* by saying that “deeds are the field, consciousness is the seed, and craving is the moisture” (*kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sneho*) for generating a new life in the future (*āyatim punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti*).

Rebirth (*jāti*) The rebirth or conception of the aggregates in the various orders of sentient beings. The Pali *jāti* is often translated as “birth,” but in doctrinal contexts, it always refers to rebirth in the sense of reincarnation in a new life. Despite the claims of some modern commentators, the suttas never use rebirth as a psychological metaphor.

Old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress Old age is the breaking of teeth, wrinkling of skin, and failing of the faculties. Death is the laying down of the body at the end of life. Like rebirth, old age and death are defined in purely physical terms. Psychological suffering is covered by the other terms.

Dependent origination is core to the insight not just of the historical Buddha Gotama, but of other Buddhas of the past (SN 12.4–10). His realization was like a person who stumbles upon an ancient city, lost and overgrown in the jungle (SN 12.65). Thus dependent origination is not an invention of the Buddha but is a description of a natural principle, one that operates in the same way whether or not a Buddha appears (SN 12.20).

The Buddha distinguished between the phenomena that are dependently originated and the process of dependent origination (SN 12.20). While all of the dependently originated phenomena can be seen in the present, the reality of the process in the past and future must be inferred (SN 12.34).

This is the difference between knowledge of dependent origination and the psychic powers of seeing the specific details of past lives and present rebirths. Such psychic visions arise from deep immersion in meditation, and are useful but not essential for understanding and letting go. Dependent origination is not about seeing the specifics of past and future lives, but understanding the principles by which rebirth operates. If memories of past lives are like watching a show on TV, insight into dependent origination is like understanding the science and technology of how television trans-

mission works. This is why dependent origination is always regarded as unique and central to Buddhism, while psychic visions have only a limited role to play.

This conscious body, with its complex systems of mental and physical processes, was produced due to ignorance and craving in a past life (SN 12.19). This is how our present existence came to be. So long as we continue to be trapped in craving for sensory experience, we repeat the cycle, fueling craving and generating yet another new body that will be reborn in the future. When we understand the theory of dependent origination it gives us an opening for developing insight.

It is, of course, self-evident that all the factors of dependent origination may be observed in the present. But in terms of the functioning of the process, we begin by examining the central factors, the unfolding of sense experience. Gradually we realize that the implications of what we are seeing are far deeper than the mere present. Like a scientist who, examining tree rings or ice cores, realizes that they can make reliable inferences about the deep past, we understand that the same processes that brought us here will propel us into the future. And we see that it is that very understanding which is the beginning of the end for ignorance.

Thus while this teaching is a profoundly philosophical one, it is not mere theory, but a praxis as well (SN 12.3). Its understanding unfolds as a natural consequence of developing faith in the Dhamma (SN 12.23). It is realized by one who has experiential realization of the Dhamma, commonly known as a stream-enterer (SN 12.28). This is true for both monastics (SN 12.29) and lay people (SN 12.41). This is why a noble disciple has no doubts about the meaning or origin of life: they have seen it for themselves (SN 12.49). Such an individual is independent of others and need not rely on a teacher. One need not be a perfected one (*arahant*) to understand dependent origination (SN 12.68).

The Buddha illustrates dependent origination with many similes, drawing imagery from fire, fuel, or food. Focusing on things that give

pleasure tends to stimulate craving, like a fire fueled by dry grass (SN 12.52) or a tree drawing up sap (SN 12.58). It is in this collection that we find the now-classic simile of the mind like a monkey, although the application is somewhat unexpected (SN 12.61).

Several suttas take up the idea of conditionality as “food” or “fuel” or “sustenance” and apply it to a set of four things: solid food, contact, intention, and consciousness (SN 12.11). Each of these is, in turn, illustrated with similes that are as horrifying as they are unforgettable (SN 12.63).

While the standard presentation of the 12 links might give the impression that they occur one after the other, like a series of dominoes falling down, the reality is more complex. Certain factors, such as consciousness and name & form, are interdependent, relying on each other (SN 12.65) like two sheaves of reeds (SN 12.67). Sometimes a factor might be implied rather than mentioned outright (SN 12.13), sometimes the sequence is altered (SN 12.43 and SN 12.44), while elsewhere the teaching might be presented in a quite different way (SN 12.38). Conditionality in Buddhism is always understood to be complex and ramified: many causes, many effects, all interacting. The simple schema is not meant to be reductive, but to clarify crucial aspects of the process in a way that is easily memorized and understood.

Philosophically, dependent origination is said to be the “middle teaching” that avoids extreme views. Such extreme views are the polar opposites that often define philosophical positions. They include views of moral responsibility: is the person who does the deed identical to the one who experiences the result? Or is it experienced by a different person? The Buddha rejects these alternatives: the deed has an effect, and that effect is suffering (SN 12.46).

Similarly the Buddha rejects the ideas that “everything exists” or that “nothing exists” (SN 12.48). While these notions might seem odd, even bizarre, to our way of thinking, they stem from the Indian philosophical tendency to see “being” as inherent, absolute, even divine. Thus if something exists, it exists in an absolute and essential

sense, and if all exists, it means the reality of the cosmos itself is absolute and eternal. If nothing “exists”, it does not mean that there is nothing real in the world; it means that things do not have any essence, and so will perish. Thus the Buddha rejects these opposing views as forms of eternalism and annihilationism, the ideas that the self will last forever, and that the self will be destroyed (SN 12.15).

Finally, perhaps the single most important thing to remember is that dependent “origination” is only half the picture. Of equal importance is “cessation”, the ending of each of the factors, which is what is called “extinguishment” (*nibbāna*). The true purpose of studying dependent origination is not for philosophical mastery, not for winning debates or passing a course, but for realizing the ending of suffering. Dependent origination stands as a truly empowering teaching, as it assumes that human understanding is quite sufficient to comprehend the essence of existence itself, to find salvation through wisdom.

The Book of the Aggregates

The “Book of the Aggregates” is the third of the five books of the Linked Discourses. It is named after the first and longest *saṃyutta*, which deals with the core Buddhist teaching of the five aggregates in 159 discourses. Of the remaining twelve *saṃyuttas*, three also take up the theme of the aggregates, while the remainder deal with miscellaneous secondary themes, some organized by subject, others by person.

The “five grasping aggregates” (*pañc’upādānakkhandhā*) were mentioned in the first sermon as the summary of the noble truth of suffering (SN 56.11), and became a foundational teaching in all forms of Buddhism.

The basic idea of an “aggregate” (*khandha*) is a set or class of phenomena. The “five aggregates” are the various sets of phenomena so classified.

The five aggregates are almost always said to be “grasping” aggregates. The term “grasping” (*upādāna*) has a complex and multi-layered relation to the basic term.

- The aggregates are the *subject* of grasping, in that they are the things that are normally attached to and taken to be the permanent “self”.
- But they are not merely passive spectators: they are also the *functional support* of grasping, the things that make grasping work. This is probably the basic metaphor of the set, as the five aggregates correspond to the five fingers of a hand, which perform the act of grasping. Grasping is something that the aggregates do. In this metaphor, the “thumb” is consciousness, which stands against the other four.
- As active participants in the process of grasping, they *stimulate* grasping to themselves (*upādāniya*).
- And finally, they are the *product* of grasping in the sense that attachments in past lives have given rise to the aggregates in this life (*upādinna*).

Here is a brief analysis of each of the five.

Form (*rūpa*) “Physical phenomena”, or sometimes simply “body”, understood as consisting of the four primary physical properties: earth (solid), water (liquidity), fire (heat), and air (gas), and anything material derived from these, such as the impressions of the five material senses. *Rūpa* is more extensive in scope than the Western concept of “matter”. It includes material properties that are perceived purely in the mind, such as shape or color seen as visions in meditation.

Feeling (*vedanā*) The pleasant, painful, or neutral tone of experience born from the six senses.

Perception (*saññā*) The recognition or interpretation of experience through the six senses. Perception refers to that function of the mind which organizes the dizzyingly complex and chaotic

input of present experience based on past experience. The eye, for example, does not see “blue” or “yellow”, it only sees light in various frequencies and amplitudes. Perception recognizes that these inputs correspond to the concept “blue” or “yellow” (SN 22.79), and so it enables us to live in a world of (relatively) permanent and predictable entities and ideas. While perception thus makes consciousness possible, it also can trap us into seeing things only in terms of the past. In the legal discussions of the Vinaya, it is common to discuss cases where a mendicant’s actions are based on a perception that turns out to be incorrect.

Choices (*saṅkhārā*) Intention, will, or volition (*cetanā*); the choice to perform an act, especially one with an ethical dimension. It is choices that create the five aggregates (SN 22.79). Later forms of Buddhism, starting with the Abhidhamma texts, treated this aggregate as if it were a catch-all, whose purpose was to include everything not mentioned under the other aggregates. However, this is not the case in the early texts, where there is no indication that *saṅkhārā* in this context means anything other than “volition, choice”.

Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) The subjective process of awareness itself. As in dependent origination, consciousness is said to depend on name & form.

Except perception, all of these are also found in dependent origination, where they have similar definitions. Whereas dependent origination shows the unfolding of the process of suffering in time, the teaching on the aggregates focuses on those aspects of present experience that are most apt to be taken as a self. In SN 22.5 the grasping to the aggregates is shown as the very same grasping that leads to rebirth as shown in dependent origination. SN 22.54 furthers this argument, asserting that it is impossible to speak of rebirth without referring to the aggregates.

From the very first teaching of the Buddha (SN 56.11) we learn that the aggregates are suffering. In the second sermon—the Dis-

course on Not-Self (Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta) at SN 22.59—this brief statement is drawn out in further dialogue with the group of five ascetics. Each of the aggregates leads to affliction and one cannot simply decree that the aggregates be whatever one wants; hence they cannot be a self. Further, each of the aggregates is impermanent and therefore suffering, which again rules out the possibility that they are a self. Seeing in this way, a practitioner lets go of attachment to the aggregates and realizes freedom. It was while listening to this discourse that the five ascetics all became perfected ones.

While the doctrine of the “three marks” is found throughout all Buddhist texts, it is here in the Khandha Saṃyutta that it rises to prominence. Here is a brief outline.

Impermanence (*anicca*) All conditioned phenomena are produced and maintained by causes and hence can only last so long as the causes sustain them. Impermanence is a fractal phenomenon; it is how reality is structured at every level. It applies equally to the grandest scale of universes and the lifespans of the gods as it does to the incessant breaking up and vanishing of conditions from moment to moment. But in the five aggregates, the main focus is on the scale of human existence, where the emotional impact of impermanence is felt most keenly in death.

Suffering (*dukkha*) At its simplest level this refers to painful feelings, whether physical or mental (*dukkha-dukkhatā*). By itself, this is a profound observation, as virtually every moment of our waking lives is afflicted by some form of pain or irritation. But suffering runs deeper than that, for even when we do experience pleasure, it cannot be sustained. The second bite of a mango is delicious—but not quite as delicious as the first (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*). Finally, even the most profound of pleasures, such as the bliss of deep meditation, is never as peaceful as *nibbāna*, since by its nature it is conditioned and unstable (*saṅkhāradukkhata*). No experience is as peaceful as cessation.

Not-self (*anattā*) The most subtle and distinctive of the three marks, not-self is the most apt to be misunderstood. It is primarily an anti-metaphysical doctrine, not a psychological one. It is intended to rule out the various kinds of self or soul proposed by the philosophers at the time of the Buddha. It does this by pointing out that all the self doctrines end up identifying one or other of the aggregates as self; but they do not have the nature that the self is supposed to have. This meaning is quite different from the modern psychological notion of self, and it is inappropriate, and potentially harmful, to apply the teaching of not-self in cases where a person is suffering from a disorder of identity.

Let us dwell a little further on the idea of self and not-self, which is best understood in its historical context. From a few centuries before the Buddha, Indian sages and philosophers had become fascinated by the subjective nature of experience. They wondered who it was, in the true and ultimate sense, that was the one referred to as “I”.

Initial theories built on simple animist notions, imaging the self as an external physical totem, or even as a little man who lived in the chest. Others theorized that the self was the heart, or the breath, or some other physical attribute. But all of these may be refuted by simple empirical observation. Sometimes a totem may be destroyed, yet a person lives. When you watch a person who is asleep, no little man may be observed leaving by the mouth. And when a trumpeter expels all their breath, they do not drop down dead.

So what then is this self if not something material? Perhaps, rather, it is feeling, the bliss experienced by one who goes to a beautiful realm after death. But this cannot be so, for feeling, too, is impermanent (DN 15). Then could the self be perception (DN 1)? But no, perception too is tricky and unreliable, like an illusion. Is self then one's choices? A man, after all, is defined by the decisions he makes. But these too are seen to be impermanent and unreliable; oft-times one makes bad choices, or the results of a choice are not what one hopes.

Unsatisfied, the sages of the Upaniṣads rejected all such limited conceptions of the Self (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.9.26: *neti! neti!*). They arrived at their most profound thesis: the self in its highest sense was awareness itself, the sheer mass of consciousness (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.12: *viññāna-ghanam'eva*). The true nature of the self is the supreme divinity (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.10: *aham brahmāsmi*; cp. DN 1:2, DN 11:81, DN 24:2: *ahamasmi brahmā*). This insight is expressed in the Upaniṣads as the famous “thou art that” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.8.7: *tat tvam asi*), and the Pali texts as “I am that” (SN 22.8: *eso hamasmi*). “That” may be anything one identifies as self. But to one who understands rightly (*ya evaṃ veda*) the divine self is nothing less than the entirety of the universe: “the self is identical with the cosmos” (SN 22.81: *so attā so loko*, cp. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.2.7: *tasyeme lokā ātmānaḥ*, 4.5.7: *idaṃ brahmedaṃ kṣatram ime lokā ime devā ime vedā imāni bhūtānīdaṃ sarvaṃ yad ayam ātmā*). This philosophy is most closely associated with Yajñavalkya, a Brahmanical sage who lived in the same region as the Buddha (Mithilā), perhaps a century or two earlier.

While the exact form of these arguments may seem archaic, we still cling to the aggregates in similar ways. We think of our possessions and belongings—homes, clothes, cars—as expressions of our self, and are upset when they are damaged or criticized. We attach, too, to our physical bodies, reveling in health, or imagining that we will survive through the propagation of our DNA. We attach to pleasure, thinking that happiness will last. We attach to our perceptions, such as our sense of belonging to a nation or religion, or our idea of ourselves as a good person. We attach to our choices, taking pride in our ability to make decisions. Finally, we attach to our consciousness, especially as we purify awareness in meditation.

Thus one of the key functions of the aggregates was to categorize theories of the self, moving from simple to profound. This seems to have been familiar to philosophers before the Buddha. The aggregates are mentioned in passing in the first sermon as if it is taken for granted that the five ascetics would know them. Many of the sec-

tarian views of self in DN 1 Brahmajāla Sutta refer to the aggregates in one way or another. And elsewhere, the non-Buddhist ascetic Saccaka asserted that the five aggregates were the self (MN 35). Nevertheless, the aggregates have not been identified in any pre-Buddhist texts.

Regardless of whether the set of categories was pre-Buddhist, the Buddha treated them in his distinctive way, emphasizing that when examined, the aggregates turn out to lack the qualities of permanence, surety, and refuge that are intrinsic to the idea of a true self. But our grasping and identification are strong and have been built up over a long time, so it is not enough to merely acknowledge this on an intellectual level. Hence in the Khandha Samyutta we find the core teachings emphasized again and again. The Buddha constantly reminds the mendicants that the aggregates lead to sorrow and despair (SN 22.7), that they are aggravating (SN 22.79), that desire for them must be given up (SN 22.137), that they are alien (SN 22.33). One who identifies with the aggregates is like a man who hires an assassin as a servant (SN 22.85). They are suffering in the past and future just as they are today (SN 22.10).

The view that the aggregates are self is called “identity view” (*sakkāyaditṭhi*). It is possible to identify with any or all of the aggregates in a myriad of ways, commonly set out as twenty forms of identity view (SN 22.1, etc.). Identity view leashes an unenlightened person to transmigration like a dog tied to a post, pointlessly running around and around (SN 22.99).

Several discourses emphasize that to understand the aggregates it is essential to develop the deep stillness of immersion meditation (SN 22.5, SN 22.6). But meditative realization is not something that just happens automatically; one must continually contemplate and observe the aggregates (SN 22.40, etc.).

In this collection we find a large number of striking and lively narratives, showing how the aggregates could be a solace at the time of old age (SN 22.1), a guide to the knotty theoretical debates on identity, or a framework for insight meditation.

The Book of the Six Sense Fields

The “Book of the Six Sense Fields” is the fourth of the five books of the Linked Discourses. It is named after the first and longest *samyutta*. The second *samyutta* on Feelings also deals with a major doctrinal topic, one that is closely related to the main theme. The remaining eight *samyuttas* deal with secondary themes organized by subject or by person.

The number of discourses in the “Linked Discourses on the Six Sense Fields” varies between editions, mainly due to the way repetitions are counted; SuttaCentral follows Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation in counting 248 discourses; see his introduction to this chapter for a discussion of the problems in counting the Suttas of this collection. They are collected in four *paññasakas*.

This *samyutta* has an especially close relationship with the “Linked Discourses on the Aggregates”, one that goes far beyond the apparent thematic similarities. Many of the discourses in the two collections are constructed on virtually identical lines. Bhikkhu Bodhi explores these connections with his notion of “template parallels”, which are found throughout the *Samyutta Nikāya*, but especially with these two sections.

The six sense fields complement the five aggregates as the summary of the noble truth of suffering. Where the aggregates focus on the functional structure of experience as a basis for views of self, the emphasis here is on how sense experience stimulates desire.

The six sense fields are the means through which the world is known, and so each of them has two aspects. The “inner” aspect is the sense organs, for example the “eye” or the “ear”, which make it possible for an organism to experience the outside world by receiving sense stimuli. These are paired with the external sensory stimuli, such as “sights” or “sounds”, which impact the sense organ (contact, *phassa*) and give rise to the appropriate form of consciousness.

It’s best to avoid thinking of the external sense fields as “objects”, since in the suttas they are depicted in relation to the observing

mind, and not as independently existing entities. There is no word for “object” in this sense in the early texts: existence is not objective, it is relational. The term *ārammaṇa*, which came to be used in this sense much later in the Abhidhamma, means “support” in the suttas.

The operation of the senses is relatively straightforward until we come to the last sense, the “mind” and “thoughts” or “mental phenomena”. To clear up possible confusion, this “sixth sense” is simply the mental faculty and has nothing to do with psychic powers. And unlike the five external senses, the “inner” sense field is not a physical organ: *mano* does not mean “brain”.

The exact meaning of “mind” (*mano*) in this context is not spelled out, so let us consider this first. The suttas use three main terms for the mind: *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa*. In general, these are synonyms and it is not possible to draw hard and fast distinctions between them (AN 3.60, DN 1:2, SN 12.61). Nevertheless, they tend to be used in different contexts, each with a distinct nuance. These contexts can be understood in terms of the four noble truths; thus the different terms refer to the same thing but imply a different aspect or response to that thing.

Viññāṇa In doctrinal contexts this is awareness itself, the sheer knowing of things. It appears in this sense in dependent origination, the aggregates, and the sense fields. Hence it pertains to the first noble truth, the suffering of the world, and it needs to be fully understood. In colloquial usage, however, it can take on a variety of shades of meaning, such as “understanding”.

Mano The mind in action, one of the three spheres of *kamma*, a sense it inherits from the Upaniṣads. It is that which creates results, as in the famous first line of the Dhammapada: *mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā*, “mind is the forerunner of all things”. It is particularly used in ethical contexts, the performance of mental acts that bear fruit of either good or bad. So it may be understood as primarily relating to the second and third noble truths, the origination and ending of suffering.

Citta The most general, and the least tightly bound to a particular technical sense. It is used widely as “mind”, “thought”, “heart”, etc. But when found in technical contexts it refers to *samādhi*, to the purified awareness of deep meditative immersion. For this reason, it is specially used in contexts relating to the path, the fourth noble truth.

In the six senses, *mano* is clearly not identical with the “knowing” (*viññāṇa*), as it gives rise to it. Nor is it the “known”, the phenomena of which the mind is aware, for that is *dhammā*. Nor is it the turning towards or paying attention to the thing known, as is revealed in MN 28 *The Longer Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint* (*Mahāhatthipadopamasutta*):

Though the mind is intact internally, so long as exterior thoughts don’t come into range and there’s no corresponding attention, there’s no manifestation of the corresponding type of consciousness.

This passage suggests that, like the physical sense organs, *mano* in some way pre-exists the actual moment of conscious awareness. This does not mean that it is some mystical substrata of consciousness, for as we have seen *mano* is consistently used in the sense of the mind that performs acts, especially those with a moral dimension. So the *mano* is that which has performed deeds in the past, fueling an ongoing mental continuum within which the results of those deeds may be experienced in the present. It is the mental faculty that bears the potential for conscious experience, created and conditioned by choices made in the past.

The “outer” aspect of the sixth sense is *dhammā*, a term so ambiguous its translation is always difficult. Here it refers to anything that may be known directly by the mind, distinct from the five physical senses. The most technically correct translation is probably “mental phenomena”. However, this is clumsy and opaque, so “thought” may be used as a more colloquial rendering, so long as it is understood to include ideas, imagination, and so on, not just verbalized cognition.

The term *āyatana* refers to something “stretched out”, a domain, field, or dimension of activity. However, the Visuddhimagga suggests that the sense of the word is primarily a “cause”, or perhaps “stimulus”:

... base (*āyatana*) should be understood as such (a) because of its actuating (*āyatana*), (b) because of being the range (*tanana*) of the origins (*āya*), and (c) because of leading on (*nayana*) what is actuated (*āyata*). *Path of Purification*, XV.4, translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoḷi.

Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoḷi rendered the term accordingly as “base”, which has been followed by Bhikkhu Bodhi. But this commentarial explanation is merely a series of false etymologies, or rather, puns. The point of such explanations is to provide material for teachers to reflect on and use in teaching, and they shouldn’t be taken uncritically. In fact the verbal root is not the obscure *āyatati* (“to actuate”) but *āyamati*, “to stretch, to extend”. *Āyatana* is commonly used in this sense and may be translated as “field”, “dimension”, etc.

As so often, the context draws upon and redefines Brahmanical terminology. The “six sense fields” (*saḷāyatana*) were first mentioned in the Buddha’s third teaching, the famous Fire Discourse (*Ādittapariyāya Sutta*) which appears in this collection at SN 35.28. This sermon was given to a large assembly of Brahmanical ascetics, following a period when the Buddha stayed in their “firehouse”, a kind of shrine room for worshipping the sacred flame. And in Sanskrit, this place is called an *āyatana*. The Upaniṣads also call the senses *āyatana* in the sense of fields or scopes of activity and experience (eg. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.1.4: *caḥsur evāyatanam*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.1.5: *mano vā āyatanam*; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.1.5: *mano ha vā āyatanam*).

When the Buddha told those ascetics that “all is burning”, he was not giving an Abhidhamma analysis, for it was many centuries before Abhidhamma was developed. He was speaking in terms that the brahmins could understand.

One of the key projects of the Brahmanical Upaniṣads was to reinterpret the deities of the Vedas. Rather than thinking of them as entities who lived in the sky, they became forces or essences that imbued all of reality. So for the brahmin ascetics, the flame (*agni*) was worshiped as the embodiment of a sacred energy that was immanent in all things.

The teachings of the Fire Sermon respond to several key Upaniṣadic passages. In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.3, it is told how evil entered into the world by the actions of the demons (*asuras*). While the gods (*devas*) were performing the ritual, they entered into the various senses and corrupted them, tainting them with evil and death. Hence when suffering is experienced through the senses, this is the reason. But those same senses can be freed from this corruption by being carried beyond death.

These purified, divine senses are further described at Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.5.1, the famous “Honey-Knowledge”, regarded as one of the highest and most secret teachings. It presents a template, applied to various kinds of things. These are not organized as rationally as the Buddhist doctrines but include quite different kinds of things in the same set, such as the elements, truth, the sun, etc. Nevertheless, the parallels with the teachings of the six senses are quite apparent.

ayam ādityaḥ sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ madhu

This sun is the honey of all beings.

asyādityasya sarvāṇi bhūtāni madhu

All beings are the honey of the sun.

yaś cāyam asminn āditye tejomayo 'mṛtamayaḥ puruṣo

yaś cāyam adhyātmaṃ cākṣuṣas tejomayo 'mṛta-

mayāḥ puruṣo 'yam eva sa yo 'yam ātmā

This person in the sun made of fire and immortality,
and this person in the internal eye made of fire
and immortality: this is that—that which is
the self.

idaṃ amṛtaṃ idaṃ brahmedaṃ sarvaṃ

This is the immortal, this is the divine, this is the all.

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.5.5, translation by myself.)

The Brahmanical view is that all creation stems from Brahmā and hence is, in its truest essence, overflowing with divinity and bliss—honey. Any suffering is merely a temporary imperfection.

This is how they handled the great challenge to any theistic system, the problem of evil. For the brahmins, to focus on suffering is to miss the point. This is not merely a facile “positive thinking” doctrine, it is a profoundly contemplative philosophy, worked out in great detail across many complex sacred texts, and informed by deep meditative practice. It does not deny the reality of suffering, but it evokes a deeper reality that suffering cannot reach.

Rather than tackling the textual and philosophical issues, the Buddha preferred to point directly at experience. Divested of theology, the experience of our senses is not “honey” but “fire”. And while our philosophy may say that fire is sacred, the reality is that it burns. The Buddha was showing the ascetics that there is no need to invoke deities and metaphysics to understand their experience: they could see how it worked right here.

The forces lighting that fire can be readily discerned: greed, hate, and delusion. This classic Buddhist presentation of the fundamental defilements appears first in this passage. It is correlated with the three feelings: pleasant feeling stimulates desire; painful feeling provokes hate; and neutral feeling slips into delusion (MN 44:25, MN 128:28, SN 36.3).

The Fire Sermon, in its brevity, foreshadows several distinctive features of the teachings on the six senses as compared to the five aggregates. It is direct, emotional, and powerful, speaking of the world that is burning, in contrast with the more intellectual approach of the aggregates.

By invoking the idea of the “all”, the Fire Sermon suggests that the scope of the six senses includes all that is experienced and known. This idea was expanded in multiple Suttas (SN 35.33–52). By contrast, no such claim to completeness is made of the aggregates. And the text treats sense experience as a conditioned process, the immediately visible dimension of dependent origination.

Since the sense fields make experience possible, it is through them that suffering comes to be (SN 35.106). It is in order to understand this suffering that one undertakes the spiritual path (SN 35.81, SN 35.152). The sense fields are, in fact, the world (*loka*) that wears away (*lujjati*; SN 35.82, SN 35.84), for “whatever in the world through which you perceive the world and conceive the world is called the world in the training of the noble one” (SN 35.116). This world is empty of self (SN 35.85).

Since the sense fields are produced by choices made in past lives, they are said to be “old kamma”; in this, they contrast with the aggregates, for they include “choices”, which are the kamma made in the present. Having inherited the senses as the result of past deeds, however, we proceed to respond to them through thinking or conceiving of them in terms of a “self”, a process known in Pali as “identifying” (*maññita*; SN 35.146, SN 35.30–32, SN 35.90–91, SN 35.248).

“Conceiving” and the closely related “conceit” (*māna*) refer to the tendency of the mind to shape experience in terms of the self. Much of our thought is devoted to justifying, explaining, and interpreting our experience in ways that reinforce our notion of self. This can end up spinning out of control, in which case it is called “proliferation” (*papañca*). To cut through this process the Buddha urges us to stop short with sense experience (SN 35.94, SN 35.95).

It is significant that, while the texts repeatedly speak of how the aggregates form the basis for theories of self (*sakkāya*), the same is *not* said of the sense fields. If the aggregates provoke grasping to theories, the sense fields provoke grasping at *pleasure*, at the sheer vitality of sensory experience. Thus while the teachings on the aggregates emphasize *views*, here the focus shifts to *restraint*. A standard passage

on sense restraint, familiar from the Gradual Training, speaks of preventing harmful qualities from invading the mind amid sense experience (SN 35.120, SN 35.127, SN 35.239, SN 35.240). A person who chases the pleasure afforded by the senses is no less trapped by the pain they bring, and it is only by setting up mindfulness that one can achieve peace (SN 35.132, SN 35.243–244, SN 35.247).

In this way, by choosing the sense fields as a locus of practice one cuts directly at the roots of craving. This is emphasized in the final two *vaggas*, which are especially rich in unforgettable imagery. The senses are an ocean traversed during the spiritual journey (SN 35.228). We'd be better off being tortured by hot pokers than being caught up in sense experience (SN 35.235). If you wish to train in meditation, you must learn to withdraw the senses like a tortoise drawing in its limbs, becoming safe from predators (SN 35.240). Pleasant experiences are the bait of Māra (SN 35.230). The six senses are like six very different animals, all tied together, and fighting to get to their territory (SN 35.247).

The Great Book

The “Great Book” is the last and largest of the five books of the Linked Discourses. It consists of twelve *samyuttas*, almost all of which deal with an aspect of Buddhist practice, or the path. The first of these, indeed, is the “Section on the Path” (*Magga Samyutta*), and in the northern canons the book as a whole is referred to as the “Book of the Path” (*Maggavagga*).

The first seven *samyuttas* offer a detailed treatment of seven sets of factors on Buddhist practice. These sets came to be known to the later traditions as the 37 *bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*, or “qualities leading to awakening”. Note that this term is not used in this way in the suttas; it is, rather, applied to one of the sets, the five faculties (SN 48.55, etc.). While the 37 factors are mentioned throughout the canon, it is in this book that we find the primary source for these teachings. Subsequent *samyuttas* deal with the path from different

perspectives, while the final two deal with stream-entry and the four noble truths respectively.

While most books of the Sāmyutta are dominated by one major collection, the Great Book features several *sāmyuttas* of comparable importance. For this reason, I will briefly discuss most of the substantive *sāmyuttas*. I leave aside those that are merely sets of template repetitions, and also the final two *sāmyuttas* on stream entry and the truths, as I have covered these topics elsewhere. I preface the discussion of the individual *sāmyuttas* with a general discussion of the “qualities leading to awakening”.

The *sāmyuttas* in the Great Book display considerable complexity in their structure and use of repetitions. But for fear of overburdening the discussion, I refer anyone interested to the relevant sections of Ven Bodhi’s *Connected Discourses*.

The 37 Qualities Leading to Awakening

For the early Buddhist texts, the primary concern was the spiritual practice that leads to the escape from suffering. This is the fourth noble truth. From the very first discourse, this was spelled out by a specific set of factors comprising the path to awakening: the noble eightfold path. During his long teaching career, the Buddha presented this path in many different ways, formally or informally, briefly or in detail, emphasizing different aspects to suit the occasion or the person.

Before his death, it seems, the Buddha had begun to systematize these various presentations, putting together seven sets of qualities pertaining to the path, totaling 37 factors. Each set presented the path to liberation from a slightly different perspective.

The seven primary *sāmyuttas* of the Mahāvagga contain the same teachings, albeit in a different sequence. The Mahāvagga begins with the noble eightfold path, due to its prestige and importance as *the* teaching on the path. But when presented elsewhere in the suttas we find the sets arranged numerically.

- Four kinds of mindfulness meditation. The observation of:
 1. body
 2. feelings
 3. mind
 4. principles
- Four right efforts:
 1. to prevent the bad
 2. to give up the bad
 3. to give rise to the good
 4. to maintain and grow the good
- Four bases of psychic power:
 1. enthusiasm
 2. energy
 3. mind
 4. inquiry
- Five faculties:
 1. faith
 2. energy
 3. mindfulness
 4. immersion
 5. wisdom
- Five powers:
 1. faith
 2. energy
 3. mindfulness
 4. immersion
 5. wisdom
- Seven factors of awakening:
 1. mindfulness
 2. investigation of principles

3. energy
 4. rapture
 5. tranquility
 6. immersion
 7. equanimity
- Noble eightfold path:
 1. right view
 2. right thought
 3. right speech
 4. right action
 5. right livelihood
 6. right effort
 7. right mindfulness
 8. right immersion

A cursory glance at the Pali texts shows how influential and widespread this set of 37 qualities was. It appears in each of the four *nikāyas* (DN 28, DN 29, DN 16, MN 103, MN 104, SN 22.81, SN 22.101, SN 43.12, AN 8.19) as well as the *Udāna* (Ud 5.5). It is one of the few doctrinal teachings to be mentioned several times in the *Vinaya* (Pj 4, Pc 8, Kd 19). It occurs constantly in the late canonical texts of the *Khuddaka* (Ne 8, Cnd 12, Cnd 15, Cnd 20, Cnd 22, Mnd 6, Mnd 7, Mnd 14, Mnd 16, Ps 1.5, Ps 2.8, Ps 2.9, Mil 3.1.13, Mil 6.4.1, Mil 6.4.2, etc.) as well as the *Abhidhamma* (Vb 17, Dt 1.2, Dt 2.1, Dt 2.6, Kv 4.3, Kv 12.5, Kv 14.9, Kv 15.6, Kv 21.1, Kv 21.5, etc.).

But its influence was not to stop there, for it remained a central doctrinal principle in later forms of Buddhism. In the *Mahāyāna*, for example, the same 37 qualities came to be known as the “37 practices of the *Bodhisattva*”.

The Buddha declared that these teachings emerged from his direct knowledge. They are factors of practice, to be developed and experienced by those on the spiritual journey. However, from their

earliest appearances, they were also treated as teachings to be learned, memorized, and recited. From DN 29:

You should all come together and recite in concert, without disputing, those things I have taught you from my direct knowledge, comparing meaning with meaning and phrasing with phrasing, so that this spiritual path may last for a long time.

Such passages place the 37 factors at the heart of the Buddha's scriptural legacy. But what, exactly, was to be recited? Surely such momentous teaching must have entailed something more than simply listing the factors. There must have been an agreed-upon body of texts, a canon of scripture recited in unity by the early community. And what could that have been if not these very teachings, the collected discourses on the factors of the path found today in the Mahāvagga? This is not to deny that expansion and elaboration of these have occurred, but the core teachings of the Mahāvagga were, in all probability, the heart of the scriptures for the earliest Buddhists.

Certain of the sets focus on a specific area, such as mindfulness or effort, while others have a more overall view, such as the noble eightfold path. Nevertheless, they are deeply interconnected, with the same factors recurring in multiple sets. Overall, they strongly emphasize meditation, although other dimensions of spiritual practice, such as ethics and study, are also found. Here is a brief overview of the general distinctions in perspective between the groups. Note that the first three sets loosely correspond to the final three factors of the noble eightfold path: right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.

Four kinds of mindfulness meditation The practice of undertaking meditation leading to serenity and insight.

Four right efforts The putting forth of effort in mental cultivation.

Four bases of psychic power Development of deep immersion leading to various extraordinary abilities.

Five faculties The mental qualities that lead to liberation, and which characterize the mind of one on the path.

Five powers The same as the faculties.

Seven factors of awakening Retention and investigation of teachings lead to the progressive deepening of the emotional qualities that ripen in liberation.

Noble eightfold path The broadest in scope of the sets and the only one to explicitly mention ethics.

As is common in the suttas, these sets sometimes refer to similar qualities with different terms. The quality of wisdom, for example, is called “observation of principles” (*dharmānupassanā*) as the fourth kind of mindfulness meditation, “inquiry” (*vīmaṃsa*) in the bases for psychic power, “wisdom” (*paññā*) in the faculties and powers, “investigation of principles” (*dharmavicaya*) in the factors of awakening, and “right view” (*sammādiṭṭhi*) in the noble eightfold path. The relations between all these terms are analyzed in detail in the Abhidhamma and commentarial texts.

Bear in mind, though, that each context has its own integrity, its specific purpose and orientation, and the choice of different terms is by no means arbitrary. “Right view”, being placed at the *start* of the path, emphasizes the theoretical understanding gained by hearing the teaching. “Investigation of principles”, similarly located near the beginning, refers to the reflection and inquiry into these teachings as realized in oneself. “Observation of principles” and “inquiry” occur after the development of deep stillness in absorption meditation and refer to the inquiry and investigation into the nature of that experience, and the meditative processes and conditions that shape such profound experiences. And “wisdom”, the culmination of all these, is the realization of the four noble truths, the liberating insight of the stream-enterer. So when considered on their own, as distinct mental factors, they can be regarded as synonyms. But their true depth is realized only by understanding the role they play in their context.

When surveying these teachings and reflecting on them as a spiritual path, there is something rather odd about them. They appear

quite different from the practices that one normally considers to be “religious”. Where are the rituals? The sacrifice? The devotion to deity? The allegiance to an institution? The symbols, rites, and mythology? These things are starkly, dramatically absent. To be sure, some such things may be found, in one form or another, elsewhere in the canon, and more so in later Buddhist traditions. But here, in the teachings regarded by the Buddha himself as his core message and practice, we find only balanced and reasoned development of behavior, emotions, and intellect. It is an integrated and rational path, one that does not depend on cultural or historical specifics, but on universal human qualities. The factors that lead to awakening, all 37 of them, are things that every human may find within themselves. In pointing to these qualities, the Buddha was pointing to the spiritual potential of all beings and offering us the means to grow and develop the best parts of ourselves.

SN 45: Linked Discourses on the Path

The noble eightfold path was famously declared to be the “middle way” in the Buddha’s very first teaching (SN 56.11). It covers the entire spiritual path (SN 45.6, SN 45.19, SN 45.20), beginning with the acquisition of right view as the starting point (SN 45.1), and leading to deep meditative immersion as the immediate precursor to the realization of the four noble truths.

The noble eightfold path is said to be a “divine vehicle” which carries us to awakening, its factors compared to the parts of a chariot (SN 45.4). Practicing it leads to the end of suffering (SN 45.5), but only if it begins with right view, else it will lead to harming oneself (SN 45.9).

The factors are defined at SN 45.8, as well as several other places in the canon.

Right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) Understanding the four noble truths.

Right thought (*sammāsaṅkappa*) Thoughts of letting go, love, and kindness.

Right speech (*sammāvācā*) Speech that is true, harmonious, gentle, and meaningful.

Right action (*sammākammanta*) Avoiding killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

Right livelihood (*sammāājīva*) Avoiding harmful livelihood.

Right effort (*sammāvāyāma*) The four right efforts.

Right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) The four kinds of mindfulness meditation.

Right immersion (*sammāsamādhi*) The four absorptions.

The eight factors have a clear progressive aspect, as made clear from the beginning of this collection (SN 45.1). They follow the same general course that is spelled out in the Gradual Training, though with less emphasis on the monastic life, as both renunciates and lay folk should practice them (SN 45.24). One hears the teaching and gains an initial understanding (right view). Then one determines to live following this (right thought), undertaking the essentials of ethical conduct in speech (right speech) and body (right action), and ensuring that one does not earn money in a manner that causes harm (right livelihood). With this foundation one makes an effort to purify the mind (right effort), undertaking meditation (right mindfulness) leading to deep absorption (right immersion) (SN 45.28).

When all these factors have been fulfilled, the mind is ready to make the breakthrough to the realization of the four noble truths. In this way the understanding of four noble truths, beginning as a concept accepted on faith, gradually deepens throughout the spiritual journey, nourished by experience and reflection. Right view guides us on each step of the path, learning from mistakes, revealing our hidden motivations, and uncovering unexpected possibilities. Ultimately it transforms into the liberating insight of the noble ones (SN 45.13, SN 45.35, etc.). The key to this transformation is the brilliant clarity and stillness of meditative absorption, a higher consciousness that sees further and deeper than ever before, and which

has the power to completely eradicate greed, hate, and delusion (SN 45.36, etc.).

Nevertheless, despite this progression, it is not the case that the factors are to be undertaken in a literal one-at-a-time fashion. The “path” is only a metaphor, and in real life, spiritual development is more complex.

The factors of the path are best seen as providing a framework for reflecting on and if necessary changing one’s own life and practice. Each of these factors is essential, and if you find yourself missing out on higher factors, try asking whether you’ve put enough work into the basics. Sometimes people seem enthusiastic to get to the higher states of consciousness, without laying the broad and secure foundations offered by the simpler factors of the path. If developing deep meditation is proving difficult, then the answer is not to try to force it to ripen quicker, nor, worse, to explain it away as being somehow unnecessary. Rather, pay closer attention to improving right view through study and discussion of Dhamma; to developing right thought by becoming more generous and open-hearted; or to being more careful in one’s ethical and business conduct (SN 45.50–54).

And remember, this path is not walked alone. For all the emphasis on solitary meditation, this *samyutta* reminds us that good friendship is the whole of the spiritual life (SN 45.2, SN 45.3), for good friendship precedes the noble eightfold path (SN 45.49).

SN 46: Linked Discourses on the Awakening Factors

These seven factors are called the “awakening factors” (*bojjaṅga*, i.e. *bodhi* + *aṅga*) because they lead to awakening (SN 46.5, SN 46.21). Of themselves, they focus on the psychology of contemplation, but the *samyutta* makes it clear from the start that, like all presentations of the path, they rest on ethics (SN 46.1).

Unlike the factors of the path, there is no explicit definition. Nevertheless, we should of course interpret these factors in the same

way as they occur in the eightfold path and elsewhere. However, there are some new factors, as well as a few places that offer a new perspective on some familiar factors. Most of the following details come from SN 46.52.

Mindfulness (*sati*) Includes both the recollection of teachings (SN 46.3) as well as mindful awareness of phenomena internal and external.

Investigation of principles (*dhammavicaya*) Includes both reflection and investigation of the teachings (SN 46.3) as well as investigation into phenomena internal and external.

Energy (*virīya*) Both mental and physical.

Rapture (*pīti*) This is the experience of uplifting joy that emerges as the mind becomes peaceful in meditation. It includes the rapture of the first and second absorptions.

Tranquility (*passadhi*) Both physical and mental

Immersion (*samādhī*) The absorptions.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) This may be both the equanimity of the higher states of immersion as well as that of deep insight.

One detail of the preceding probably needs further explanation; that is, the idea that mindfulness includes recollection of the teachings. Mindfulness is defined throughout the suttas as the ability to recollect things that were said and done long ago (DN 33, DN 34, MN 53, SN 48.9, SN 48.50, AN 4.35, AN 8.13, AN 10.17, etc.). The root meaning of the word *sati* is in fact “memory” and in the Brahmanical traditions it refers to the memorized scriptures. But of course today we understand mindfulness as “clear awareness” of phenomena in the present.

This *samyutta* offers a clue that helps resolve these two senses. In SN 46.56, a brahmin asks the Buddha why he can sometimes remember his chanting and sometimes cannot. The Buddha explains that the presence of the hindrances obscures his memory, giving an elaborate series of similes comparing water in various states with the various hindrances. How, we might wonder, does a reciter of oral

texts achieve this? *By maintaining continued and clear focus during the act of recitation.* When the mind wanders and gets distracted, the recitation is lost. *Sati* does not mean the unstructured memories that happen to come to mind, but the steady flow and continuity of consciously focused awareness. And in this way, the act of recollecting scriptures suddenly seems a lot like keeping attention on one's meditation.

The factors are sequential, with each serving as condition or fuel for the next (SN 46.3). Multiple suttas stress this aspect of conditionality. Each of the awakening factors is nourished by a specific kind of fuel (SN 46.51). The set as a whole emerges from the practice of the four kinds of mindfulness meditation and the series of practices that underlie them (SN 45.6). They affect and condition the mind in distinct ways; thus when the mind is tired, it's best to develop investigation, energy, and rapture, but when restless, develop tranquility, immersion, and equanimity. But mindfulness is always useful (SN 46.53). And the factors themselves are the condition for awakening (SN 46.56).

Nevertheless, even the perfected ones continue to practice them, donning any one of them whenever they wish, like a garment (SN 46.4). Such a one has "acquired the path" and understands the true power of the awakening factors to lead to the end of rebirth (SN 46.30).

The *samyutta* repeatedly opposes the awakening factors with their dark counterparts, the five hindrances of sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. These are compared to corruptions in gold (SN 46.33) or to parasites (SN 46.39).

A unique aspect of the awakening factors is that their recitation is said to be effective in helping cure disease. Several suttas speak of how a sick monk—and even the Buddha himself—becomes inspired by hearing them recited and rises cured (SN 46.14–16). Understandably, this has ensured that reciting passages on the awakening factors for sick people remains popular in Theravadin culture. If such recita-

tion seems less effective today than in the suttas, it should be borne in mind that these are cases of advanced and experienced meditators, perfected ones indeed, who had already developed these factors to completion. Their inspiration is on a different level than that of an ordinary person. And even so, there is no guarantee: there are plenty of cases in the early texts where perfected ones fall ill with no cure.

Most of the awakening factors refer to the emotional aspects of the spiritual path, the joy and peace of meditation. This is further emphasized in SN 46.54, which connects the awakening factors with the four immeasurables or divine meditations—love, compassion, rejoicing, and equanimity. The Buddhist mendicants are challenged by followers of other paths, who say that they too teach the development of these things. The Buddha points out, however, that he describes *how* to develop these things to their fullest potential. And to do this the immeasurables are empowered by the awakening factors.

SN 47: Linked Discourses on Mindfulness Meditation

The Pali term *satipaṭṭhāna* means the “establishing of mindfulness”. I usually render it more colloquially as simply “mindfulness meditation”. While elsewhere *sati* is defined as “memory”, here it is described as *anupassanā*, “sustained observation”. It refers to the meditative practice of setting up and maintaining continued and unbroken awareness in four distinct arenas:

Body (*kāya*) Any aspect of the physical, including the breath, the postures, parts of the body, and so on.

Feelings (*vedanā*) Different kinds of feeling, whether painful, pleasurable, or neutral, spiritual or carnal.

Mind (*citta*) States of awareness, whether under the influence of greed, hate, and delusion, or free of such.

Principles (*dhammā*) Understanding the causal relations that lead to suffering or to peace, especially by reflecting on the process of meditation itself.

Each of these can include a diverse range of experience. But in meditation, it is important to keep focus. The standard formula phrases this through the use of the reflexive idiom *kāye kāyānupassī*. Here the locative case is used quite literally to mean “one of the bodies in the body”, or as we would say in English, a particular aspect of the body. Thus the meditator does not continually shift attention to whatever comes into mind but maintains a steady, continuous awareness of a specific aspect of physical experience.

This is a progressive practice. The nature of this progress becomes more clear when it is recognized that mindfulness of breathing is a form of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice.

1. Meditation begins with attention to the relatively coarse phenomena of the physical breath until it becomes calm and still.
2. A subtle sense of joy and bliss pervades the breath and the body.
3. The mind becomes free, immersed in the singular experience of the bliss of release.
4. One contemplates the changing process of meditation that has led to this point. The mind, empowered by immersion, lets go.

But *satipaṭṭhāna* is broader than I have indicated here, for it includes not only the positive experiences that evolve during meditation but also the negative ones: the pain, the constricted mind, the hindrances. By encompassing the full range of experience, *satipaṭṭhāna* promotes a broad, inclusive approach to meditation, one based on awareness rather than control, laying the groundwork for the flowering of wisdom.

This *saṃyutta* presents a series of insightful and often delightful suttas on *satipaṭṭhāna*, but it does not define the scope of the meditation. The definitions above are derived from the longer discourses today found at MN 10 and DN 22. However, these have undergone considerable late development as compared with the short discourses of the *saṃyutta*, and one cannot simply assume that everything in MN 10 and DN 22 applies in the *saṃyutta*.

The Pali compound *satipaṭṭhāna* resolves to *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna*. This phrase is familiar from the Gradual Training, where it refers to the moment when a practitioner sits down in seclusion and begins meditation by “establishing mindfulness” (*satim upaṭṭhapetvā*). It thus refers primarily to the formal practice of meditation.

Today it is common to speak of “mindfulness in daily life”, but in the suttas, this is called *sampajañña*, which I translate as “situational awareness”. This is one of the series of practices in the Gradual Training that lays the groundwork for formal meditation. SN 47.2 makes plain the distinction between these two by treating them as two qualities the mendicant should develop. This is not to say, of course, that they are completely separate, for nothing in spiritual and mental development happens in isolation. *Sampajañña* is not limited to “mindfulness in daily life”, but plays a role in absorptions and insight as well (see SN 47.35). But it is to say that these two practices are primarily distinct, with situational awareness helping to prepare the mind for mindfulness meditation.

The standard formula describes the mindful meditator with four terms. These refer back to the fundamental helper practices of the Gradual Training, reminding us that *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation does not happen in isolation:

Keen (*ātāpī*) possessing persistent and unflagging energy.

Aware (*sampajāno*) possessing situational awareness.

Mindful (*satimā*) possessing mindfulness.

Rid of desire and aversion for the world (*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ*) having eliminated the overt forms of desire and aversion through the practice of sense restraint. The phrase *abhijjhādomanassa* is elsewhere used only in the context of sense restraint (DN 10, MN 33, SN 35.120, AN 4.14, etc.).

In the eightfold path, the awakening factors, the faculties, and the powers, mindfulness meditation is one of the key factors leading to deep meditative stillness and immersion. It is defined elsewhere as “the basis for immersion in *samādhi*” (MN 44: *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*

samādhinimittā). With the charming parable of a cook, SN 47.8 shows how a skillful mindfulness meditator, by understanding the characteristics of their mind, enters immersion and abandons defilements, while a poor meditator fails. In SN 47.4 the Buddha urges all meditators, whether beginners or advanced, to practice mindfulness to the level of full immersion (*ekodibhūtā vippasannacittā samāhitā ekaggacittā*; “at one, with minds that are clear, immersed in *samādhi*, and unified”).

The centrality of meditative immersion is reinforced by the saying that *satipaṭṭhāna* is the “path to convergence” (*ekāyano maggo*). This saying is famous from MN 10 but sourced from the Saṃyutta, where the saying is placed in the mouth of Brahmā (SN 47.1, SN 47.18, SN 47.43). It is a term from the Upaniṣads, which in contemplative contexts means “the place where all things come together as one” (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4:11).

The meditative absorptions (*jhānas*) are explicitly brought into *satipaṭṭhāna* in the extended and late passage on the four noble truths in DN 22. However they are implicit in many places, including the observation of feelings under the notions of “spiritual rapture” and “spiritual bliss”, which are defined in terms of the absorptions (SN 36.31); as well as in the observation of mind under the mind that is “expansive”, “unexcelled”, “immersed”, “freed”, all of which are terms for deep states of absorption; or the discussion at MN 125.

This is not to say that insight (or discernment, *vipassanā*) has no place in *satipaṭṭhāna*. On the contrary, the fourth of the *satipaṭṭhānas*, the observation of principles, is primarily concerned with the insight that follows from meditative immersion. Here, as described in MN 10, one does not merely observe the presence and absence of various factors, one understands the reason why they appear and disappear. And understanding causality is the heart of insight. This is reinforced in the teaching on mindfulness of breathing, which introduces the contemplation of impermanence at this point.

Two suttas bring the *vipassanā* aspect to the fore. In SN 47.40, the Buddha first teaches the standard *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, then

introduces the “development” of *satipaṭṭhāna*. In the suttas, “development” means the enhancement and expansion of what is already there. (*Bhāvanā* is derived from the causative form of the word “to be”, i.e. “to make be more”.) This further development involves contemplating all four of the *satipaṭṭhānas* in terms of origin and cessation. The exact meaning of this is spelled out in SN 47.42, which gives the origin of each of the four.

A distinctive feature of this collection is the number of charming parables, which are as memorable as they are amusing. In addition to the story of the cook which we mentioned above (SN 47.8), we hear how a quail learned to escape a hawk (SN 47.6), how a foolish monkey got trapped in tar (SN 47.7), and how two acrobats support each other (SN 47.19). Another discourse sets a seemingly impossible challenge for mindfulness practice: to walk, carrying a bowl of oil filled to the brim, between a popular performer and the crowd jostling to see her, while a man with a drawn sword waits to chop off your head if you spill a drop (SN 47.20)!

SN 48: Linked Discourses on the Faculties

The word *indriya* has a rather interesting history. It occurs 39 times in the Rg Veda in the general sense of “the power of Indra”, the great warrior-god and dragon-slayer known in Pali as Sakka. But the nature of this power is perhaps not what one might imagine, for more than two-thirds of these cases connect *indriya* with *soma*.

Now, *soma* was of course a drug, probably a preparation from the amphetamine-like stimulant ephedra. It was drunk by the ancient Indo-Europeans to imbue warriors with berserk energy on the battlefield. As well as taming the horse and inventing the fast two-wheeled chariot, drug-enhanced combat was one of the key innovations underlying the military success of the Indo-Europeans.

In the Vedic culture this was ritualized as religious practice: Indra himself drinks *soma* to magnify his potency. He becomes unstoppable and crushes all his enemies before him. His devotees follow his

example, manifesting the power of the god within themselves. The drug-induced high gave them the might of the gods. But the crucial point is that the power is not borrowed from Indra; rather, both god and devotee draw power from the same source. It was inside them all along, it just needed the *soma* to bring it out.

By the time of the Buddha, the Vedic age was long-gone and the *soma* was largely forgotten. Later commentators, unfamiliar with its Vedic roots, defined *indriya* as “rulership”, and the various *indriyas* in Buddhism as the governing faculties that exercise control over their domains. But the use in the suttas shows that the meaning lies closer to the Vedic sense of “potency”. The *indriyas* are innate potentials that can be manifested in the right conditions.

This is why, after the Buddha’s awakening, he surveyed the world and assessed the *indriyas* of the many different beings in it. He saw the spiritual potential latent within each person to different degrees, and realized that this hidden potential could be drawn out with the right teaching and encouragement (SN 6.1).

To formulate a teaching on the *indriyas*, the Buddha drew upon a set of five qualities he had developed under his former teachers Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta (MN 26:17, etc.). That these are a set of teachings in the Brahmanical tradition is confirmed by their mention in the Yogasūtra (1.20). He called this set the five *indriyas*.

The same qualities were also known as the *balas* or “powers”. At SN 48.43 the Buddha discusses the relation between these two sets, saying they are like a river that flows around an island. They are part of the same stream and go to the same place, but from a certain perspective, they can be distinguished. The term *bala*, like *indriya*, is Vedic, with the same basic sense of potency or strength, and occurs in contexts featuring Indra and his *soma*. The *balas* have only some repetition templates in the *samyutta*, and are defined in the Aṅguttara (AN 5.14).

The *indriyas* (together with the *balas*) came to be included in the 37 *bodhipakkhiyadhammā*, and form the heart of the Indriya

Saṃyutta, where they are defined as follows (SN 48.8, SN 48.9, SN 48.10):

Faith (*saddhā*) Faith in the Buddha’s awakening.

Energy (*virīya*) The effort to give up the bad and develop the good.

Mindfulness (*sati*) Recollection of things said and done long ago, and the four kinds of mindfulness meditation.

Immersion (*samādhi*) Unification of mind based on letting-go; further defined as the four absorptions (*jhānas*).

Wisdom (*paññā*) Understanding impermanence and the four noble truths.

By beginning with faith (*saddhā*), the text introduces a quality not explicitly mentioned in the earlier sets. In Buddhism, faith is essential. In traditional Buddhist lands to this day, the quiet yet steadfast faith and devotion to the Buddha and his teachings is ever-present, expressed through offerings of flowers, through grace and humility in the presence of the sacred, or uplifting recollection of the Buddha’s words. It is an emotional quality, often paired with *pema*, “affection”. But the Buddha explicitly rejected blind or “baseless faith” (MN 95:13: *amūlikā saddhā*) and urged his followers to develop a “grounded faith” (MN 47:16: *ākāravatī saddhā*) based on careful and critical inquiry.

This is a faith that is akin to the confidence and trust that a scientist needs when relying on the findings and theories of others in their field. It is essential in order to get anywhere; but at the same time, it is completely provisional. If there is anything that is contradicted by the evidence, it should be rejected. And once you have seen the truth for yourself, there is no need for faith, as pointed out by Venerable Sāriputta in SN 48.44.

Following the pattern we have seen in previous sets of qualities, the mention of faith aligns the faculties with the progress of one following the Gradual Training. First, one hears the teaching and gains faith, then one goes forth and applies energy in practice, undertaking mindfulness meditation, realizing the absorptions and

the wisdom into impermanence that follows on from them. At this point, a practitioner goes beyond simple belief or reasoned argument and sees the truth for themselves. Their faith is described as *aveccappasāda*, “experiential” or “confirmed” confidence. The word *avecca* literally means “having undergone”. It is only at this point that faith is unshakable.

Many suttas on the five faculties are built along the same kinds of patterns and templates as the *samyuttas* on the noble eightfold path or the awakening factors. But in two related respects they are quite distinctive. And both of these distinctive features stem from the root sense of *indriya* as “potency” or “potential”.

The first of these two features is the use of the faculties to grade practitioners. One who truly understands the faculties is a stream-enterer (SN 48.2, SN 48.3), while one who, based on this understanding, completely lets go is a perfected one (SN 48.4, SN 48.5). This grading of practitioners based on their development of the faculties is extended in more detail in a further series of discourses (SN 48.12–18, SN 48.24).

So while, in one sense, we all have these faculties within us as a hidden potential, they do not manifest their strength until empowered by the path. Once that happens, at the moment of stream-entry, they are as unstoppable as Indra on a dragon-slaying rampage.

To understand the second distinctive feature, recall that in these *samyuttas* we are dealing with the path, the fourth of the noble truths, which is “to be developed” (*bhāvetabba*). And while the Indriya Samyutta, like other *samyuttas* on the path, does indeed speak of the “development of the faculties”, a series of suttas also speaks of understanding the faculties in light of the four noble truths (SN 48.2–7). Normally such phrasing is found in discourses dealing with the first noble truth, such as those on the aggregates or sense fields, which are “to be fully understood”. Here the texts are blurring the distinction between the first and fourth noble truths. To be sure, this is not unique; we have already noted that a couple of discourses

on *satipaṭṭhāna* do a similar thing differently. But it is unusual, and certainly the emphasis is unique.

There is nothing doctrinally difficult about this; after all, the path is conditioned (AN 4.34), and all conditioned things are suffering. But the Buddha usually spoke of the path in glowingly positive terms, not about its suffering and drawbacks.

Once again, this makes sense when we consider the faculties as inner potentials, as something that we already possess in a latent form to one degree or another. In understanding the faculties we are understanding *who we are* and *who we might become*.

This idea that an *indriya* is a potency or ability or strength possessed by a person is further developed in the remainder of the *sam-yutta*, which introduces a series of faculties beyond the basic five. Together with the five faculties, these make up a list of 22 faculties, which became a standard set in the Abhidhamma (see Vb 5). Here they are in the Abhidhamma sequence:

- The six sense faculties (SN 48.25).
- Three biological faculties: femininity, masculinity, and vitality (SN 48.22).
- Five kinds of feeling as faculties (SN 48.31).
- The five spiritual faculties.
- Three faculties relating to stages of awakening (SN 48.23).

Senses, feelings, and even biological attributes, are things that everyone possesses. They must be understood as part of conditioned reality, and hence suffering, but they can be harnessed to empower the spiritual path.

SN 51: Linked Discourses on the Bases for Psychic Power

We have learned that the terms *indriya* and *bala*, which we translate as “faculty” and “power” were Vedic terms closely associated with the divine might of the war-god Indra. The current *sam-yutta* deals with *iddhi*, another Vedic term with a similar meaning of “success,

power, potency”. Note that the Pali *iddhi* is identical in meaning with two Vedic terms, *siddhi* and *ṛddhi*, but formally it is derived from the latter. *Pāda* literally means “foot”, and since *iddhipāda* is defined as the “path or practice to gaining *iddhi*” (SN 51.27), it’s tempting to maintain the metaphor by speaking of the “four footsteps to psychic power”.

Iddhis may refer to various kinds of success, potency, or power, but in this context, they consist of various astonishing feats of psychic power or superpowers. Such feats have a long and colorful history in India. In the Vedas, as we have seen, they originated in the legendary military prowess of the gods, to which mortals aspired with the aid of stimulants. As the *soma* vanished, it seems, other means of transcending normal human and physical limits were sought. Ascetics undertook punishing mortifications (*tapas*), torturing their bodies in search of superpowers. While some pre-Buddhist religious practitioners—notably those of the Jains and the Upaniṣads—had set themselves more lofty and worthy goals than mere powers, there remained many for whom spiritual practice was a means to these decidedly worldly ends.

The modern cultural fascination with superheroes shows that this is not bound to a specific cultural time or place. It is about the very human longing for transcendence and transformation, becoming other, becoming more. Superheroes display many of the same kinds of powers talked about in the Buddhist and other ancient Indian texts: mind-reading, enhanced senses, the ability to control the elements or to multiply one’s form, to fly in the sky and even through space (SN 51.11). And the means by which powers are gained remain similar to the pre-Buddhist traditions: they may be of divine or alien origin; or derived from a drug or chemical agent; or the outcome of enduring trials and suffering.

Dispensing with these methods, however, the Buddha said that superpowers are gained through pure mental development or meditation. The focus shifted from the powers themselves to the means for attaining them; which, it turns out, also happens to be the path to

awakening. The various powers extend or enhance ordinary human abilities, and they may be developed in the same way as any other ability is developed: by practice.

Despite their frequent mention in Buddhist texts, psychic powers are notably omitted when it comes to the really important things. They are side-effects of the spiritual path, things that may be fun and of some worth as preliminary exercises, but far from the true goal (see SN 12.70). The Buddha had a decidedly ambiguous attitude to powers, especially when they were shown off. He forbade the monastics from displaying them publicly, saying monks who make such displays were like a woman who shows her private parts for a cheap coin (Kd 15:8.2). Displays of psychic powers are moreover criticized because they seem like mere magic (DN 11:5, AN 3.60). And the possession of superpowers was by no means a sign of genuine spiritual attainment, for even Devadatta, the Buddha's arch-nemesis, was said to have attained them (Kd 17:1.4).

None of this addresses the question of whether such powers are real. The suttas assume throughout that they are, and there is no reason to think this does not reflect the Buddha's views. Traditional Buddhism has always accepted the reality of experiences and powers beyond the normal, and Buddhist cultures are full of anecdotes and stories about such events. Rigorous studies, however, are harder to come by. The extraordinary *Irreducible Mind*, a sustained critique of reductionist theories of mind, assembles hundreds of studies into various kinds of extraordinary phenomena. While a reasonable person may well remain skeptical, it seems there is a significant body of evidence in support of such things as mind-reading or recollection of past lives. The ability to fly or to touch the sun remain, sadly, unattested.

Normally in the suttas the term *iddhi* is used for a specific set of psychic powers, which primarily exhibit mastery over the physical realm (SN 51.19, etc.). These are typically included within a broader set of six "direct knowledges" (*abhiññā*), which are also mentioned

in this *samyutta* (SN 51.11). The final one of these is the ending of defilements and rebirth, the true goal of Buddhist practice.

As to the substance of the *iddhipādas*, there are four basic terms:

Enthusiasm (*chanda*) This is one of the most common words for “desire”. While not formally mentioned as an item in the other lists of the *bodhipakkhiyadhammā*, it appears in the formula for the four right efforts. It is the desire to do good, to practice, to escape suffering.

Energy (*viriya*) This is the single most common factor among the 37 *bodhipakkhiyadhammā*. However, in the bases for psychic power it receives special emphasis as it is not only one of the factors, but also qualifies each of the factors.

Mind (*citta*) Thought, idea, resolve, or awareness (see below).

Inquiry (*vīmaṃsā*) Inquiry or investigation into the Dhamma, but especially into what obstructs meditation and what helps it. In this context, it is not too far in meaning from “curiosity”.

Curiously enough, though the word *citta* has a wide range of meanings, it is not clearly defined in this context. Even the Abhidhamma and commentaries offer little more than the usual list of synonyms for “mind” (Vb 9). Normally in the context of the path, the mind is “to be developed” (see SN 51.9) and such “development of mind” (*cittabhāvanā*) is a term for *samādhi* and the path to it. Accordingly, *citta* falls between the energy and wisdom factors, in the place normally occupied by *samādhi* and mindfulness, and is said to be developed in the normal way of *samādhi* (see SN 51.11). And *samādhi* itself, like energy, is constantly emphasized as essential to this practice at every point.

However, *citta* is also the thought or intention that gets you to your destination (SN 51.15). In line with this, one gains *samādhi* by relying on *citta* (SN 51.13), which suggests that *citta* cannot be exactly identical with *samādhi*.

Perhaps the term *citta* was used here precisely because of its breadth of meaning. It encompasses the “thought” of the Dhamma,

of practice, or of the goal; the “idea” one has in mind that leads one on; the “resolve” that keeps attention focused; the growing “awareness” as the goal comes into view; and the purified “consciousness” of deep meditation. In this way *citta* here covers the same ground as it does as one of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*: it refers to the mental state with which one develops the path, including, but not limited to, states of *samādhi*.

The four bases are almost always presented in a stock formula that consists of a long compound, the meaning of which is explained at SN 51.13. Each of the four qualities may be relied on to develop deep unification of mind, or *samādhi*. This process involves making an active effort, defined in terms of the four right efforts. Thus each of the *iddhipādas* consists of these three aspects:

1. One of the four qualities.
2. The meditative immersion that results.
3. The effort required.

At SN 51.20 we find the most detailed explanation of how these are applied in practice. This sutta brings in several practices familiar from elsewhere in the suttas, such as the contemplation of the 31 parts of the body. While most of these are straightforward, there is a somewhat obscure Pali idiom that begs a little clarification. That is the phrase “as before, so after; as after, so before” (*yathā pure tathā pacchā, yathā pacchā tathā pure*), called the “perception of continuity” (*pacchāpuresaññā*). Similar phrases are found in several places in the context of meditation (Thag 6.4, SN 47.10, AN 7.61, AN 3.90). In the Vinaya, the same phrase is used to emphasize that the status of a mendicant remains unchanged. In meditation, it points to the need for constant and consistent effort in maintaining one’s focus. As part of a series of related idioms—as above, so below; as by day, so by night; as this is, so is that—it indicates how the process of meditation moves from diversity and differentiation towards unity and oneness.

When first encountering the bases for psychic power, students are often puzzled by an apparent paradox. Desire, so we're told, is the cause of suffering, yet here we are supposed to develop it. This problem is addressed directly in SN 51.15, where Ānanda explains to the brahmin Uṇṇābha that the spiritual path is lived to give up desire, which is accomplished by developing the four bases of psychic power. But Uṇṇābha protests, for desire is itself one of the four bases, and desire cannot be given up using desire. Ānanda resolves the contradiction with the simile of a man walking to a park. Before setting out, one has the desire, the energy, the idea, or the curiosity to reach the park. But when you get there, those things vanish. In the same way, the desire or enthusiasm to reach the goal of spiritual practice carries you to the goal, but once there it is no longer needed.

A Brief Textual History

The Saṃyutta Nikāya was edited by M. Léon Feer on the basis of manuscripts in Sinhalese and Burmese scripts and published in Latin script by the Pali Text Society from 1884 to 1898. The first translation followed in 1917–30 by Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids (vols. 1–2) and F.L. Woodward (vols. 3–5) under the title *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*. In 1999 the PTS issued a new edition of the Pali text of vol. 1 *Sagāthāvagga*, edited by G.A. Somaratne.

While several partial translations were subsequently made, there was no complete new translation in English until 2002, when Bhikkhu Bodhi published his *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. As with his translation of the *The Middle-Length Discourses of the Buddha*, this constituted a major leap forward, essentially rendering the earlier translations obsolete. Unlike the *Middle-Length Discourses*, this was an entirely new translation. In an extensive introduction, Bhikkhu Bodhi spelled out his evolving approach to translation and presented a detailed thematic and structural analysis of the text.

Where the Pali was unclear I frequently referred to the earlier work of Bodhi, and rarely to Woodward/Rhys Davids and various translations of specific texts.

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The Group of Linked Discourses With Verses

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH DEITIES

The Chapter on a Reed

SN 1.1

Crossing the Flood

Oghataraṇasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.¹ At one time the Buddha was staying near 1.1
Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Then, late at night, a glorious deity, lighting up the entire Jeta’s 1.3
Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and said
to him,² “Good fellow, how did you cross the flood?”³

“Neither standing nor swimming, respectable sir, I crossed the 1.5
flood.”⁴

1. Bhikkhu Bodhi’s *Connected Discourses of the Buddha* includes extensive discussions of variant readings, as well as summaries of the commentary. I don’t replicate these here, but usually I follow Bodhi’s readings and note where I differ.

2. “Deity” is *devatā*, which in Pali as in English is an abstract noun. Though feminine in grammatical gender, it does not imply that the deity is female. Here, for example, the deity is addressed with the masculine form *āvuso*.

3. “Good fellow” (*mārisa*; Sanskrit *mārṣa*, *māriṣa*) is a special term of address used by deities and sometimes by kings. The term harks back to Sanskrit *mādrṣa*, “one like me”, in the sense of having a comparable status, i.e. “fellow”. | The Buddha lived and taught in the Gangetic plain, a region characterized by deadly and unpredictable flooding.

4. That *āyūhati* means “swim” is clear from SN 2.5:3.5.

- 1.6 “But in what way did you cross the flood neither standing nor swimming?”⁵
- 1.7 “When I stood, I sank under. When I swam, I was swept away. That’s how I crossed the flood neither standing nor swimming.”⁶
- 2.1 “After a long time I see
a brahmin fully quenched.
Neither standing nor swimming,
he’s crossed over clinging to the world.”
- 3.1 That is what that deity said, and the Teacher concurred. Then that deity, knowing that the Teacher concurred, bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.

SN 1.2

Liberation

Nimokkhasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvathī.⁷
- 1.2 Then, late at night, a glorious deity, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and said to him, “Good fellow, do you know the liberation, emancipation, and seclusion of sentient beings?”
- 3.1 “I do, good sir.”
- 4.1 “But how is it that you know the liberation, emancipation, and seclusion of sentient beings?”

5. The deity’s counter-question shows that the Buddha’s answer was deliberately obscure.

6. The teaching suggests a state of poised flow, where one is neither stuck in attachments, nor restlessly straining to get somewhere else.

7. From here, the Pali gives only the abbreviated setting or none at all. In such cases, we are meant to read the full introduction per SN 1.1.

“Due to the ending of relish for rebirth;⁸ due to the finishing of perception and consciousness;⁹ due to the cessation and stilling of feelings—¹⁰ that, respectable sir, is how I know the liberation, emancipation, and seclusion of sentient beings.”

SN 1.3

Led On

Upanīyasutta

At Sāvatthī.

1.1

Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

1.2

“This life, so very short, is led onward.

2.1

One led on to old age has no shelter.

Seeing this peril in death,

do good deeds that bring you joy.”

“This life, so very short, is led onward.

3.1

One led on to old age has no shelter.

Seeing this peril in death,

8. The Buddha’s answer seems to mix a few lines of verse with some prose. This line is verse, as it has an unusual structure, best understood as due to the exigencies of metre, and where it occurs elsewhere it is always as verse. Also, this line and the next are metrical (*vatta*). The Chinese parallels at SA 1268 and SA-2 179 format the whole of the Buddha’s answer as prose, the verse being spoken by the deity at the end. Perhaps the Buddha quoted a couple of lines of verse in a prose sentence.

9. With this the Buddha differentiates himself from Yājñavalkya, for whom perception (limited awareness) ends, but consciousness (infinite awareness) is eternal (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.12).

10. The Chinese parallels here speak of the liberation of the mind rather than the cessation of feelings. The textual problems seem insoluble and it appears the text is corrupt.

a seeker of peace would drop the world's bait.”¹¹

SN 1.4

Time Flies

Accentisutta

1.1 At Sāvatthī.

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

2.1 “Time flies, nights pass by,
the stages of life leave us one by one.
Seeing this peril in death,
do good deeds that bring you joy.”

3.1 “Time flies, nights pass by,
the stages of life leave us one by one.
Seeing this peril in death,
a seeker of peace would drop the world's bait.”

SN 1.5

Cut How Many?

Katichindasutta

1.1 At Sāvatthī.¹²

11. Whereas the first two discourses saw the deity asking a question, here they propose a conventional good, and the Buddha elevates it to the transcendental.

12. The redactors show their playful side here, placing this “riddle of fives” as the fifth sutta of the Saṃyutta. | The enigmatic repetition of “five” is reminiscent of Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.17: “Where the five groups of five and space are established, I regard that Self as the immortal Brahman, knowing which I am immortal.” Or perhaps it is a reference to the five great sacrifices, to sages, gods, ghosts, men and ancestors (Manu 4.21).

Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence: 1.2

“Cut how many? Drop how many? 2.1
Develop how many more?
When a mendicant slips how many chains
are they said to have crossed the flood?”

“Five to cut, five to drop,¹³ 3.1
and five more to develop.
When a mendicant slips five chains¹⁴
they're said to have crossed the flood.”

SN 1.6

Awake

Jāgarasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence: 1.2

“How many sleep among the waking? 2.1
How many wake among the sleeping?
By how many do you gather dust?
By how many are you cleansed?”

“Five sleep among the waking.¹⁵ 3.1

13. According to the commentary, the five lower fetters are cut, the five higher fetters are dropped, and the five faculties are developed.

14. The “five chains” are not defined in the Suttas, but Vb 17:238.1 identifies them as greed, hate, delusion, conceit, and views.

15. This verse is found in *Isibhāsiyāim* 29.2, where it is attributed to the Jain Vardhamāna Mahāvīra. His explanation there takes the “five” as the senses, which for the “waking” sages are “asleep” (i.e. restrained), while the unawakened “sleep” in ignorance while their “awakened” senses run riot. The Pali commentaries, on

Five wake among the sleeping.
By five you gather dust.
By five you're cleansed."

SN 1.7

Undeciphered

Appaṭividitasutta

1.1 At Sāvattḥi.

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

2.1 "Those have not deciphered the teachings¹⁶
may be led astray by the doctrines of others.
Asleep, they have not woken up:
it is time for them to wake!"

3.1 "Those who have well deciphered the teachings
won't be led astray by the doctrines of others.
They have woken up, they rightly know,
smoothly they walk in the rough."

SN 1.8

Very Confused

Susammuttḥasutta

1.1 At Sāvattḥi.

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

the other hand, take them as the five spiritual faculties on the side of awakening, in contrast with the five hindrances.

16. *Paṭivīdita* ("deciphered") is found only here and DN 1:1.3.2, where it is likewise in the context of understanding views.

“Those who are very confused about the teachings 2.1
 may be led astray by the doctrines of others.
 Asleep, they have not woken up:
 it is time for them to wake!”

“Those who are unconfused about the teachings, 3.1
 won’t be led astray by the doctrines of others.
 They have woken up, they rightly know,
 smoothly they walk in the rough.”

SN 1.9

Fond of Conceit

Mānakāmasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s 1.2
 presence:

“One fond of conceit can’t be tamed, 2.1
 no sage is lacking immersion.
 Living negligent alone in the wilderness,
 they can’t cross beyond Death’s dominion.”

“Having given up conceit, serene within oneself, 3.1
 with a good heart, everywhere free;
 living diligent alone in the wilderness,
 they cross beyond Death’s dominion.”

SN 1.10

Wilderness

Araññasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity addressed the Buddha in verse:

2.1 “Living in the wilderness,
peaceful spiritual practitioners
eat just one meal a day:
so why is their complexion so clear?”

3.1 “They don’t grieve for the past,¹⁷
nor do they pray for the future;¹⁸
they feed on whatever comes that day,
that’s why their complexion’s so clear.

4.1 Because they pray for the future,
and grieve for the past,
fools wither away,
like a green reed mowed down.”

17. Compare MN 131:3.1.

18. *Pajappanti*, from *jappa*, means both to “incant” and to “long for”, and the English “pray” has exactly the same connotations—for exactly the same reasons. They originated in begging favors of a god.

The Chapter on the Garden of Delight

SN 1.11

The Garden of Delight

Nandanāsutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvaththī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!” 1.1

“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this: 1.5

“Once upon a time, mendicants, a certain deity of the company of the thirty-three was amusing themselves in the Garden of Delight, escorted by a band of nymphs, and supplied and provided with the five kinds of heavenly sensual stimulation. On that occasion she spoke this verse: 2.1

“They don’t know pleasure 3.1
who don’t see the Garden of Delight!
It’s the abode of lordly gods,¹⁹
the glorious host of Thirty!’²⁰

19. *Naradeva* is a term for a king. Here and at SN 9.6:4.3 it refers to the gods of the Thirty-Three, and at Thag 20.1:41.1 to Brahmā. At Cp 5:1.3 it apparently refers to the aristocrats who are “gods among men” (see Manu 11.82).

20. *Tidasa* (“thirty”) is a poetic abbreviation for the “thirty-three” gods. Noted as such in Kṣīrasvāmin’s *Amarakośodghāṭana* 1.1.7.

4.1 When they had spoken, another deity replied with this verse:

5.1 ‘Fool, don’t you understand²¹
the saying of the perfected ones:
All conditions are impermanent,²²
their nature is to rise and fall;
having arisen, they cease;
their settling is such bliss.’”

SN 1.12

Delight

Nandatisutta

1.1 At Sāvattṭhī.

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

2.1 “Children bring you delight!
Cattle also bring you delight!
For attachments are a man’s delight;
without attachments there’s no delight.”

3.1 “Children bring you sorrow.
Cattle also bring you sorrow.
For attachments are a man’s sorrow;²³

21. The vocative form *bāle* suggests that a female deity is being addressed, which is certainly the case in the parallel passage at SN 9.6:5.1. The commentary says that the speaker here is also a female deity.

22. This famous verse, which occurs many times in the Suttas, was spoken by the Buddha at SN 15.20:8.2 and by Sakka, the lord of the thirty-three, at the Buddha’s passing (SN 6.15:6.2, DN 16:6.10.11. | In this context, *saṅkhārā* means “conditions” or “conditioned phenomena” rather than “volitional actions”, “choices”. | The unusual reading *sabbasaṅkhārā* (rather than *vata saṅkhārā*) recurs in the parallel passage at SN 9.6:5.3.

23. “Attachment” here is *upadhi*, which is both the things of the world to which we cling, and the inner clinging (see Snp 1.2, SN 12.66). The Jains defined

without attachments there are no sorrows.”

SN 1.13

There's Nothing Like a Child

Natthiputtasamasutta

At Sāvatthī.

1.1

Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

“There's no fondness like that for a child,
no wealth equal to cattle,²⁴
no light like that of the sun,²⁵
and of streams the ocean is paramount.”²⁶

2.1

“There's no fondness like that for oneself,²⁷
no wealth equal to grain,
no light like that of wisdom,

3.1

upadhi similarly (Tattvārthasūtra 9.26). The dominant meaning in Sanskrit is “fraud”, which perhaps informs the Buddhist sense: the things we attach to give a false sense of security.

24. Vājasaneyi Samhitā 23.48b says cattle have no measure.

25. These lines closely mirror the question at Vājasaneyi Samhitā 23.47a (quoted at Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.5.2.13), “What light equals the sun? What lake equals the ocean?” The answers given in the next verse are “Brahmā” and “heaven”. This points to the myth that the rivers, especially the Ganges, originate in the “causal ocean” (*garbhodaka*) of heaven. The rivers of northern India, bringing life down from the Himalayas, naturally suggest a divine origin.

26. *Sara* means originally “flow”, hence “stream, river”, then “lake”. The ocean as the paramount lake is a destination, the final point where rivers converge. As such it evokes the Upaniṣadic idea that consciousness converges in Divinity (see notes on SN 1.61:2.4 and MN 9:53.2). This is ultimately the same as the “causal ocean” from which the rivers flow.

27. The Theravada tradition, starting from the Vimuttimagga, begins the meditation on love (*mettā*) by focusing on oneself, a practice that draws on passages such as this. See also SN 3.8, Ud 5.1. Here the Pali uses *pema* (“fondness”) rather than *mettā* (“love”).

and of streams the rain is paramount.”²⁸

SN 1.14

Aristocrats

Khattiyasutta

- 1.1 “An aristocrat is the best of bipeds,²⁹
 an ox is the best of quadrupeds,³⁰
 a maiden is the best of wives,
 and a first-born the best of sons.”
- 2.1 “A Buddha is the best of bipeds,
 a thoroughbred, the best of quadrupeds,
 a good listener is the best of wives,³¹
 and the best of sons is loyal.”

SN 1.15

Resounding

Saṇamānasutta

- 1.1 “In the still of high noon,³²
 when the birds have settled down,
 the mighty forest itself resounds—
 that strikes me as so scary!”

28. By pointing to the rain, the Buddha indicates the natural cause of the lakes and oceans.

29. Where the setting is omitted, it is assumed that a deity speaks and the Buddha answers.

30. A loyal ox labors hard.

31. *Sussusati*, literally “wanting to listen” is a precursor for wisdom (Snp 1.10:11.3), and is normally used of mendicants who want to learn the Dhamma (MN 122:26.4).

32. These verses are also in SN 9.12.

“In the still of high noon,
when the birds have settled down,
the mighty forest itself resounds—
that strikes me as so delightful!” 2.1

SN 1.16

Sleepiness and Sloth

Niddātandisutta

“Sleepiness, sloth, and yawning,
discontent, and grogginess after eating:
because of this the noble path
doesn’t shine for creatures here.” 1.1

“Sleepiness, sloth, and yawning,
discontent, and grogginess after eating:
when this is energetically fended off,
the noble path is purified.” 2.1

SN 1.17

Hard to Do

Dukkarasutta

“Hard to do, hard to endure,
is the ascetic life for the inept,
for it has many narrow passes
where the fool founders.” 1.1

“How many days could an ascetic live
without controlling the mind?
They’d founder with each step,” 2.1

under the sway of thoughts.³³

- 3.1 A mendicant should collect their thoughts
as a tortoise draws its limbs into its shell.³⁴
Independent, not disturbing others,
quenched: they wouldn't blame anyone."

SN 1.18

Conscience

Hirīsutta

- 1.1 "Can a person constrained by conscience
be found in the world,
who is cognizant of blame,³⁵
like a fine horse of the whip?"
- 2.1 "Few are those constrained by conscience,
who live always mindful.
Having reached the end of suffering,
smoothly they walk in the rough."

SN 1.19

Little Hut

Kuṭikāsutta

- 1.1 "Don't you have a little hut?
Don't you have a little nest?"

33. "Thought" here is *saṅkappa*, while below it is (*mano*)-*vitakka*.

34. The simile is drawn out into a parable at SN 35.240, while the same simile is found in the Jain *Isibhāsiyāim* chapter 16.

35. The reading *apabodhati* is uncertain. It seems to be from the root *bodh*, which suggests the sense "be aware (of), be cognizant (of)". This matches the answering verse, which speaks of mindfulness. The point is that by being aware of what is blameworthy they restrain themselves from it.

Don't you have any networks?³⁶
Aren't you free of shackles?"

"Indeed I have no little hut. 2.1
Indeed I have no little nest.
Indeed I have no networks.
Indeed I'm free from shackles."

"What do you think I call your little hut? 3.1
What do I call your little nest?
What do I call your network?
And what do I call your shackle?"

"You call mother a little hut; 4.1
and wife a little nest.
You call children a network,
and you call my craving a shackle."

"It's good you have no little hut! 5.1
It's good you have no little nest!
It's good you have no networks!
And good that you're free from shackles."

SN 1.20

With Samiddhi

Samiddhisutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rā- 1.1
jagaha in the Hot Springs Monastery.

36. At SN 22.102:2.1 and AN 6.54:9.2, *santānakā* means "network of roots", while at Kd 1:25.15.7 it means "cobwebs".

- 1.3 Then Venerable Samiddhi rose at the crack of dawn and went to the hot springs to bathe.³⁷ When he had bathed and emerged from the water he stood in one robe drying his limbs.
- 1.5 Then, late at night, a glorious deity, lighting up the entire hot springs, went up to Samiddhi, and, standing in the air, addressed him in verse:³⁸
- 2.1 “Mendicant, you seek alms before you eat;
you don’t seek alms after eating.
But you should eat first, then seek alms:³⁹
don’t let the time pass you by.”
- 3.1 “I actually don’t know the time;⁴⁰
it’s hidden and unseen.
That’s why I seek alms before eating,
so that the time may not pass me by!”
- 4.1 Then that deity landed on the ground and said to Samiddhi, “You’ve gone forth while young, mendicant. With pristine black hair, you’re blessed with youth, in the prime of life, and you’ve never flirted with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures! Don’t

37. At a later date, a deity in the same location asked Samiddhi if he knew the verses on “one fine night” (MN 133:1.3). Samiddhi further appears in discourses at MN 136, where he had gone forth only three years, and AN 9.14, where he seems more mature. In SN 4.22, Māra threatens to shake his faith, prompting him to ask the Buddha about Māra’s true nature (SN 35.65). This event is recalled in his verse at Thag 1.46. The tale is expanded at Ja 167.

38. The commentary says the deity is female, but he is addressed as *āvuso* by Samiddhi and *yakkha* by the Buddha, both of which are masculine.

39. The deity is playing with two meanings of *bhuvāna*. The obvious sense is “having eaten”, because one can only eat after going for alms. By reversing the terms, they introduce a paradox—how can one eat without having obtained food?—and thereby force the second meaning of *bhuvāna*, “having enjoyed (the pleasures of life)”. They are suggesting that the mendicant should enjoy sensual pleasures while young, then go forth.

40. Samiddhi joins the game, answering the deity with another play on words. He implies that “time” means the “time of death”.

give up what is apparent in the present to chase after what takes effect over time.”

“I’m not, respectable sir. I’m giving up what takes effect over time 5.1
to chase after what is apparent in the present.⁴¹ For the Buddha
has said that sensual pleasures take effect over time, with much suffering and distress, and they’re all the more full of drawbacks. But this teaching is apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves.”

“But in what way, mendicant, has the Buddha said that sensual 6.1
pleasures take effect over time, with much suffering and distress, and they’re all the more full of drawbacks? And how is this teaching apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves?”

“I’m junior, respectable sir, recently gone forth, newly come to 7.1
this teaching and training. I’m not able to explain this in detail. But he, that Blessed One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha, is staying near Rājagaha in the Hot Springs Monastery. You should approach him and ask about this matter. And you should remember it in line with the Buddha’s answer.”

“It’s not easy for us to approach the Buddha, as he is surrounded 8.1
by other illustrious deities. If you go to the Buddha and ask him about this matter, we’ll come along and listen to the teaching.”

“Yes, reverend,” Venerable Samiddhi replied. He went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened. 8.3
Then he added:

“Sir, if that deity spoke the truth, he’ll be close by.” 17.1

When he had spoken, that deity said to Samiddhi, “Ask, mendicant, ask! For I have arrived.” 18.1

Then the Buddha addressed the deity in verse: 19.1

“Sentient beings who perceive the communicable, 20.1
become established in the communicable.

41. Similar arguments appear at SN 4.21 and MN 70:4.10.

Not understanding the communicable,
they fall under the yoke of Death.

21.1 But having fully understood the communicable,
they don't conceive a communicator,
for they have nothing
by which they might be described.

21.5 Tell me if you understand, spirit."

22.1 "I don't understand the detailed meaning of the Buddha's brief
statement. Please teach me this matter so I can understand the de-
tailed meaning."

23.1 "If you think that 'I'm equal,
special, or worse', you'll dispute about that.
Unwavering in the face of the three discriminations,
they have no thought, 'I'm equal or special'.⁴²

23.5 Tell me if you understand, spirit."

24.1 "I don't understand the detailed meaning of the Buddha's brief
statement. Please teach me this matter so I can understand the de-
tailed meaning."

25.1 "They gave up judgment without falling into conceit;⁴³
craving for name and form was cut off right here.
They cut the ties, untroubled,
with no need for hope.
Though gods and humans search for them
in this life or the next, they never find them,
not in heaven nor in any abode.

42. The third discrimination, omitted here, is "I am worse" (SN 45.162).

43. *Saṅkhā* is sometimes used in a positive senses, as one who has "appraised" the world (SN 7.20:3.3). Here, the context suggests it means "judgments" about people (DN 1:1.4.1, MN 18). | For *na vimāna* read *na ca māna* per Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, note 38.

Tell me if you understand, spirit.” 26.1

“This is how I understand the detailed meaning of the Buddha’s
brief statement: 27.1

You should never do anything bad 28.1
by speech or mind or body in all the world.
Having given up sensual pleasures,
mindful and aware,
you shouldn’t keep doing
what’s painful and pointless.”

The Chapter on a Sword

SN 1.21

A Sword

Sattisutta

1.1 At Sāvathī.

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

2.1 “Like they’re struck by a sword,
like their head was on fire,
a mendicant, mindful, should go forth,
to give up sensual desire.”⁴⁴

3.1 “Like they’re struck by a sword,
like their head was on fire,
a mendicant, mindful, should go forth,
to give up substantialist view.”⁴⁵

44. Here, as often (eg. AN 6.54:22.3), giving up *kāmarāga* implies attaining the absorptions. It cannot mean relinquishing the “underlying tendency” or the “fetter” to sensual desire, for this occurs only at the third stage of awakening (non-return), whereas the Buddha’s rejoinder urges rather to give up substantialist view, the first stage of awakening, the stream-enterer.

45. In some parallels for this verse, the mendicant is urged, rather, to give up desire for rebirth (Thag 1.40:1.2, Thag 20.1:24.1). But SN 2.16:3.2 is the same as here.

SN 1.22

Impact

Phusatisutta

“It doesn’t impact one who doesn’t impact others.⁴⁶ 1.1
 It impacts one because they impact others.
 That’s why it impacts one who impacts,
 who wrongs one who’s done no wrong.”

“Whoever wrongs a man who has done no wrong,⁴⁷ 2.1
 a pure man who has not a blemish,
 the evil backfires on the fool,
 like fine dust thrown upwind.”

SN 1.23

A Tangle

Jaṭāsutta

“Tangled within, tangled without:⁴⁸ 1.1
 these people are tangled in tangles.
 I ask you this, Gotama:
 who can untangle this tangle?”

“A wise person grounded in ethics,⁴⁹ 2.1

46. To “impact” (*phusati*, elsewhere “contact” or “touch”) is to create harmful karma, which is the “it” that in turn harms the ones who impacts.

47. This verse occurs with a troublesome brahmin at SN 7.4:2.1; as rejoinder to Kokālika’s attack on Sāriputta and Moggallāna at Snp 3.10:14.1 (see SN 6.10, which has the story without this verse); and at Dhṛp 125.

48. The “tangle” (*jaṭā*) is the tangled hair or dreadlocks of the Brahmanical *jaṭila* ascetics, as is made clear in SN 7.6 where a dreadlocked brahmin opens with the same verse. The claim is that *jaṭila* ascetics are as tangled in their minds by craving as they are in their hair.

49. In a bold literary conceit, the vast compendium of the Visuddhimagga positions itself as an explanation of this single verse.

developing the mind and wisdom,⁵⁰
 a keen and alert mendicant—
 they can untangle this tangle.

- 3.1 Those in whom greed, hate, and ignorance⁵¹
 have faded away;
 the perfected ones with defilements ended—
 they have untangled the tangle.

- 4.1 And where name and form
 cease with no residue left behind;
 and impingement and perception of form:
 it's here this tangle is cut.”

SN 1.24

Shielding the Mind

Manonivāraṇasutta

- 1.1 “Whatever you’ve shielded the mind from⁵²
 can’t cause you suffering.
 So you should shield the mind from everything,
 then you’re freed from all suffering.”
- 2.1 “You need not shield the mind from everything,
 nor has the mind gained self-control.
 The mind need only be shielded
 from where the bad things come.”

50. Here *citta* (“mind”) stands for *samādhi* or *jhāna*, which is normally the case in the Suttas on the path (eg. *cittasampadā* = *samādhisampadā*, *cittabhāvanā* = *samādhibhāvanā*, *adhicitta* = *samādhi*, etc.)

51. The previous verse dealt with the one who is practicing; this verse with the perfected one; and the final verse with final extinguishment.

52. These are some of the very few verses in the Pali Canon whose metre has not been identified.

SN 1.25

A Perfected One

Arahantasutta

“When a mendicant is perfected, well-versed,⁵³ 1.1
 with defilements ended, bearing the final body:
 would they say, ‘I speak’,
 or even ‘they speak to me?’⁵⁴

“When a mendicant is perfected, well-versed, 2.1
 with defilements ended, bearing the final body:
 they would say, ‘I speak’,
 and also ‘they speak to me.’
 Skillful, understanding the world’s labels,
 they’d use these terms as mere expressions.”⁵⁵

“When a mendicant is perfected, well-versed, 3.1
 with defilements ended, bearing the final body:
 is such a mendicant drawing close to conceit
 if they’d say, ‘I speak’,
 or even ‘they speak to me?’”

“Someone who has given up conceit has no ties, 4.1
 the ties of conceit are all dissipated.
 Though that intelligent person has passed beyond con-
 ceiving,
 they’d still say, ‘I speak’,

and also ‘they speak to me.’ 5.1
 Skillful, understanding the world’s labels,

53. *Katāvī* (“well-versed”) is also found at MN 82:38.5.

54. The questioner wonders how those who have abandoned the conceit of self could use the word “I”.

55. An “expression” (*vohāra*) is a “conveyance” for sharing meaning. It does not implicate the user in a metaphysical view of “Self”. See DN 9:53.5.

they'd use these terms as mere expressions.”

SN 1.26

Lamps

Pajjotasutta

- 1.1 “How many lamps are there⁵⁶
that light up the world?
We’ve come to ask the worthy sir:⁵⁷
how are we to understand this?”
- 2.1 “There are four lamps in the world,
a fifth is not found.⁵⁸
The sun blazes by day,
the moon radiates at night,
- 3.1 while a fire illuminates both
by day and by night.
But a Buddha is the best of blazes:
this is the supreme radiance.”

56. These verses are also at SN 2.4.

57. Accept variant *bhavantam* in this and similar passages. *Bhagavantam* is hypermetrical.

58. With this, the Buddha contradicts Yājñavalkya, who posits two additional lights: speech (as when you can make your way in the dark by the sound of another’s voice) and the Self (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3).

Streams

Sarasutta

- “From where do streams recoil?⁵⁹ 1.1
 Where does the cycle spin no more?⁶⁰
 Where does name and form
 cease with no residue left behind?”
- “Where water and earth, 2.1
 fire and air have no footing—⁶¹
- from here the streams recoil; 2.3
 here the cycle spins no more;⁶²
 here name and form
 cease with no residue left behind.”⁶³

59. The “stream” (here *sara*, otherwise *sota*) is usually explained as craving (SN 41.5:5.10, Iti 109:3.3). Or else it could be the “stream of lives” (*bhavasota*) as in the next sutta (SN 1.28:2.2).

60. The “cycle” of transmigration (*samsāra*) through endless rebirths (see DN 15:22.6, MN 22:42.2). | The “streams” and the “cycle” also occur together in Ud 7.2:4.1.

61. The commentary says this is Nibbāna. | A *gāḍha* is a “ford” across a river (Rig Veda 7.60.7, 7.97.8, 10.106.9; Gopatha Brāhmaṇa 1.5.2a), a safe path on which one has a “footing” to cross the water. In this verse, the verb form *gāḍhati* means to be “established” (*patiṭṭhita*) like a seed in soil, or a beam of light on a floor, or consciousness in name and form.

62. Compare eg. SN 22.56:5.3, MN 22:42.2, MN 109:9.10, Ud 6.8:5.7, and DN 15:22.6.

63. Passages such as Snp 5.2:6.3, DN 15:22.6 and DN 11:85.26 say that consciousness ceases at this point, too.

SN 1.28

Affluent

Mahaddhanasutta

- 1.1 “The affluent and the wealthy,
even the aristocrats who rule the land,
are jealous of each other,
insatiable in sensual pleasures.
- 2.1 Among those of such an avid nature,
flowing along the stream of lives,
who here has given up craving?
Who in the world is not avid?”
- 3.1 “Having given up their home, their child, their cattle,
and all that they love, they went forth.
Having given up desire and hate,
having dispelled ignorance,
the perfected ones with defilements ended—
they in the world are not avid.”

SN 1.29

Four Wheels

Catucakkasutta

- 1.1 “Four are its wheels, and nine its doors;⁶⁴
it’s stuffed full, bound with greed,

64. These verses, with a brief setting, are also at SN 2.28:2.1. | The “four wheels” of a cart are compared to the body, but the application of the metaphor is not obvious. The commentary relates it to the four postures. Later Buddhist tantra speaks of four “wheels” (*cakra*) in the sense of dynamic centers of vital and spiritual energy—navel, heart, throat, crown. This is attested much later than the suttas, but this could be a precedent. | The “nine doors” are the nine apertures of the body (compare the eleven doors at MN 52:15.5).

and born from a bog.
Great hero, how will I keep going?”⁶⁵

“Having cut the strap and harness—2.1
the wicked desire and greed—
and having plucked out craving, root and all:
that’s how you will keep going.”

SN 1.30

Antelope Calves

Enijaṅghasutta

“O hero so lean, with antelope calves,⁶⁶1.1
not greedy, eating little,
a giant, wandering alone like a lion,
you’re not concerned for sensual pleasures.
We’ve come to ask a question:
How is one released from all suffering?”

“The world has five kinds of sensual stimulation,2.1
and the mind is said to be the sixth.
When you’ve discarded desire for these,
you’re released from all suffering.”

65. The phrase *yātrā bhavissati* is familiar from the mendicant’s reflection on eating only so that they “will keep going”. The problem here is that the body is bound up with suffering.

66. A similar exchange is found at Snp 1.9:15.1, there spoken by two *yakkhas*. | “Antelope calves” are one of the thirty-two marks of a great man, for which see DN 14:1.32.25, DN 30:1.22.6.

The Chapter on the Satullapa Group

SN 1.31

Virtuous

Sabbhisutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.3 Then, late at night, several glorious deities of the host of a hundred felicities, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side.⁶⁷ Standing to one side, one deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:
- 2.1 “Associate only with the virtuous!
Try to get close to the virtuous!
Understanding the true teaching of the good,
things get better, not worse.”
- 3.1 Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:
- 4.1 “Associate only with the virtuous!
Try to get close to the virtuous!

67. These deities appear only in this chapter. | “Felicity” renders *ullāpa*, which judging from the use in this chapter means “uplifting saying, felicity” rather than “praise”.

Understanding the true teaching of the good,
wisdom is gained—but not from anyone else.”

Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence: 5.1

“Associate only with the virtuous! 6.1
Try to get close to the virtuous!
Understanding the true teaching of the good,
you grieve not among the grieving.”

Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence: 7.1

“Associate only with the virtuous! 8.1
Try to get close to the virtuous!
Understanding the true teaching of the good,
you shine among your relatives.”

Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence: 9.1

“Associate only with the virtuous! 10.1
Try to get close to the virtuous!
Understanding the true teaching of the good,
sentient beings go to a good place.”

Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence: 11.1

“Associate only with the virtuous! 12.1
Try to get close to the virtuous!
Understanding the true teaching of the good,
sentient beings live happily.”

Then another deity said to the Buddha, “Sir, who has spoken well?” 13.1

“You’ve all spoken well in your own way. However, listen to me also: 14.1

- 15.1 Associate only with the virtuous!
 Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 you're released from all suffering.”
- 16.1 That is what the Buddha said. Delighted, those deities bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on their right, before vanishing right there.

SN 1.32

Stinginess

Maccharisutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.
- 1.2 Then, late at night, several glorious deities of the host of a hundred felicities, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side. Standing to one side, one deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:
- 2.1 “Because of stinginess and negligence
 a gift is not given.
 Wanting merit,
 a smart person would give.”
- 3.1 Then another deity recited these verses in the Buddha's presence:
- 4.1 “When a miser fails to give because of fear,
 the very thing they're afraid of comes to pass.
 The hunger and thirst
 that a miser fears
 hurt the fool
 in this world and the next.
- 5.1 So you should dispel stinginess,

overcoming that stain, and give a gift.
 The good deeds of sentient beings
 support them in the next world.”

Then another deity recited these verses in the Buddha’s presence: 6.1

“Among the dead they do not die,⁶⁸ 7.1
 those who, like fellow travelers on the road,
 are happy to provide, though they have but little.
 This is an ancient teaching.

Some who have little are happy to provide, 8.1
 while some who have much don’t wish to give.
 An offering given from little
 is multiplied a thousand times.”⁶⁹

Then another deity recited these verses in the Buddha’s presence: 9.1

“Giving what’s hard to give, 10.1
 doing what’s hard to do;
 the wicked don’t act like this,
 for the teaching of the good is hard to follow.

That’s why the virtuous and the wicked 11.1
 have different destinations after here.
 The wicked go to hell,
 while the virtuous are bound for heaven.”

Then another deity said to the Buddha, “Sir, who has spoken 12.1
 well?”

“You’ve all spoken well in your own way. However, listen to me 13.1
 also:

68. Similar imagery is used at Dhp 21, where it is the “heedful” who do not die.

69. Compare the parable of the widow’s two coins (Mark 12:41–44).

- 14.1 A hundred thousand people
 making a thousand sacrifices
 isn't worth a fraction of that sort,
 who lives rightly, wandering for gleanings,
 or one who supports their partner
 with what little they have.”
- 15.1 Then another deity addressed the Buddha in verse:
- 16.1 “Why doesn't that sacrifice of theirs, so abundant and
 magnificent,
 equal the value of a moral person's gift?
 How is it that a hundred thousand people
 making a thousand sacrifices
 isn't worth a fraction of what's offered by that sort?”
- 17.1 “Some give based on immorality—
 after slaying, killing, and tormenting.⁷⁰
 Such an offering—tearful, violent—
 in no way equals the value of a moral person's gift.
- 18.1 That's how it is that a hundred thousand people
 making a thousand sacrifices
 isn't worth a fraction of what's offered by that sort.”

SN 1.33

Good

Sādhusutta

1.1 At Sāvattthī.

1.2 Then, late at night, several glorious deities of the host of a hundred felicities, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the

70. Read *jhatvā*, “slay”.

Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side. Standing to one side, one deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence:

“Good, good fellow, is giving! 2.1
Because of stinginess and negligence
a gift is not given.
Wanting merit,
a smart person would give.”

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: 3.1

“Good, good fellow, is giving! 4.1
Even when one has little, giving is good.

Some who have little are happy to provide, 5.1
while some who have much don't wish to give.
An offering given from little
is multiplied a thousand times.”

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: 6.1

“Good, good fellow, is giving! 7.1
Even when one has little, giving is good.
And it's also good to give out of faith.
Giving and warfare are similar, they say,
for even a few of the good may conquer the many.
If a faithful person gives even a little,
it still brings them happiness in the hereafter.”

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: 8.1

“Good, good fellow, is giving! 9.1
Even when one has little, giving is good.

And it's also good to give out of faith.
And it's also good to give legitimate wealth.

- 10.1 A personage who gives legitimate wealth,⁷¹
earned by his efforts and initiative,
has passed over Yama's Vetaraṇī River;⁷²
that mortal arrives at celestial fields."

- 11.1 Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence:

- 12.1 "Good, good fellow, is giving!
Even when one has little, giving is good.
And it's also good to give out of faith.
And it's also good to give legitimate wealth.
And it's also good to give intelligently.

- 13.1 The Holy One praises giving intelligently
to those worthy of offerings here
in the world of the living.
What's given to these is very fruitful,
like seeds sown in a fertile field."

- 14.1 Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence:

- 15.1 "Good, good fellow, is giving!
Even when one has little, giving is good.
And it's also good to give out of faith.

71. *Jantu* is literally, "one who is born", and originally had the sense of "child" (Rig Veda 9.67.13) and hence "kin". In the Suttas it occasionally retains that meaning (SN 11.11:2.1), but normally just means a "person". It is exclusively reserved for poetry, so I use the elevated "personage".

72. The Vetaraṇī is described at Snp 3.10:26.1. It features in the later literature of the Brahmins (eg. Bhāgavata Purāṇa 5.26.22, Skanda Purāṇa 6.1.226.32) and Jains (Sūtrakṛtāṅga 1.5.1.8).

And it's also good to give legitimate wealth.
 And it's also good to give intelligently.
 And it's also good to be restrained
 when it comes to living creatures.

One who lives without harming any living being 16.1
 does no bad because of others' blame.⁷³
 Were that the case they praise the coward, not the
 brave;
 for the virtuous do no bad out of fear."

Then another deity said to the Buddha, "Sir, who has spoken 17.1
 well?"

"You've all spoken well in your own way. However, listen to me 18.1
 also:

A gift of faith is praised in many ways,⁷⁴ 19.1
 but a passage of teaching is better than giving,
 for the virtuous, in days old and older still,
 even attained extinction with wisdom."⁷⁵

SN 1.34

There Are None

Nasantisutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, 1.1
 Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Then, late at night, several glorious deities of the host of a hundred 1.2
 felicities, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha,

73. Both PTS and BJT have the singular *karoti* here.

74. Read *saddhā* rather than variant *addhā* (also at Ja 424:8.1 and its commentary). I think here he is affirming the good points made by the deities before making his own contribution.

75. The lesson of this verse is that study of "passages of teaching" (*dharmmapada*) stimulates wisdom leading to liberation.

bowed, and stood to one side. Standing to one side, one deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

- 2.1 "Among mankind there are no sensual pleasures that
 are permanent.
 Here there are sensuous things, bound to which,
 drunk on which, there's no coming back.
 That person doesn't return from Death's dominion."⁷⁶
- 3.1 "Gloom is born of desire; suffering is born of desire;⁷⁷ when desire
 is removed, gloom is removed; when gloom is removed, suffering is
 removed."
- 4.1 "The world's pretty things aren't sensual pleasures.
 Greedy intention is a person's sensual pleasure.
 The world's pretty things stay just as they are,
 but the attentive remove desire for them.
- 5.1 Give up anger, get rid of conceit,
 and get past all the fetters.
 Sufferings don't torment the one who has nothing,
 not clinging to name and form.
- 6.1 They gave up judgment without falling into conceit;
 craving for name and form was cut off right here.
 They cut the ties, untroubled,
 with no need for hope.
 Though gods and humans search for them
 in this life or the next, they never find them,
 not in heaven nor in any abode."

76. The deity seems to be expressing the non-Buddhist view that, while sensual pleasures in this realm are impermanent, the sinner goes to the realm of death from where is no return.

77. These lines do not appear to be verse. The text marks them as a different speaker, but the identity of the speaker is unclear.

“If neither gods nor humans see one freed in this way,” 7.1
*said Venerable Mogharāja,*⁷⁸

“in this life or the next,
 are those who revere that supreme man,
 who lives for the good of mankind,
 also worthy of praise?”

“The mendicants who revere one freed in this way,” 8.1
said the Buddha,

“are also worthy of praise, Mogharāja.
 Having understood the teaching
 and given up doubt,
 those mendicants slip their chains.”

SN 1.35

Fault-Finding Deities

Ujjhānasaññisutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, 1.1
 Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Then, late at night, several glorious deities of the host of the fault- 1.2
 finders, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha,
 and stood in the air.⁷⁹ Standing in the air, one deity spoke this verse
 in the Buddha’s presence:

“Someone who pretends 2.1
 to be other than they really are,
 is like a cheating gambler
 who enjoys what was gained by theft.

78. Best known for his verses in the Way to the Far Shore (Sn̐ 5.16), Mogharāja also features in Thag 2.44, where he lives outdoors, and AN 1.234:1.1 where he wears coarse robes. His appearance here is abrupt.

79. For the deities to stand in the air is disrespectful if not downright threatening (DN 3:1.21.1).

- 3.1 You should only say what you would do;
you shouldn't say what you wouldn't do.
The wise will recognize
one who talks without doing.”
- 4.1 “Not just by speaking,
nor solely by listening,
are you able to progress
on this hard path,
by which the attentive practicing absorption
are released from Māra's bonds.
- 5.1 The attentive certainly don't act like that,
for they understand the way of the world.
The attentive are quenched by understanding,
they've crossed over clinging to the world.”
- 6.1 Then those deities landed on the ground, bowed with their heads
to the Buddha's feet and said, “We made a mistake, sir. It was foolish,
stupid, and unskillful of us to presume to attack the Buddha! Please,
sir, accept our mistake for what it is, so we will restrain ourselves in
future.”
- 6.4 At that, the Buddha smiled.⁸⁰
- 6.5 Then those deities, becoming even more fault-finding, flew up in
the air. One deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:
- 7.1 “If you don't give your pardon
when a mistake is confessed,
with hidden anger and heavy hate,
you're stuck in your enmity.”

80. The texts usually mention the Buddha smiling when he arrives at some place of special, hidden significance (MN 81:2.1, MN 83:2.1, AN 5.180:1.3). However, at Thag 12.2:11.1 he smiled when Sunīta, having gone forth from a low-born family, was honored by the gods. In both cases the Buddha smiled at the point when the gods rightly honored one who had been seen as contemptible.

- “Suppose no mistake were found,
and no one here had gone astray:
if enmities were not settled,⁸¹
how could that be skillful?” 8.1
- “Who makes no mistakes?
Who doesn’t go astray?
Who doesn’t fall into confusion?
Who is attentive, ever mindful?” 9.1
- “The Realized One, the Buddha,
sympathetic for all beings:
that’s who makes no mistakes,
and that’s who doesn’t go astray.
He doesn’t fall into confusion,
for he’s attentive, ever mindful. 10.1
- If you don’t give your pardon
when a mistake is confessed,
with hidden anger and heavy hate,
you’re stuck in your enmity.
I don’t approve of such enmity,
and so I pardon your mistake.” 11.1

SN 1.36

Faith

Saddhāsutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, 1.1
Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

81. Commentary glosses *yadi verāṇi na sammeyyūṃ*, suggesting a reading *na ce*, weakened for the metre.

1.2 Then, late at night, several glorious deities of the host of a hundred felicities, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side. Standing to one side, one deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:⁸²

2.1 "Faith is a person's partner.⁸³
If faithlessness doesn't linger,
fame and renown are theirs,
and when they discard this corpse they go to heaven."

3.1 Then another deity recited these verses in the Buddha's presence:

4.1 "Give up anger, get rid of conceit,⁸⁴
and get past all the fetters.
Chains don't torment one who has nothing,
not clinging to name and form."⁸⁵

5.1 "Fools and simpletons⁸⁶
devote themselves to negligence.
But the wise protect diligence
as their best treasure.

6.1 Don't devote yourself to negligence,
or delight in erotic intimacy.

82. The Pali text attributes none of the verses to the Buddha. However, in the two Chinese parallels at SA 1286 and SA-2 284, one deity gives an opening verse; the Buddha responds with a series of 5 or 6 verses; then the deity concludes with a verse in praise. This gives a much more satisfying structure, and it seems likely the Pali text has suffered loss.

83. This sounds like a typical deity verse in that it culminates by going to heaven, but it is attributed to the Buddha in the Chinese parallels.

84. This verse sounds unlike something a deity would say, and like something the Buddha would say.

85. While the deity is said to recite several verses, the Pali text finishes here with a close *-ti* indicating the end of the quote.

86. The Pali text indicates no speaker for the final verses, but presumably they too were spoken by the Buddha.

For if you're diligent and practice absorption,
you'll attain ultimate happiness."

SN 1.37

The Congregation

Samayasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land 1.1
of the Sakyans, in the Great Wood near Kapilavatthu, together with a
large Saṅgha of five hundred mendicants, all of whom were perfected
ones.⁸⁷ And most of the deities from ten solar systems had gathered
to see the Buddha and the Saṅgha of mendicants.

Then four deities of the pure abodes, aware of what was happen- 1.4
ing, thought:⁸⁸ "Why don't we go to the Buddha and each recite a
verse in his presence?"

Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their 2.1
arm, they vanished from the Pure Abodes and reappeared in front
of the Buddha. They bowed to the Buddha and stood to one side.
Standing to one side, one deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's
presence:

"There's a great congregation in the woods, 3.1
where heavenly hosts have assembled.
We've come to this righteous congregation
to see the invincible Saṅgha!"

Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence: 4.1

"The mendicants there are immersed in samādhi, 5.1
they've straightened their own minds.

87. This discourse is the same as the first section of DN 20.

88. The Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsā*) are realms into which only nonreturners can be reborn. They are reckoned as five: Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha.

Like a charioteer holding the reins,
the astute ones protect their senses.”

6.1 Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

7.1 “They snapped the post and snapped the cross-bar,⁸⁹
unstirred, they tore out Indra’s pillar.⁹⁰
They live pure and immaculate,
the young giants tamed by the Clear-eyed One.”⁹¹

8.1 Then another deity spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

9.1 “Anyone who has gone to the Buddha for refuge
won’t go to a plane of loss.
After giving up this human body,
they swell the heavenly host.”

SN 1.38

A Splinter

Sakalikasutta

1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Maddakucchi deer park.

89. Read *khīla* (“post”) rather than *khila* (“barrenness”).

90. A village (Bu Pj 2:3.8) or royal compound (Bu Pc 83:1.3.56.1) was marked with a “boundary-post” (*indakhīla*). It symbolized a fixed and immovable point, either in a good sense (SN 56.39:4.1) or, as here, an obstacle. The Sanskrit *indrakīla* is a two-foot long iron bolt securing a fort, presumably fixed in the ground (Arthaśāstra 2.3.26), or else a mountain in the Himalayas. The warrior Arjuna, journeying beyond the Gandhamādana, is stopped at the Indrakīla mountain by Sakra/Indra disguised as a brahmin ascetic, at whose urging Arjuna undertakes asceticism in order to gain the power he would need (Mahābhārata 3.3.37). The symbolic sense of “stopping” relates to the Pali sense of immovability, and suggests that the underlying metaphor is the irresistible power represented by Indra.

91. *Nāga* applies to powerful beings: the cobra, the elephant, the dragon, and as here, the spiritual “giants” of the Saṅgha.

Now at that time the Buddha's foot had been cut by a wooden splinter.⁹² The Buddha was stricken by harrowing pains; physical feelings that were painful, sharp, severe, acute, unpleasant, and disagreeable. But he endured unbothered, with mindfulness and situational awareness. And then he spread out his outer robe folded in four and laid down in the lion's posture—on the right side, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful and aware. 1.3

Then, late at night, seven hundred glorious deities of the host of a hundred felicities, lighting up the entire Maddakucchi, went up to the Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side. 2.1

Standing to one side, one deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: "The ascetic Gotama is such an elephant, sir! And as an elephant, he endures painful physical feelings that have come up—sharp, severe, acute, unpleasant, and disagreeable—unbothered, with mindfulness and situational awareness." 2.2

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: "The ascetic Gotama is such a lion, sir! And as a lion, he endures painful physical feelings ... unbothered." 3.1

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: "The ascetic Gotama is such a thoroughbred, sir! And as a thoroughbred, he endures painful physical feelings ... unbothered." 4.1

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: "The ascetic Gotama is such a boss bull, sir! And as a boss bull, he endures painful physical feelings ... unbothered." 5.1

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: "The ascetic Gotama is such a behemoth, sir!"⁹³ And as a behemoth, he endures painful physical feelings ... unbothered." 6.1

Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha's presence: "The ascetic Gotama is truly tamed, sir! And as 7.1

92. This may not be the same event recorded at Kd 17:3.9.11 where a stone chip injured the Buddha's foot. Here it is *sakalikā*, a wooden splinter (eg. SN 12.55:4.4, SN 35.246:4.20).

93. "Behemoth" is *dhoraṃyha*, literally "beast of burden", a draft-horse or ox.

someone tamed, he endures painful physical feelings ... unbothered.”

- 8.1 Then another deity expressed this heartfelt sentiment in the Buddha’s presence: “See, his immersion is so well developed, and his mind is so well freed—not leaning forward or pulling back, and not held in place by forceful suppression. If anyone imagines that they can overcome such an elephant of a man, a lion of a man, a thoroughbred of a man, a boss bull of a man, a behemoth of a man, a tamed man—what is that but a failure to see?”

- 9.1 “Learned in the five branches of Vedic lore,⁹⁴
brahmins practice fervent mortification for a full century.
But their minds are not properly freed,⁹⁵
for those of base character don’t cross to the far shore.

- 10.1 Seized by craving,
attached to precept and observance,
they practice rough and fervent mortification for a hundred years.
But their minds are not properly freed,
for those of base character don’t go to the far shore.

- 11.1 Someone who’s fond of conceit can’t be tamed,
and someone without immersion can’t be a sage.
Living negligent alone in the wilderness,
they can’t cross beyond Death’s dominion.”

94. Pali texts frequently refer to the five branches of Vedic lore: the three Vedas, linguistics, and the legendary “testaments as fifth” (DN 3:1.3.1). Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.1.4 likewise mentions the Rig, Yajur, and Samn Veda, the Atharva as fourth, and the “legendary testaments as fifth of the Vedas”. | *Sataṃ samam* also describes Vedic practice at Dhṛp 106.

95. The Buddha’s equanimity in the face of pain is contrasted with those ascetics who, even though they actively pursue pain through their mortifications, still do not purify their minds.

“Having given up conceit, serene within oneself, 12.1
with a good heart, everywhere free;
living diligent alone in the wilderness,
they cross beyond Death's dominion.”

SN 1.39

With Pajjunna's Daughter (1st)

Paṭhamapajjunnadhīṭusutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Vesālī, 1.1
at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof.

Then, late at night, the glorious Kokanadā, Pajjunna's daughter, 1.3
lighting up the entire Great Wood, went up to the Buddha, bowed,
stood to one side,⁹⁶ and recited these verses in the Buddha's presence:

“Staying in the woods of Vesālī 2.1
is the Buddha, best of creation.⁹⁷
Kokanadā am I who worships him,
Kokanadā, Pajjuna's daughter.

Previously I had only heard 3.1
the teaching realized by the Clear-eyed One.
But now I know it as a witness
while the sage, the Holy One teaches.

There are simpletons who go about 4.1
denouncing the teaching of the noble ones.

96. Pajjuna is Parjanya, the Vedic god of rain, especially the thunderstorm. His “lively drops” impregnate the earth, begetting plants (Rig Veda 5.83). While I cannot find a reference elsewhere to his daughter Kokanadā, it seems fitting that the daughter of the rain and the earth is the “Red Lotus”.

97. Bodhi suggests taking the singular *sattassa* as a metrically shortened *sa-ttānam* (“beings”). However, there is a plural form *sattāna* that is metrically identical with *sattassa*. Perhaps Kokanadā is using *satta* here in the sense of “creation”.

They fall into the terrible Hell of Screams⁹⁸
where they suffer long.⁹⁹

- 5.1 There are those who have found
acceptance and peace
in the teaching of the noble ones.
After giving up this human body,
they swell the heavenly host.”

SN 1.40

With Pajjunna’s Daughter (2nd)

Dutiypajjunnadhītusuttam

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Vesālī,
at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof.
- 1.3 Then, late at night, the glorious Kokanadā the Younger, Pajjunna’s
daughter, lighting up the entire Great Wood, went up to the Buddha,
bowed, stood to one side, and recited these verses in the Buddha’s
presence:
- 2.1 “She came here, beautiful as a flash of lightning,¹⁰⁰
Kokanadā, Pajjunna’s daughter.
Revering the Buddha and the teaching,
she spoke these verses full of meaning.
- 3.1 The teaching is such that

98. The commentaries identify this *roruva* (“Hell of Screams”) with the “Smoky Roruva”, while the “Great Hell of Screams”, mentioned as the destiny of a corrupt financier in SN 3.20, is the “Flaming Roruva”, said to be the same as Avīci. These are also known in the Sanskrit tradition, eg. Manu 4.88, and described in detail at eg. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 10, 12. There, the Ruarava of glowing coals is the destiny of the false witness and the liar, while Mahāraurava is scorching copper and ravenous beasts.

99. Torment in the Mahāraurava lasts 100,000,000 years, according to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.

100. An apt description of the daughter of the thunderstorm.

I could analyze it in many different ways.
However, I will state the meaning in brief
as far as I have learned it by heart.

You should never do anything bad
by speech or mind or body in all the world.
Having given up sensual pleasures,
mindful and aware,
you shouldn't keep doing
what's painful and pointless."

4.1

The Chapter on Fire

SN 1.41

On Fire

Ādittasutta

1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthi in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

1.3 Then, late at night, a glorious deity, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and recited these verses in the Buddha's presence:

2.1 “When your house is on fire,
you rescue the pot
that's useful,
not the one that's burnt.

3.1 And as the world is on fire
with old age and death,
you should rescue by giving,
for what's given is rescued.

4.1 What's given has happiness as its fruit,
but not what isn't given.
Bandits take it, or rulers,
it's consumed by fire, or lost.

5.1 Then in the end this corpse is cast off,

along with all your possessions.
 Knowing this, an intelligent person
 would enjoy what they have and also give it away.
 After giving and using according to their means,
 blameless, they go to a heavenly place.”

SN 1.42

Giving What?

Kindadasutta

- “Giving what do you give strength? 1.1
 Giving what do you give beauty?
 Giving what do you give happiness?
 Giving what do you give vision?
 And who is the giver of all?
 Please answer my question.”
- “Giving food you give strength. 2.1
 Giving clothes you give beauty.
 Giving a vehicle you give happiness.
 Giving a lamp you give vision.
- And the giver of all 3.1
 is the one who gives monastic quarters.¹⁰¹
 But one who teaches the Dhamma
 gives the gift of freedom from death.”

101. Here and SN 1.47:2.4 are the only places we find *upassaya* used for general “monastic quarters” rather than specifically for nuns. It is one of several Jain terms used by bhikkhunīs, perhaps because several prominent early bhikkhunīs, such as Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā, converted from Jainism.

SN 1.43

Food

Annasutta

- 1.1 “Both gods and humans
enjoy their food.¹⁰²
So what’s the name of the spirit¹⁰³
who doesn’t enjoy food?”
- 2.1 “Those who give with faith
and a clear and confident heart,
partake of food
in this world and the next.
- 3.1 So you should dispel stinginess,
overcoming that stain, and give a gift.
The good deeds of sentient beings
support them in the next world.”

102. Here the word for “food” is *anna*, which is a major theme of Vedic texts. From their creation the gods needed food (Aitareya Upaniṣad 1.2.1). The Divinity created two kinds of food for the gods, namely that offered in the fire, and that offered for beings not in the fire (*hutam ca prahutam ca*), or else the offerings at new and full moon (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.5.1–2). The point is that gods are dependent and hence not free. Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.2.1 says that all creatures on the earth are produced by food, and pass back into food, the eldest of creatures, while 3.6–10 honors food as the foundation of life.

103. “Spirit” is *yakkha*. In early texts it sometimes means “mysterious manifestation of divinity”.

SN 1.44

One Root

Ekamūlasutta

“One the root, two the loops,¹⁰⁴ 1.1
 three the stains, five the spreads,¹⁰⁵
 and the ocean, the twelfth whirlpool:¹⁰⁶
 such is the abyss crossed by the seer.”

SN 1.45

Peerless

Anomasutta

“Behold him of peerless name 1.1
 who sees the subtle meaning,
 giver of wisdom,
 unattached to the realm of sensuality:
 the all-knower, so very intelligent,
 the great seer treading the noble road.”

104. The exact meaning of these items is open to interpretation. See Bodhi’s note for two readings; I offer a third. | *Āvaṭṭa* here might be read as “whirlpool”, “loop”, or “twist”.

105. *Paṭṭhara* is probably a “spread” of grass, such as was laid down in rituals.

106. If the ocean is counted as the last item, the total is twelve. *Dvādasā* can be an ordinal number. | I take the riddle as corresponding with the twelvefold “round” (*vaṭṭa*) of dependent origination. The “one root” is ignorance; the “two loops” are name-and-form with consciousness (DN 15:22.6); the “three stains” are ignorance, craving, and grasping; the “five spreads” are perhaps the five consequents starting with consciousness; and the “ocean” is transmigration itself.

SN 1.46

Nymphs

Accharāsutta

- 1.1 “It’s resounding with a group of nymphs,¹⁰⁷
but haunted by a gang of goblins!¹⁰⁸
This grove is called ‘Deluding.’¹⁰⁹
How will I keep going?”
- 2.1 “That path is called ‘the direct way,’¹¹⁰
and it’s headed for the place called ‘fearless’.
The chariot is called ‘unswerving,’¹¹¹
fitted with wheels of the teaching.¹¹²
- 3.1 Conscience is its bench-back,
mindfulness its upholstery.
I say the teaching is the driver,
with right view running out in front.

107. The nymphs (*accharā*, “aquatics”, perhaps originally cloud-deities) were known from Vedic times as beautiful dancers and musicians often romantically entwined with the *gandhabba*.

108. As horrifying as nymphs are seductive, the flesh-eating *pisāca* (Sanskrit *piśāca*) arises in troops under cover of night and slips through the air wreaking havoc.

109. Delusion contains both desire and aversion.

110. This Sutta contrasts the “direct” way with the “deluding” (*mohana*) way. This recalls the notion that the teaching shows the way to those who are lost (*mūlhasa vā maggaṃ ācikkheyya*, SN 7.1:9.3). This echoes the common description of the Saṅgha as practicing the way that is “direct”, suggesting that they are proceeding directly along a known route (SN 11.3:11.2).

111. Verses connecting parts of the Dhamma to a chariot are also found at SN 41.5 and SN 45.4. | Chariots appear throughout the Vedic literature as vehicles of gods and heroes, and in metaphors especially for the sun and the sacrifice. Rig Veda 10.135.3 speaks of a chariot created by the mind, with a single pole and facing all directions, which connects a grieving son with his departed father.

112. Normally *dharmacakka*, the “wheel of the teaching”, is singular, this being a unique plural. The commentary explains as mental and physical energy.

Any woman or man 4.1
 who has such a vehicle,
 by means of this vehicle
 has drawn near to extinguishment.”

SN 1.47

Planters

Vanaropasutta

“Whose merit always grows 1.1
 by day and by night?
 What people—firm in principle,
 accomplished in conduct—
 are going to heaven?”

“Planters of parks or groves,¹¹³ 2.1
 those who build a bridge,
 a drinking place and well,
 and those who give monastic quarters.

Their merit always grows 3.1
 by day and by night.
 Those people—firm in principle,
 accomplished in conduct—
 are going to heaven.”

113. This verse is cited at Kv 7.5 in discussing the controverted point of whether the merit of a gift keeps growing even after it is given.

SN 1.48

Jeta's Grove

Jetavanasutta

- 1.1 “This is indeed that Jeta’s Grove,¹¹⁴
frequented by the Saṅgha of seers,
where the King of Dhamma stayed:
it brings me joy!
- 2.1 Deeds, knowledge, and principle;
ethical conduct, an excellent livelihood;
by these are mortals purified,
not by clan or wealth.
- 3.1 That’s why an astute person,
seeing what’s good for themselves,
would examine the teaching rationally,
that’s how they become purified in that.
- 4.1 Sāriputta is full of wisdom,¹¹⁵
ethics, and peace.
Even a mendicant who has crossed over
might at best equal him.”

SN 1.49

Stingy

Maccharisutta

- 1.1 “Those folk in the world who are stingy,
miserly and abusive,

114. These verses are also found at SN 2.20, where they are attributed to Anāthapiṇḍika.

115. Anāthapiṇḍika was especially devoted to Sāriputta (see MN 143).

setting up obstacles
for others who give.

What kind of result do they reap? 2.1
What kind of future life?
We've come to ask the worthy sir:
how are we to understand this?"

"Those folk in the world who are stingy, 3.1
miserly and abusive,
setting up obstacles
for others who give:

they're reborn in hell, 4.1
the animal realm, or Yama's world.¹¹⁶
If they return to the human state,
they're born in a poor family,

where clothes, food, pleasure, and play 5.1
are hard to find.
They don't even get
what they hope for from others.
This is the result in the present life,
and in the next, a bad destination."

"We understand what you're saying,¹¹⁷ 6.1

116. Yama's world is ambiguous. In standard Buddhist cosmology his realm stands above the gods of the Thirty-Three (MN 97:30.18), but here we would normally find the ghost realm (*pettivisaya*). His true role is as guardian to the paths or rivers that lead one from one life to another (SN 1.33:10.3, MN 130:3.1, Dhṛp 235). He was the son of Vivasvant (the sun) and brother of Manu, and as the first person to die, Rig Veda 10.4 tells us that he discovered the paths to the lands of the dead that he now guards with his pair of hounds. Yama is a righteous god, but sinners see him as horrifying due to their own guilt (Brahma Purāṇa 106.46).

117. This idiom is also found in the Parābhavaṣutta (Snṇ 1.6).

and ask another question, Gotama.
 What about those who've gained the human state,
 who are bountiful and rid of stinginess,

7.1 confident in the Buddha and the teaching,
 with keen respect for the Saṅgha?
 What kind of result do they reap?
 What kind of future life?
 We've come to ask the worthy sir:
 how are we to understand this?"

8.1 "Those who've gained the human state
 who are bountiful and rid of stinginess,
 confident in the Buddha and the teaching,
 with keen respect for the Saṅgha:
 they illuminate the heavens¹¹⁸
 wherever they're reborn.

9.1 If they return to the human state,
 they're reborn in a rich family,
 where clothes, food, pleasure, and play
 are easy to find.

10.1 They rejoice like those
 who control the possessions of others.
 This is the result in the present life,
 and in the next, a good destination."

118. Read *ete sagge pakāśenti* with PTS and BJT.

SN 1.50

With Ghaṭikāra

Ghaṭikārasutta

- “Seven mendicants reborn in Aviha¹¹⁹ 1.1
 have been freed.
 With the complete ending of greed and hate,
 they’ve crossed over clinging to the world.”
- “Who are those who’ve crossed the bog, 2.1
 Death’s dominion so hard to pass?
 Who, after leaving behind the human body,¹²⁰
 have risen above celestial yokes?”
- “Upaka and Palagaṇḍa,¹²¹ 3.1
 and Pukkusāti, these three;¹²²
 Bhaddiya and Bhaddadeva,¹²³
 and Bāhudanti and Piṅgiya.¹²⁴
 They, after leaving behind the human body,
 have risen above celestial yokes.”

119. This discourse, with more background, is also at SN 2.24. | Aviha is one of the realms in which non-returners are born. The speaker is announcing that these seven have become perfected ones in that realm.

120. I follow Bodhi in using the BJT readings, with variants in notes.

121. An Ājīvaka ascetic named Upaka met the Buddha shortly after his awakening, but was unconvinced (MN 26:25.1); the commentary says that this was he. Another Upaka, a layman, encounters the Buddha at AN 4.188. | Palagaṇḍa means “mason”, but no one of that name is known.

122. The story of Pukkusāti is told in MN 140.

123. Several mendicants named Bhaddiya are known, but they are arahants so it does not fit. A Licchavi layman of the same name appears in AN 4.193, but there is no indication he went forth. | Bhaddadeva (*khaṇḍadeva*) is otherwise unknown.

124. Bāhudanti (*bāhuraggi*, *bahunandi*) is also a name of Indra, the “son of Bahudanti”. | Piṅgiya (*siṅgiya*) is probably the brahmin ascetic who features in Snp 5.17.

- 4.1 “You speak well of them,
who have let go the snares of Māra.
Whose teaching did they understand
to cut the bonds of rebirth?”
- 5.1 “None other than the Blessed One!
None other than your instruction!
It was your teaching that they understood
to cut the bonds of rebirth.
- 6.1 Where name and form
cease with no residue left behind;
understanding this teaching,
they cut the bonds of rebirth.”
- 7.1 “The words you say are deep,
hard to understand, so very hard to wake up to.
Whose teaching did you understand
that you can say such things?”
- 8.1 “In the past I was a potter¹²⁵
in Vebhaliṅga named Ghaṭikāra.
I took care of my parents
as a lay follower of Buddha Kassapa.
- 9.1 I refrained from sexual intercourse,
I was chaste, spiritual.
We lived in the same village;
in the past I was your comrade.
- 10.1 I am the one who understands
that these seven mendicants have been freed.
With the complete ending of greed and hate,
they’ve crossed over clinging to the world.”

125. This story is told in detail in MN 81.

- “That’s exactly how it was,
just as you say, Bhaggava.¹²⁶
In the past you were a potter
in Vebhaliṅga named Ghaṭikāra.
You took care of your parents
as a lay follower of Buddha Kassapa. 11.1
- You refrained from sexual intercourse,
you were chaste, spiritual. 12.1
We lived in the same village;
in the past you were my comrade.”
- That’s how it was¹²⁷ 13.1
when those friends of old met again.
Both of them were evolved,
bearing their final body.¹²⁸

126. The Buddha calls him by his clan name, as the Buddha Kassapa does at MN 81:19.3.

127. The commentary says that this verse was added by the redactors.

128. This confirms that Ghaṭikāra, too, had realized arahantship in his final birth in Aviha. This explains how he was able to know that the others were arahants.

The Chapter on Old Age

SN 1.51

Old Age

Jarāsutta

- 1.1 “What’s still good in old age?
What’s good when grounded?
What is people’s treasure?
What’s hard for thieves to take?”
- 2.1 “Ethics are still good in old age.
Faith is good when grounded.
Wisdom is people’s treasure.
Merit’s hard for thieves to take.”

SN 1.52

Getting Old

Ajarasāsutta

- 1.1 “What’s good because it never gets old?
What’s good when committed?
What is people’s treasure?
What can thieves never take?”
- 2.1 “Ethics are good because they never grow old.

Faith is good when committed.¹²⁹
Wisdom is people's treasure.
Merit's what thieves can never take."

SN 1.53

A Friend

Mittasutta

"Who's your friend while journeying? 1.1
Who's your friend at home?
Who's your friend in time of need?
Who's your friend in lives to come?"

"A caravan is your friend while journeying. 2.1
Mother is your friend at home.
An ally in time of need
is a friend time and again.
But the good deeds you've done yourself—
that's your friend in lives to come."

SN 1.54

Grounds

Vatthusutta

"What is the site for human beings? 1.1
What is the best comrade here?
By what do the creatures who live off the earth
sustain their life?"

"Children are the site for human beings. 2.1

129. The previous discourse had *patitṭhitā* ("grounded", i.e. based on reason), whereas here we have *adhiṭṭhitā* ("committed", i.e. unwavering).

A wife is the best comrade.¹³⁰
 The creatures who live off the earth
 sustain their life by rain.”¹³¹

SN 1.55

Gives Birth (1st)

Paṭhamajanasutta

- 1.1 “What gives birth to a person?
 What do they have that runs about?
 What enters transmigration?
 What’s their greatest fear?”
- 2.1 “Craving gives birth to a person.
 Their mind is what runs about.
 A sentient being enters transmigration.
 Suffering is their greatest fear.”

SN 1.56

Gives Birth (2nd)

Dutiyajanasutta

- 1.1 “What gives birth to a person?
 What do they have that runs about?
 What enters transmigration?
 From what are they not free?”
- 2.1 “Craving gives birth to a person.
 Their mind is what runs about.
 A sentient being enters transmigration.

130. See AN 7.63:10.1.

131. For eulogies of rain, see the related verse at SN 1.80:4.1, and also SN 1.13:3.4, SN 1.74:2.2.

From suffering they are not free.”

SN 1.57

Gives Birth (3rd)

Tatiyajanasutta

“What gives birth to a person? 1.1
What do they have that runs about?
What enters transmigration?
What is their destiny?”

“Craving gives birth to a person. 2.1
Their mind is what runs about.
A sentient being enters transmigration.
Deeds are their final haven.”¹³²

SN 1.58

Deviation

Uppathasutta

“What’s declared to be a deviation?¹³³ 1.1
What is ending day and night?
What’s the stain of chastity?
What’s the waterless bath?”¹³⁴

“Lust is declared to be a deviation. 2.1
Youth is ending day and night.
Women are the stain of chastity,

132. This is illustrated at SN 3.21.

133. “Deviation” is *uppatha* (“off course”). | These questions and answers are included in SN 1.76.

134. A reference to the belief that bathing in water brings purity. Compare the “inner bathing” at MN 7:18.5.

to which this generation clings.
 Fervor and chastity¹³⁵
 are the waterless bath.”

SN 1.59

A Partner

Dutiyasutta

- 1.1 “What is a person’s partner?
 What instructs them?
 Enjoying what is a mortal
 released from all suffering?”
- 2.1 “Faith is a person’s partner.
 Wisdom instructs them.
 Delighting in extinguishment a mortal
 is released from all suffering.”

SN 1.60

A Poet

Kavisutta

- 1.1 “What’s the source of verses?¹³⁶
 What constitutes their phrasing?
 What do verses depend upon?
 What underlies verses?”

135. “Fervor and celibacy” (*tapas* and *brahmacariya*) are closely linked in Atharva Veda 11.5, which eulogizes the brahmacārin as the force of potency creating even the gods.

136. In this short discourse the Buddha articulates a naturalistic theory of poetry.

“Metre is the source of verses.”¹³⁷
 Syllables constitute their phrasing.¹³⁸
 Verses depend on names.¹³⁹
 A poet underlies verses.”¹⁴⁰

2.1

137. Rig Veda 10.90.9 says that verses, chants, and metres were born, rather, from the sacrifice.

138. The *akkhara* (“syllable”) is the smallest indivisible morpheme, typically consisting of a consonant bound with a vowel. Mystically, it is the “imperishable” Divinity within all things. The “phrasing” (*viyañjana*) is the complex linguistic expression. Verses and other expressions are often counted by their syllables (eg. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.2.1.22, 6.2.2.33, 6.3.1.43).

139. Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.1.4 defines “name” (*nāma*) as the Vedic texts and sciences.

140. The Buddha uses the worldly word for “poet” (*kavi*) instead of the divinely-inspired Vedic “seer” (*isi*).

The Chapter on Oppressed

SN 1.61

Name

Nāmasutta

- 1.1 “What overcomes everything?
What is it that nothing excels?
What is the one thing
that has everything under its sway?”
- 2.1 “Name overcomes everything.”¹⁴¹
Nothing excels name.”¹⁴²
Name is the one thing
that has everything under its sway.”¹⁴³

141. Compare Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 20.2.32, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.6.5.3.

142. This contradicts Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.1.5, which states, “Surely there is that which excels name” (*nāmno vāva bhūyo ’stīti*), which it says is the “speech” that makes the scripture known.

143. The Buddha is refuting the doctrine that “name” (and form) come to an end in the ocean of infinite consciousness (see too DN 15:22.6).

SN 1.62

Mind

Cittasutta

“What leads the world on? 1.1
What drags it around?
What is the one thing
that has everything under its sway?”

“The mind leads the world on. 2.1
The mind drags it around.
Mind is the one thing
that has everything under its sway.”

SN 1.63

Craving

Taṇhāsutta

“What leads the world on? 1.1
What drags it around?
What is the one thing
that has everything under its sway?”

“Craving leads the world on. 2.1
Craving drags it around.
Craving is the one thing
that has everything under its sway.”

SN 1.64

Fetter

Samyojanasutta

- 1.1 “What fetters the world?
How does it travel about?¹⁴⁴
With the giving up of what
is extinguishment spoken of?”
- 2.1 “Delight fetters the world.
It travels about by means of thought.
With the giving up of craving
extinguishment is spoken of.”

SN 1.65

Bonds

Bandhanasutta

- 1.1 “What binds the world?
How does it travel about?
With the giving up of what
are all bonds severed?”
- 2.1 “Delight binds the world.
It travels about by means of thought.
With the giving up of craving
all bonds are severed.”

144. The commentary here explains *vicāraṇa* as “feet”.

SN 1.66

Beaten Down

Attahatasutta

“By what is the world beaten down? 1.1
By what is it surrounded?
What dart has laid it low?
With what is it always fuming?”

“The world is beaten down by death. 2.1
It’s surrounded by old age.
The dart of craving has laid it low.
It’s always fuming with desire.”

SN 1.67

Ensnared

Uḍḍitasutta

“By what is the world ensnared? 1.1
By what is it surrounded?
By what is the world fastened shut?
On what is the world grounded?”

“Craving has ensnared the world. 2.1
It’s surrounded by old age.
The world is fastened shut by mortality.
The world is grounded on suffering.”

SN 1.68

Fastened Shut

Pihitasutta

- 1.1 “By what is the world fastened shut?¹⁴⁵
 On what is the world grounded?
 By what is the world ensnared?
 By what is it surrounded?”
- 2.1 “The world is fastened shut by mortality.
 The world is grounded on suffering.
 Craving has ensnared the world.
 It’s surrounded by old age.”

SN 1.69

Desire

Ichāsutta

- 1.1 “What is it that binds the world?
 By removing what is it freed?
 With the giving up of what
 are all bonds severed?”
- 2.1 “Desire is what binds the world.
 By the removing of desire it’s freed.
 With the giving up of desire,
 all bonds are severed.”

145. This is the same as the previous, except the lines are rearranged.

SN 1.70

The World

Lokasutta

“In what has the world arisen? 1.1
With what does it get intimate?
By grasping what¹⁴⁶
is the world troubled in what?”

“The world has arisen in six.¹⁴⁷ 2.1
It gets intimate with six.
Derived from the six,
the world’s troubled in six.”

146. I follow Bodhi’s construal of these lines, see note 126 in *Connected Discourses*.

147. The six senses.

The Chapter on Incinerated

SN 1.71

Slain

Chetvāsutta

1.1 At Sāvathī.

1.2 Standing to one side, that deity addressed the Buddha in verse:

2.1 “When what is slain do you sleep at ease?¹⁴⁸
When what is slain is there no sorrow?
What is the one thing, Gotama,
whose killing you approve?”

3.1 “When anger’s slain you sleep at ease.
When anger’s slain there is no sorrow.
Anger has a poisonous root
and a sweet tip, O deity.
The noble ones praise its killing,
for when it’s slain there is no sorrow.”

148. For reading *jhatvā* with the primary sense “to slay”, see Brough, *The Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, p. 265, note on verses 288, 289.

SN 1.72

A Chariot

Rathasutta

“What is a chariot known by? 1.1
What is fire known by?
What is a nation known by?
What is a woman known by?”

“A chariot is known by a banner. 2.1
Fire is known by smoke.
A nation is known by its ruler.
A woman is known by her husband.”

SN 1.73

Wealth

Vittasutta

“What’s a person’s best wealth? 1.1
What brings happiness when practiced well?
What’s the sweetest taste of all?
The one they say has the best life: how do they live?”

“Faith here is a person’s best wealth. 2.1
The teaching brings happiness when practiced well.
Truth is the sweetest taste of all.
The one they say has the best life lives by wisdom.”

SN 1.74

Rain

Vuṭṭhisutta

- 1.1 “What’s the best of things that rise?
And what’s the finest thing to fall?
And what of the things that go forth?
And who’s the finest speaker?”
- 2.1 “A seed’s the best of things that rise.
Rain’s the finest thing to fall.
Cattle, of things that go forth.
And a child is the finest speaker.”¹⁴⁹
- 3.1 “Knowledge is best of things that rise.
Ignorance the finest thing to fall.
The Saṅgha, of things that go forth.
And the Buddha is the finest speaker.”

SN 1.75

Afraid

Bhītāsutta

- 1.1 “Why are so many people here afraid,
when the path has been taught
with so many dimensions?
I ask you, Gotama, whose wisdom is vast:
Standing on what need one not fear the next world?”

149. The commentary says this refers to a child who testifies on one’s behalf in a court of law. But I think it is about the joy a parent feels when they hear their child speak for the first time. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.4.2.38 says, “children utter speech” (*prajā vācam pravādanti*) when one year old.

“When speech and mind are directed right, 2.1
 and you don’t do anything bad with the body
 while dwelling at home with plenty of food and drink.
 Faithful, gentle, charitable, and bountiful:
 one who stands on these four principles,
 who stands on the teaching
 need not fear the next world.”

SN 1.76

Getting Old

Najiratisutta

“What ages, what does not age? 1.1
 What’s called a deviation?
 What’s a roadblock for skillful qualities?
 What is ending day and night?
 What’s the stain of celibacy?
 What’s the waterless bath?

How many holes are there in the world, 2.1
 where one’s wealth leaks out?
 We’ve come to ask the worthy sir:
 how are we to understand this?”

“The physical form of mortals gets old, 3.1
 but their name and clan don’t.
 Lust is called a deviation,

and greed is a roadblock for skillful qualities. 4.1
 Youth is ending day and night.
 Women are the stain of chastity,
 to which this generation clings.
 Fervor and chastity
 are the waterless bath.

- 5.1 There are six holes in the world,
 where one's wealth leaks out:
 laziness and negligence,
 lack of initiative and lack of restraint,¹⁵⁰
 sleepiness and sloth.
 You should completely get rid of these holes!"

SN 1.77

Authority

Issariyasutta

- 1.1 "What is authority in the world?
 What's the best of valuables?
 What in the world is a rusty sword?
 Who is a pest in the world?"¹⁵¹
- 2.1 Who gets arrested when they take things away?
 And who is loved when they take things away?
 And who is approved by the astute
 when they come again and again?"
- 3.1 "Sway is authority in the world.
 A woman is the best of valuables.
 Anger in the world is a rusty sword.
 A bandit is a pest in the world.

150. Compare the "roadblocks for wealth" at AN 10.73:2.2. This shows that *vitta* ("wealth") is correct here, not *citta* ("mind").

151. "Pest" is *abbuda*, literally "tumor", "cancer". Also an early stage of embryonic development (SN 10.1:3.2) and the name of a hell or a very large number (SnP 3.10:8.2, SN 6.10:6.2). Originally the name of the snake Arbuda crushed beneath Indra's foot, where he is mentioned along with other foes such as Vṛtra, Namuci, etc. (Rig Veda 1.51.6, 2.11.20, 2.14.4, 8.3.19, 8.32.3, 8.32.26, 10.67.12). As Arbuda Kādraveya he is, rather curiously, said to have composed Rig Veda 10.94, where he addresses the pressing stones. He is also invoked in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.4.3.9.

A bandit gets arrested when they take things away. 4.1
 And an ascetic is loved when they take things away.
 An ascetic is approved by the astute
 when they come again and again.”

SN 1.78

Desire

Kāmasutta

“What should one who wants what’s best 1.1
 not give away?
 What should a mortal not forsake?
 What should be released when it’s good,
 but not when it’s bad?”

“A man shouldn’t give away himself.¹⁵² 2.1
 He shouldn’t forsake himself.
 Speech should be released when it’s good,
 but not when it’s bad.”

SN 1.79

Provisions

Pātheyyasutta

“What binds the provisions for a journey?¹⁵³ 1.1
 What’s the vault of wealth?¹⁵⁴
 What drags a person around?

152. The response puns on *attha* (“the goal”, “what’s best”) with *attā*, “oneself”.

153. *Pātheyya* is equivalent to the archaic Latinate *viatica*, “provisions for a journey”. Both this question and the next have the literal sense of safeguarding one’s possessions.

154. *Āsaya* here has the sense of a place of safety (see Manu 7.160), which for wealth is a “vault”.

What in the world is hard to give up?
 With what are ordinary beings bound,
 like birds in a snare?”

- 2.1 “Faith binds the provisions for a journey.¹⁵⁵
 Majesty is the vault of wealth.¹⁵⁶
 Desire drags a person around.
 Desire in the world is hard to give up.
 Ordinary beings are bound by desire,
 like birds in a snare.”

SN 1.80

Lamp

Pajjotasutta

- 1.1 “What’s the lamp for the world?
 What in the world is wakeful?
 Who are one’s work colleagues?
 What is one’s walk of life?
- 2.1 What nurtures the idle and the tireless,
 like a mother her child?
 By what do the creatures who live off the earth
 sustain their life?”
- 3.1 “Wisdom is the lamp for the world.
 Mindfulness in the world is wakeful.

155. The Buddha elevates the meaning, since faith holds all the factors of the path together.

156. *Sirī* (“majesty”) is explained by the commentary as *issariya*, “sovereignty”. This suggests that the sense is that wealth can only be safeguarded by power. Alternatively, *sirī* can also mean “luck” or “Lady Luck”, suggesting that the keeping of wealth is just a matter of luck.

Cattle are one's work colleagues,¹⁵⁷
and the furrow is one's walk of life.

Rain nurtures the idle and the tireless, 4.1
like a mother her child.
The creatures who live off the earth
sustain their life by rain."

SN 1.81

Free of Strife

Araṇasutta

"Who in the world is free of strife? 1.1
Whose life is not wasted?
Who here completely understands desire?
Who always lives as their own master?

To whom do mother, father, and brothers 2.1
bow when they're established?
Who here, though low born,
is bowed to even by aristocrats?"

"Ascetics are free of strife in the world.¹⁵⁸ 3.1
The life of ascetics is not wasted.¹⁵⁹
Ascetics completely understand desire.
Ascetics always live as their own master.

Mother, father, and brothers 4.1
bow to ascetics when they're established.

157. Only the first lines are specifically spiritual, while the remainder is concerned with worldly abundance.

158. How this is achieved is treated in MN 139:0.2.

159. The word for "life" here (*vusitaṃ*) commonly describes the completion of the spiritual path.

Even though an ascetic is low born,
they're bowed to even by aristocrats.”¹⁶⁰

The Linked Discourses on Deities are complete.

160. Such as King Ajātasattu (DN 2:36.2).

LINKED DISCOURSES ON GODLINGS

Chapter One

SN 2.1

With Kassapa (1st)

Paṭhamakassapasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattṭhi in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.3 Then, late at night, the glorious godling Kassapa, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and said to him,¹⁶¹ “The Buddha has revealed the mendicant, but not his instructions to a mendicant.”¹⁶²
- 1.5 “Well then, Kassapa, clarify this matter yourself.”

161. The commentary says that godlings (*devaputta*) are born “in the lap of the gods”, that is, not from a womb. Typically, in contrast with the “deities” (*devatā*), they are named individuals. The commentary also takes the term as gendered, with *devaputta* as “son of god” and *devadhītā* as “daughter of god”. But as the latter term is not attested in early Pali (or Sanskrit) we should probably take *devaputta* as gender neutral (like *devatā*). This is supported by pre-Buddhist Sanskrit, where we only find *devaputra* as an adjective, “the heaven and earth, whose children are gods”, where those children are “two young women, sisters” (Rig Veda 1.185.4). | Many of the Suttas in this chapter refer to Indra (i.e. Sakka) under different names. Indra was a son of the original Kassapa, so this may refer to Indra with the patronymic.

162. This is an unusual thing to say, as the Buddha obviously gave instructions for mendicants very often. It must have a specific context. The commentary supplies a context, but it relies on a later legend. | This suggests that the verse below, which is phrased as a direct exhortation to the mendicants, is to be read as Kassapa quoting the Buddha’s own words. However, no such verse is attributed

“You should all train 2.1
to learn well-spoken words,¹⁶³
to attend closely to ascetics,
to sit alone in hidden places,
and to calm the mind.”

That is what the godling Kassapa said, and the Teacher concurred. 3.1
Then Kassapa, knowing that the Teacher concurred, bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.

SN 2.2

With Kassapa (2nd)

Dutiyakassapasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Standing to one side, the godling Kassapa spoke this verse in the 1.2
Buddha’s presence:

“If a mendicant is a meditator, freed in mind,¹⁶⁴ 2.1
and if they desire the heart’s fulfillment—¹⁶⁵
having known the arising and passing of the world,
good-hearted, independent, that is their reward.”

to the Buddha in the Pali canon. At Thag 3.7:3.1 it is spoken by the mendicant Vāraṇa.

163. I read *sikkhetha* as second person plural optative, and *subhāsita* (etc.) as dative (of purpose), although we would expect the *āya* form in this sense. The commentary glosses with third singular and accusative (*subhāsitaṃ sikkheyya*). Norman (*Elders Verses I*, note 239) suggests it may be locative.

164. Verse also at SN 2.13.

165. Compare SN 4.25:14.1.

SN 2.3

With Māgha

Māghasutta

1.1 At Sāvattī.

1.2 Then, late at night, the glorious godling Māgha, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side,¹⁶⁶ and addressed the Buddha in verse:

2.1 “When what is slain do you sleep at ease?¹⁶⁷
 When what is slain is there no sorrow?
 What is the one thing
 whose killing you approve?”

3.1 “When anger's slain you sleep at ease.
 When anger's slain there is no sorrow.
 Anger has a poisonous root
 and a sweet tip, O Smiter of the Constrictor.¹⁶⁸
 The noble ones praise its killing,
 for when it's slain there is no sorrow.”

166. Māgha is one of the many names of Sakka. It's a *taddhita* construction from *magha* in possessive sense meaning “bounteous one”, and is thus a synonym of Maghavā (SN 11.12:1.3).

167. The same question is at SN 11.21 under the name Sakka and epithet Vāsava.

168. *Vatrabhū* is the Pali spelling of Sanskrit *vrtrahan*, “slayer of the Constrictor”. This is the only time it appears in Pali. Vṛtra was a massive cobra whose defeat at the hands of Indra/Sakka was a primordial Vedic myth (eg. Rig Veda 1.32). Vṛtra, who was identified with wickedness (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11.1.5.7), held the waters imprisoned. The release of the waters for the good of all is the primary symbol of Indra's bounty.

SN 2.4

With Maghada

Māgadhasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Standing to one side, the godling Maghada addressed the Buddha
in verse:¹⁶⁹ 1.2

“How many lamps are there¹⁷⁰

2.1

that light up the world?

We’ve come to ask the Buddha;

how are we to understand this?”

“There are four lamps in the world,

3.1

a fifth is not found.

The sun blazes by day,

the moon radiates at night,

while a fire illuminates both

4.1

by day and by night.

But a Buddha is the best of blazes:

this is the supreme radiance.”

SN 2.5

With Dāmali

Dāmalisutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

169. The name is variously spelled *māgha* (like the previous Sutta) or *māgadha*, suggesting he is the god “of Magadha”—but we meet no such deity elsewhere. I think it should be corrected to Maghada, “giver of bounty”, cf. Rig Vedic *maghadeya* (7.67.9), *indro maghāni dayate* (7.21.7). I adopt this spelling even though it is, so far as I know, unattested in manuscripts. See also note on next Sutta.

170. These verses also at SN 1.26.

1.2 Then, late at night, the glorious godling Dāmali, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side,¹⁷¹ and spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

2.1 “This is what should be done by a brahmin:¹⁷²
unrelenting striving.
Then, with the giving up of sensual pleasures,
they won’t hope to be reborn.”

3.1 “The brahmin has nothing left to do,”¹⁷³
said the Buddha to Dāmali,
“for they’ve completed their task.
So long as a personage fails to gain a footing in the
river,
they swim with every limb.¹⁷⁴
But someone who has gained a footing
and stands on dry land
need not swim,
for they have reached the far shore.

4.1 Dāmali, this is a simile for the brahmin,
alert, a meditator who has ended defilements.
Since they’ve reached the end of rebirth and death,
they need not swim,
for they have reached the far shore.”

171. Dāmali is elsewhere unknown. But cf. Vedic *dāman*, “giver”, which is associated with *magha* at Rig Veda 5.79.4. Given its close association with Indra, who is “made to be a giver” (8.93.8, see too 5.36.1, 6.24.4), it seems likely this is yet another epithet of Sakka.

172. Dāmali is treating the “brahmin” as one who still needs to practice. | This line parallels the opening of the Mettasutta (Sn̐ 1.8:1.1).

173. For the Buddha, the only true brahmin is the arahant.

174. This couplet confirms the meaning “swim” for *āyūhati*.

With Kāmada

Kāmadāsutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Standing to one side, the godling Kāmada said to the Buddha,¹⁷⁵ 1.2
 “It’s too hard, Blessed One! It’s just too hard!”

“They do it even though it’s hard,”

2.1

said the Buddha to Kāmada,

“the stable trainees with ethics, and immersion.

For one who has entered the homeless life,
 contentment brings happiness.”

“Such contentment, Blessed One, is hard to find.”

3.1

“They find it even though it’s hard,”

4.1

said the Buddha to Kāmada,

“those who love peace of mind;
 whose minds love to meditate
 day and night.”

“But it’s hard, Blessed One, to immerse this mind in samādhi.”

5.1

“They become immersed in samādhi

6.1

even though it’s hard,”

said the Buddha to Kāmada,

“those who love calming the faculties.

Having cut through the net of Death,
 the noble ones, Kāmada, go on their way.”

175. Kāmada, the “granter of pleasure” is otherwise unknown in early texts, but later is an epithet of the Sun or of Shiva. More likely, given that *kāmada* has the same sense as the names in the previous Suttas, it is once more Indra under another name.

7.1 “But this path, Blessed One, is rough and hard to travel.”

8.1 “Though it’s rough, hard to travel,
the noble ones, Kāmada, go on their way.
The ignoble fall headfirst
on a rough path.
But the path of the noble ones is smooth,
for the noble ones are smooth amid the rough.”

SN 2.7

With Pañcālacaṇḍa

Pañcālacaṇḍasutta

1.1 At Sāvatthī.

1.2 Standing to one side, the godling Pañcālacaṇḍa spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:¹⁷⁶

2.1 “The opening amid confinement
was discovered by the Buddha of vast intelligence,
who awakened to absorption,¹⁷⁷
the sage, the solitary boss bull.”

176. This saying by Pañcālacaṇḍa is quoted by Udāyī and explained by Ānanda at AN 9.42. Pañcālacaṇḍa appears alongside Ālavaka, the tutelary deity of Ālavī, hinting that he may be the fierce (*caṇḍa*) protector of the Pañcāla clan (DN 32:10.16). Several Pañcālacaṇḍas appear in the Jātakas: a licentious youth and a misogynistic chaplain (Ja 536), and a prince of Pañcāla (Ja 546). A Pañcālacaṇḍa appears as a Vedic teacher of the idea that speech is what unifies (Aitareya Āraṇyaka 3.1.6 = Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka 7.19, Gopatha Brāhmaṇa 1.1.27n). None of these, however, have any obvious relation to our text.

177. The compound *jhānamabujjhi* can be resolved as either *jhānam abujjhi* (“awakened to absorption”) or *jhānena abujjhi* (“awakened by means of absorption”). At AN 9.42, Ānanda explains that each stage of absorption is an “opening” relative to what came before, but still a “confinement”, and only Nibbāna is the opening without confinement. The thrust of the verse, therefore, is the Buddha’s insight into the nature of absorption, supporting the sense “awakened to absorption”.

“Even amid confinement they understand,” 3.1
said the Buddha to Pañcālacaṇḍa,
 “the principle for attaining extinguishment.
 Those who have acquired mindfulness
 are perfectly serene in samādhi.”

SN 2.8

With Tāyana

Tāyanasutta

At Sāvattḥī. 1.1

Then, late at night, the glorious godling Tāyana, formerly a religious founder, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side,¹⁷⁸ and recited these verses in the Buddha’s presence: 1.2

“Cut the stream, striving!¹⁷⁹ 2.1
 Cast aside sensual pleasures, brahmin.
 A sage who doesn’t give up sensual pleasures
 is not reborn in a unified state.¹⁸⁰

If one is to do what should be done, 3.1
 one should staunchly strive.
 For the life gone forth when laxly led
 just stirs up dust all the more.

A bad deed is better left undone, 4.1
 for it will plague you later on.

178. Tāyana means “defender” (here the affix *-ana* is agentive). Compare Vedic *trātr*, “defender”, an epithet of Indra (eg. Rig Veda 2.23.8, 6.25.7).

179. These verses are often recited by mendicants to remind them of their commitment.

180. As, for example, the gods of universal beauty (AN 7.44:4.1). Tāyana taught rebirth in the Brahmā realm as the goal of his spiritual life, as did other religious founders of the past (AN 6.54, AN 7.73, AN 7.74, AN 7.66).

A good deed is better done,
one that does not plague you.

- 5.1 When kusa grass is wrongly grasped
it only cuts the hand.
So too, the ascetic life, when wrongly taken,
drags you to hell.

- 6.1 Any lax act,
any corrupt observance,
or suspicious spiritual life,
is not very fruitful.”

- 7.1 That is what the godling Tāyana said. Then he bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.

- 8.1 Then, when the night had passed, the Buddha told the mendicants all that had happened.

- 8.2 “Mendicants, tonight, the glorious godling Tāyana, formerly a religious founder, lighting up the entire Jeta’s Grove, came to me, bowed, stood to one side, and recited these verses in my presence.” The Buddha repeated the verses in full, adding:

- 14.1 “That is what the godling Tāyana said. Then he bowed and respectfully circled me, keeping me on his right side, before vanishing right there. Mendicants, learn the verses of Tāyana! Memorize the verses of Tāyana! Remember the verses of Tāyana! These verses are beneficial and relate to the fundamentals of the spiritual life.”

SN 2.9

The Moon

Candimasutta

At Sāvattthī.¹⁸¹

1.1

Now at that time the Moon God had been seized by Rāhu, lord of titans.¹⁸² Then the Moon God, recollecting the Buddha, at that time spoke this verse:¹⁸³

“Homage to you, Buddha, hero!

2.1

You’re free in every way.

I’ve wandered into confinement:¹⁸⁴

be my refuge!”¹⁸⁵

Then the Buddha addressed Rāhu in verse concerning the Moon God:

“The Moon God has gone for refuge

4.1

to the Realized One, the perfected one.

181. This discourse and the next provide the Buddhist community with verses to recite for solace on the terrifying occasion of an eclipse.

182. Rāhu (“seizer”), is able to swallow the Moon and Sun because he has largest physical body of any creature (AN 4.15:2.1). This also lets him divert the rains (AN 5.197:3.1). This myth is alluded to in Atharvaveda 19.9.10a and Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.13.1. An eclipse was a day unfit for study (Manu 4.110). The full story of Rāhu, however, is not told until the Purāṇas, so this Sutta is possibly the oldest telling that survives.

183. Candimā, the “moon” as celestial body or deity, appears frequently in the Vedas (eg. Rig Veda 1.24.10, 1.102.2, etc.). A slightly different form of this name appears in SN 2.11.

184. The later Purāṇic legend says that Rāhu disguised himself as a brahmin to drink the gods’ nectar of immortality. But he was spied by the Sun and Moon, decapitated by Vishnu, and now his disembodied head traverses the skies as a black planet. He does not forget how the Sun and Moon betrayed him, so, nursing his enmity, he swallows them when he can. He is ever frustrated as they simply pass out through his throat.

185. Here the sense of “refuge” (*saraṇa*) is both physical and spiritual.

The Buddhas have compassion for the world—
so Rāhu, release the Moon!”

- 5.1 Then Rāhu, having released the Moon, rushed to see Vepacitti, lord of titans and stood to one side, shocked and awestruck.¹⁸⁶
Vepacitti addressed him in verse:

- 6.1 “Why the rush?
Rāhu, you released the Moon
and came here looking like you’re in shock:
why do you stand there so scared?”

- 7.1 “My head would have exploded in seven pieces,
I would have found no happiness in life,
if, when enchanted by the Buddha’s verse,¹⁸⁷
I had not released the Moon.”

SN 2.10

The Sun

Sūriyasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
1.2 Now at that time the Sun God had been seized by Rāhu, lord of titans.¹⁸⁸ Then the Sun God, recollecting the Buddha, at that time spoke this verse:

186. Rāhu was the son of Vepacitti and, according to Purāṇic legend, Simhikā.

187. *Abhigā* first appears with regards to a drop of Soma that has been “chanted over”, “besung”, or “enchanted” and hence imbued with potency (Rig Veda 9.96.23). Throughout Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 8.5.4 it is used more prosaically: a history of horse sacrifices is listed, each event honored with a specific verse “sung about” it. In Pali, the phrase *gāthābhigā* is found only in this passage and when the Buddha refused to eat food “chanted over” by a brahmin (eg. SN 7.8:8.1). In both cases the chanting has a mysterious potency, so I render “enchanted with verse”.

188. Suriya, the sun, is one of the most prominent deities of the Vedas, appearing under many names and aspects as both celestial body and deity.

“Homage to you, Buddha, hero! 2.1
 You’re free in every way.
 I’ve wandered into confinement:
 be my refuge!”

Then the Buddha addressed Rāhu in verse concerning the Sun 3.1
 God:

“The Sun God has gone for refuge 4.1
 to the Realized One, the perfected one.
 The Buddhas have compassion for the world—
 so Rāhu, release the Sun!

He is a beacon in the darkness,¹⁸⁹ 5.1
 the blazing sun, circle of awesome might.
 Rāhu, do not swallow him as he traverses the sky.¹⁹⁰
 Rāhu, release my offspring, the Sun!”¹⁹¹

Then Rāhu, having released the Sun, rushed to see Vepacitti, lord 6.1
 of titans and stood to one side, shocked and awestruck. Vepacitti
 addressed him in verse:

“Why the rush? 7.1
 Rāhu, you released the Sun
 and came here looking like you’re in shock:
 why do you stand there so scared?”

189. The Buddha offers an extra verse to the Sun as compared to the Moon.

190. The mention of “swallow” here confirms this detail of the mythology, which is also implied in the existence of a torture called “Rāhu’s mouth” (MN 13:14.3).

191. The Buddha is the “kinsman of the sun” as he is a scion of the royal Solar Lineage traced back to the sun himself. Both Sun and Moon attended the Mahāsamayasutta (DN 20:14.3) where, according to the commentary, they became stream-enterers and hence the Buddha’s spiritual “sons”. Symbolically the Buddha, by enabling the Sun’s “release” from the “confined space”, becomes the father of light and wisdom.

- 8.1 “My head would have exploded in seven pieces,
I would have found no joy in life,
if, when enchanted by the Buddha’s verse,
I had not released the Sun.”

The Chapter with Anāthapiṇḍika

SN 2.11

With Candimasa

Candimasaṣutta

At Sāvattḥī.

1.1

Then, late at night, the glorious godling Candimasa, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side,¹⁹² and spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

1.2

“Like deer in a mosquito-free marsh,
they will reach a safe place
having entered the absorptions,
unified, alert, and mindful.”

2.1

“Like fish when the net is cut,
they will reach the far shore
having entered the absorptions,
diligent, with strife discarded.”¹⁹³

3.1

192. Candimasa is another form of the shining “moon”, echoing Vedic *candramasa* (eg. Rig Veda 1.84.15, 10.64.3, Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.15.5, etc.). As often, there is no obvious link between the deity and the content of their verses.

193. Rig Vedic *raṇa* usually means “joy, delight” (eg. 8.96.16, 10.104.7) or occasionally “battle, strife, conflict” (see MN 139). The commentary explains it

SN 2.12

With Vishnu

Veṇḍusutta

1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Vishnu spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:¹⁹⁴

2.1 “Happy are the men¹⁹⁵
who pay homage to the Holy One!
They apply themselves to Gotama's instructions,

here as “vice, defilement”. But compare Rig Veda 10.112.10, where Indra the “bounteous” (*maghavan*) is urged to “battle” and bestow a share of winnings on devotees. Likewise at 10.113.4 Indra's successful “battle” is a prelude to releasing the waters. Then there is the oft-quoted line *dhanāñjayaṃ raṇe-ṇe* (“winner of the stakes in every battle”, 1.74.3, 6.16.15). These suggest emendation to *raṇāñjaya* (“victor in battle”), but this is not attested in Pali. On the other hand, the Chinese translation at SA 1303 seems to take *raṇa* in the sense of “delight” (喜樂). Also see the *uddāna* to Thag 1.50, *vimalo ca raṇāñjaho*, which supports the commentarial sense “free of defilement”. On the whole, since the sense “strife” is clearly attested, and the development of Vedic “joy” to commentarial “defilement” is not well-attested, I am inclined to accept the sense “strife” in all cases, while suspecting that the original of *raṇāñjaya* was *raṇāñjaya*.

194. *Veṇhu* (variant *veṇḍu*) is the Pali spelling of Sanskrit *viṣṇu*, who in Pali appears only here and at DN 20:14.1. He appears somewhat often in the Rig Veda, where he is an ally of Indra in his battle with the constrictor serpent (4.18.11, 6.20.2, 8.100.12). His name is explained as meaning “widespread” due to his role as the wide-stepping solar god who made three great strides over the earth, the midspace, and the heavens, opening up the broad expanse of the world. He also played a role in fertility (Rig Veda 7.36.9, 10.84.1). By the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa he was identified with the sacrifice (eg. 1.1.2.13), and was said to be a dwarf, perhaps as the shrunken sun of dusk (1.2.5.5). In one passage he is mystically identified with Indra as *Maghavan* (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 14.1.1.13). | Just as the previous chapter featured Indra under several names, the deities in the next few Suttas may also be names of Vishnu, although the identifications are weak.

195. The common Pali terms *manuja* (“mankind”, “man”), *manussa* (“human”), and *mānava* (usually “(Vedic) student”, occasionally “son of man”) all have the same root sense, “child of Manu”. Vishnu himself was a child of Manu via his mother Ākūti, Manu's daughter.

diligently training.”

“Those who practice absorption 3.1
 in accord with the training”,
 said the Buddha to Vishnu,
 “in the way of teaching I’ve proclaimed,
 diligent while there is still time;
 they won’t fall under the sway of Death.”

SN 2.13

With Dīghalaṭṭhi

Dīghalaṭṭhisutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rā- 1.1
 jagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels’ feeding ground.

Then, late at night, the glorious godling Dīghalaṭṭhi, lighting up 1.3
 the entire Bamboo Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to
 one side,¹⁹⁶ and spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

“If a mendicant is a meditator, freed in mind, 2.1
 and if they desire the heart’s fulfillment—
 having known the arising and passing of the world,
 good-hearted, independent, that is their reward.”

196. Dīghalaṭṭhi (“long stick”) is otherwise unknown. Following the previous Sutta, perhaps to be traced to Vishnu in the sense “wide success” (*dīrghavyaṣṭi*) in reference to his broad strides (cp. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.5.4.11).

SN 2.14

With Nandana

Nandanasutta

1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Nandana addressed the Buddha in verse:¹⁹⁷

2.1 “I ask you, Gotama, whose wisdom is vast,
the Blessed One
of unhindered knowledge and vision.
What sort do they call ethical?
What sort do they call wise?
What sort lives on after transcending suffering?
What sort is worshiped by the deities?”

3.1 “Someone who is ethical, wise, evolved,
becomes serene, loving absorption, mindful,
who’s gotten rid of and given up all sorrows,
with defilements ended, they bear their final body.

4.1 That sort they call ethical.
That sort they call wise.
That sort lives on after transcending suffering.
That sort is worshiped by the deities.”

197. Elsewhere in Pali, Nandana is the name of the “Garden of Delight” in the heaven of the Thirty-Three. Nandana is also a name of Vishnu.

SN 2.15

With Candana

Candanāsutta

Standing to one side, the godling Candana addressed the Buddha in 1.1
verse:¹⁹⁸

“Who here crosses the flood,¹⁹⁹ 2.1
tireless all day and night?
Who, not standing and unsupported,
does not sink in the deep?”

“Someone who is always endowed with ethics, 3.1
wise and serene,
energetic and resolute,
crosses the flood so hard to cross.

Someone who desists from sensual perception, 4.1
has moved past the fetter of form,
and has finished with relishing and greed
does not sink in the deep.”

198. Candana appears in MN 134:6.4 and SN 40.11:1.1, and together with Kāmasetṭha in DN 20:10.5 and DN 32:10.4. *Candana* means “sandalwood”, although the name of the god might also relate to its root “shining”. The name rhymes with the previous (*nandana/candana*).

199. This question is found in two variants: “how do you cross the flood” (*ka-thamsu tarati ogham*, Snp 1.10:8.1) and “who here crosses the flood” (*ko sūdhā tarati ogham*, Snp 1.9:23.1). The pattern seems to be that the question matches others in the same verse, so here it is “who”.

SN 2.16

With Vāsudatta

Vāsudattasutta

1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Vāsudatta spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:²⁰⁰

2.1 “Like they’re struck by a sword,
like their head was on fire,
a mendicant should wander mindful,
to give up sensual desire.”

3.1 “Like they’re struck by a sword,
like their head was on fire,
a mendicant should wander mindful,
to give up substantialist view.”

SN 2.17

With Subrahmā

Subrahmasutta

1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Subrahmā addressed the Buddha in verse:²⁰¹

2.1 “This mind is always anxious,
this mind is always stressed
about stresses that haven’t arisen
and those that have.
If there is a state free of anxiety,

200. Vāsudatta (“son of Vasudatta”) is otherwise unknown, but Vāsu and Vāsu-deva are both names of Vishnu.

201. Probably not the same individual as the “independent divinity” Subrahmā (SN 6.6–8 and DN 20:20.1). In the Rig Veda, *subrahma* meant “good sacred formulation” (Rig Veda 7.16.2, 10.47.3, 10.62.4)

please answer my question.”

“Not without understanding and fervor,²⁰²
not without restraining the sense faculties,
not without letting go of everything,
do I see safety for living creatures.”

3.1

That is what the Buddha said. ...²⁰³ The godling vanished right there. 4.1

SN 2.18

With Kakudha

Kakudhasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāketa 1.1
in the deer park at the Añjana Wood.²⁰⁴

Then, late at night, the glorious godling Kakudha, lighting up the 1.3
entire Añjana Wood, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one
side, and said to him,²⁰⁵ “Do you delight, ascetic?”

202. PTS reads *bojjhaṅgatapasā*; Yogācārabhūmi Śarīrārthagāthā 5.2 has *jñānatapaso*; SA 596 seems to pass over *bojjha*; while SA2 181 has 智慧者, “wise one”. I follow Bodhi in accepting the MS reading, *nāññatra bojjhā tapasā*.

203. This prose fragment is unusual here. Such endings are normally abbreviated in the Pali, although they are retained in the Chinese.

204. Sāketa was one of the great cities (DN 17:1.2.4), a former capital of Kosala, and a regular stop on the road near Sāvattī (SN 44.1:1.2, MN 24:14.11, Snp 5.1:37.1). Situated on the banks of the Sarabhū (modern Sarayu), it is identified with the modern city of Ayodhya, about 95 km south of Sāvattī. See also note on SN 22.95:1.1. | Añjana means “antimony”, and the *kohl* eyeliner made from it. It’s used for several place names, perhaps evoking the dark color. The Añjana is one of several forests near Sāketa where ascetics would stay.

205. A deity of this name, identified as a former Koliyan who had been Mahā-moggallāna’s supporter, reports on Devadatta’s ill intent (AN 5.100, Ud 8.5, Kd 17:2.2.1). Both discourses show a concern for ascetic conduct. At Kd 1:20.2.3, a deity is living in a *kakudha* tree (arjuna). | There was a river of similar name near Kusināra (DN 16:4.22.5), which could well have flowed through Koliyan country. Variant spellings abound in Pali and Sanskrit.

- 1.5 “What have I gained, sir?”
 1.6 “Well then, ascetic, do you sorrow?”
 1.7 “What have I lost, sir?”
 1.8 “Well then, ascetic, do you neither delight nor sorrow?”
 1.9 “Yes, sir.”
- 2.1 “I hope you’re not gloomy, mendicant,²⁰⁶
 I hope that delight isn’t found in you.
 I hope that discontent doesn’t
 overwhelm you as you sit alone.”
- 3.1 “I’m genuinely not gloomy, spirit,
 and no delight is found in me.
 And also discontent doesn’t
 overwhelm me as I sit alone.”
- 4.1 “How are you not gloomy, mendicant?
 How is delight not found in you?
 How does discontent not
 overwhelm you as you sit alone?”
- 5.1 “Delight is born from gloom,
 gloom is born from delight;
 sir, you should know me as
 a mendicant free of delight and gloom.”
- 6.1 “After a long time I see
 a brahmin fully quenched.
 A mendicant free of delight and gloom,
 he has crossed over clinging to the world.”

206. The paralleling of *agha* with *soka* (“sorrow”) here as the opposites of “delight” help establish the Pali sense of *agha* as “gloom” rather than the Vedic “sin”.

SN 2.19

With Uttara

Uttarasutta

At Rājagaha. Standing to one side, the godling Uttara spoke this 1.1
verse in the Buddha's presence:²⁰⁷

“This life, so very short, is led onward. 2.1
One led on to old age has no shelter.
Seeing this peril in death,
do good deeds that bring you joy.”

“This life, so very short, is led onward. 3.1
One led on to old age has no shelter.
Seeing this peril in death,
a seeker of peace would drop the world's bait.”

SN 2.20

With Anāthapiṇḍika

Anāthapiṇḍikasutta

Standing to one side, the godling Anāthapiṇḍika recited these verses 1.1
in the Buddha's presence:²⁰⁸

“This is indeed that Jeta's Grove, 2.1
frequented by the Saṅgha of seers,
where the King of Dhamma stayed:
it brings me joy!

Deeds, knowledge, and principle; 3.1
ethical conduct, an excellent livelihood;

207. Uttara is a very common name, making identification impossible.

208. The full story of how Anāthapiṇḍika died and returned to speak these verses is told in (MN 143).

by these are mortals purified,
not by clan or wealth.

4.1 That's why an astute person,
seeing what's good for themselves,
would examine the teaching rationally,
that's how they become purified in that.

5.1 Sāriputta is full of wisdom,
ethics, and peace.
Even a mendicant who has crossed over
might at best equal him."

6.1 That is what the godling Anāthapiṇḍika said. Then he bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.

7.1 Then, when the night had passed, the Buddha addressed the mendicants: "Mendicants, tonight, a certain glorious godling, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, came to me, bowed, stood to one side, and recited these verses in my presence." The Buddha then repeated the verses in full.

13.1 When he said this, Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, "Sir, that godling must surely have been Anāthapiṇḍika. For the householder Anāthapiṇḍika was devoted to Venerable Sāriputta."

13.4 "Good, good, Ānanda. You've reached the logical conclusion, as far as logic goes. For that was indeed the godling Anāthapiṇḍika."

The Chapter on Various Sectarians

SN 2.21

With Shiva

Sivasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī 1.1
in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Then, late at night, the glorious godling Shiva, lighting up the 1.3
entire Jeta’s Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one
side,²⁰⁹ and recited these verses in the Buddha’s presence:

“Associate only with the virtuous! 2.1
Try to get close to the virtuous!
Understanding the true teaching of the good,
things get better, not worse.

Associate only with the virtuous! 3.1

209. This is the only clear appearance of Shiva (*siva*, “auspicious”, “kindly”) in early Pali (but see Sivaka at SN 10.8). In the Rig Veda he appears a few times under the name Rudra, the “roarer”, where he is feared but approached as dispenser of blessed healing (Rig Veda 2.33). Along with other gods, he is there sometimes described as *siva*, “kindly, blessed”. As time went on his kindly aspect became more prominent, but he never lost his destructive side. He was not normally known as Shiva until the Purāṇic period. | The next few deities have names that are similar in meaning: *khema*, *serī*.

Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 wisdom is gained—but not from anyone else.

- 4.1 Associate only with the virtuous!
 Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 you grieve not among the grieving.
- 5.1 Associate only with the virtuous!
 Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 you shine among your relatives.
- 6.1 Associate only with the virtuous!
 Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 sentient beings go to a good place.
- 7.1 Associate only with the virtuous!
 Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 sentient beings live happily.”
- 8.1 Then the Buddha replied to Shiva in verse:
- 9.1 “Associate only with the virtuous!
 Try to get close to the virtuous!
 Understanding the true teaching of the good,
 you’re released from all suffering.”

With Khema

Khemasutta

Standing to one side, the godling Khema recited these verses in the Buddha's presence:²¹⁰ 1.1

"Fools and simpletons behave 2.1
like their own worst enemies,
doing wicked deeds
that ripen as bitter fruit.

It's not good to do a deed 3.1
that plagues you later on,
for which you weep and wail,
as its effect stays with you.

It is good to do a deed 4.1
that doesn't plague you later on,
that gladdens and cheers,
as its effect stays with you."²¹¹

"As a precaution, you should do 5.1
what you know is for your own welfare.
A thinker, an attentive one would not proceed
thinking like the cart driver.

Suppose a cart driver leaves the highway, 6.1
so even and well compacted.
They enter upon a rough road,
and fret as soon as their axle is broken.

So too, a dullard leaves the good 7.1

210. Khema is a common name meaning "safety, blessedness, sanctuary".

211. I follow Bodhi in finishing the godling's verses at this point.

to follow what's against the good.
 Fallen in the jaws of death,²¹²
 they fret like one whose axle is broken.”²¹³

SN 2.23

With Serī

Serīsutta

- 1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Serī addressed the Buddha in verse:²¹⁴
- 2.1 “Both gods and humans²¹⁵
 enjoy their food.
 So what's the name of the spirit
 who doesn't like food?”
- 3.1 “Those who give with faith
 and a clear and confident heart,
 partake of food
 in this world and the next.
- 4.1 So you should dispel stinginess,
 overcoming that stain, and give a gift.
 The good deeds of sentient beings

212. “Jaws of death” (*maccumukha*) is also at Snp 4.2:5.3. Compare Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.1.1, “he escapes from the jaws of death” (*tanmrtyumukhātpramucyate*).

213. See Bodhi, *Connected Discourses* note 174 for readings in these verses. | The final line here and in the previous verse are identical in Pali (*akkhacchinno jaḥayati*) but require different senses. The commentary reads the first as *akkhacchinno avajhāyati* (“frets with broken axle”) and the second *akkhacchinno iva jhāyati* (“frets like one whose axle is broken”). The prefixed verb is not necessary for the sense (cp. Snp 4.7:5.2, Dhṛp 155:3), so instead I take the first line as *akkhacchinno eva jhāyati* (“frets as soon as their axle is broken”).

214. The name *serī* here is from *siri* (“auspiciousness, good luck”). He does not appear elsewhere.

215. Also at SN 1.43:1.1.

support them in the next world.”

“It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the 5.1
Buddha.” He repeated the Buddha’s verses, and said:

“Once upon a time, sir, I was a king named Serī, a giver, a donor, 8.1
who praised giving.²¹⁶ I gave gifts at the four gates to ascetics and
brahmins, to paupers, vagrants, supplicants, and beggars.²¹⁷ Then
the ladies of my harem approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty gives
gifts, but we don’t. Your Majesty, please support us to give gifts and
make merit.’²¹⁸ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who
praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to
say?’ And so I gave the first gate to the ladies of my harem. There
they gave gifts, while my own giving dwindled.²¹⁹

Then my aristocrat vassals approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty 9.1
gives gifts, the ladies of your harem give gifts, but we don’t. Your
Majesty, please support us to give gifts and make merit.’ Then it
occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who praises giving. When
they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to say?’ And so I gave the
second gate to my aristocrat vassals. There they gave gifts, while my
own giving dwindled.

Then my troops approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty gives 10.1
gifts, the ladies of your harem give gifts, your aristocrat vassals give
gifts, but we don’t. Your Majesty, please support us to give gifts
and make merit.’ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who
praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to
say?’ And so I gave the third gate to my troops. There they gave gifts,
while my own giving dwindled.

Then my brahmins and householders approached me and said, 11.1
‘Your Majesty gives gifts, the ladies of your harem give gifts, your
aristocrat vassals give gifts, your troops give gifts, but we don’t. Your

216. The moral of this story is echoed in SN 3.18:9.1.

217. Sharing wealth is a moral act. | *Dīyittha* is passive reflexive aorist of √*dā*.

218. Visible good deeds encourage others.

219. “Dwindled” is *paṭikkami*, literally “went backwards”. This sense is also
recorded for Sanskrit *pratikram*.

Majesty, please support us to give gifts and make merit.’ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to say?’ And so I gave the fourth gate to my brahmins and householders. There they gave gifts, while my own giving dwindled.

- 12.1 Then my men approached me and said, ‘Now Your Majesty is not giving gifts anywhere!’ When they said this, I said to those men, ‘Well then, lads, deposit half the revenue generated in the outer districts in the royal compound. Give the other half as charity to ascetics and brahmins, to paupers, vagrants, supplicants, and beggars in those districts.’ Sir, for a long time I made so much merit and did so many skillful deeds. I never reached any limit so as to say ‘there’s this much merit’ or ‘there’s this much result of merit’ or ‘for so long I’ll remain in heaven’. It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha.

- 13.1 “Those who give with faith
and a clear and confident heart,
partake of food
in this world and the next.

- 14.1 So you should dispel stinginess,
overcoming that stain, and give a gift.
The good deeds of sentient beings
support them in the next world.”

SN 2.24

With Ghaṭṭikāra

Ghaṭṭikārasutta

- 1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Ghaṭṭikāra spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:²²⁰

220. See SN 1.50 and notes there.

- “Seven mendicants reborn in Aviha
have been freed.
With the complete ending of greed and hate,
they’ve crossed over clinging to the world.” 2.1
- “Who are those who’ve crossed the bog,
Death’s dominion so hard to pass?
Who, after leaving behind the human body,
have risen above celestial yokes?” 3.1
- “Upaka and Palagaṇḍa,
and Pukkusāti, these three;
Bhaddiya and Bhaddadeva,
and Bāhudantī and Piṅgiya.
They, after leaving behind the human body,
have risen above celestial yokes.” 4.1
- “You speak well of them,
who have let go the snares of Māra.
Whose teaching did they understand
to cut the bonds of rebirth?” 5.1
- “None other than the Blessed One!
None other than your instruction!
It was your teaching that they understood
to cut the bonds of rebirth. 6.1
- Where name and form
cease with no residue left behind;
understanding this teaching,
they cut the bonds of rebirth.” 7.1
- “The words you say are deep,
hard to understand, so very hard to wake up to.
Whose teaching did you understand 8.1

to be able to say such things?”

- 9.1 “In the past I was a potter
in Vebhalinga named Ghaṭikāra.
I took care of my parents
as a lay follower of Buddha Kassapa.
- 10.1 I refrained from sexual intercourse,
I was chaste, spiritual.
We lived in the same village;
in the past I was your comrade.
- 11.1 I am the one who understands
that these seven mendicants have been freed.
With the complete ending of greed and hate,
they’ve crossed over clinging to the world.”
- 12.1 “That’s exactly how it was,
just as you say, Bhaggava.
In the past you were a potter
in Vebhalinga named Ghaṭikāra.
- 13.1 You took care of your parents
as a lay follower of Buddha Kassapa.
You refrained from sexual intercourse,
you were chaste, spiritual.
We lived in the same village;
in the past you were my comrade.”
- 14.1 “That’s how it was
when those friends of old met again.
Both of them are evolved,
and bear their final body.”

With Jantu

Jantusutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.

1.1

At one time several mendicants were staying in the Kosalan lands, 1.2
in a wilderness hut on the slopes of the Himalayas. They were
haughty, insolent, fickle, scurrilous, loose-tongued, unmindful, lack-
ing situational awareness and immersion, with straying minds and
undisciplined faculties.²²¹

Then on the fifteenth day sabbath the godling Jantu went up to 2.1
those mendicants and addressed them in verse:²²²

“The mendicants used to live happily, 3.1
as disciples of Gotama.

Desireless they sought alms;
desireless they used their lodgings.

Knowing that the world was impermanent
they made an end of suffering.

But now they’ve made themselves hard to look after, 4.1
like chiefs in a village.

They eat and eat and then lie down,
passed out in the homes of others.²²³

Having raised my cupped palms to the Saṅgha, 5.1
I speak here only about certain people.

221. Normally *kuṭikā* is understood as a diminutive of *kuṭi*, hence “little hut”. But here several mendicants are staying (as at Ud 4.2:1.3), while elsewhere the Buddha stayed in one while at the Jetavana (DN 14:1.1.2). More likely the suffix here does not change the meaning of *kuṭi*.

222. The deity Jantu (“personage”, “man”, “offspring”) cannot be identified.

223. Monks falling asleep inappropriately is addressed in the Vinaya (Bu Pc 5, Bu Ss 1:2.1.1, Kd 8:16.1.1; see also Kd 1:7.2.2). | *Mucchita* in Pali usually means “infatuated, besotted”, but the normal meaning of Sanskrit *mūrchita* is “fainted, passed out”.

They're dregs, with no protector,
just like those who have passed away.

- 6.1 I'm speaking about
those who live negligently.
To those who live diligently
I pay homage.”

SN 2.26

With Rohitassa

Rohitassasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
1.2 Standing to one side, the godling Rohitassa said to the Buddha:²²⁴
1.3 “Sir, is it possible to know or see or reach the end of the world by traveling to a place where there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn?”
1.4 “Reverend, I say it's not possible to know or see or reach the end of the world by traveling to a place where there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn.”
2.1 “It's incredible, sir, it's amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha.

224. Rohitassa (“red horse”) is Agni in his manifestation as the swift sunbeam, breaking over the mountains and flashing across the sky. Agni was he of red horses (*rohidaśva*, Rig Veda 1.45.2, 4.1.8, 8.43.16, 10.7.4, 10.98.9; see 2.10.2). This can mean the tongues of the ritual fire whose message is speedily conveyed to the gods, but especially the “ruddy steed” swift as the wind (*aruṣā rohitā*, 1.94.10), the “red horses of the dawn” (*aruṇebhir aśvair*, Rig Veda 1.113.14, see 4.52.2, 6.65.2, 7.75.6). The current Sutta seems to draw on the conception of Rohita in Atharvaveda 13, glorifying Agni as the Sun, who “arrives in a flash” (13.2.15), “swift” (13.2.2), “rushing” (13.2.19), “traversing the sky” (13.2.22), radiating as far as worlds extend (13.2.42, 13.2.10, 13.1.16), racing over the world never letting his thought stray (13.2.15). The “Sun's bay horses” (*sūryasyāśvā harayaḥ*, 13.1.24) are seven ruddy steeds who carry it, spreading out its rays (13.2.4, 13.3.16).

Once upon a time, I was a seer named Rohitassa, son of the benefactors. I was a sky-walker with psychic powers.²²⁵ I was as fast as a light arrow easily shot across the shadow of a palm tree by a well-trained expert archer with a strong bow.²²⁶ My stride was such that it could span from the eastern ocean to the western ocean.²²⁷ This wish came to me: ‘I will reach the end of the world by traveling.’ Having such speed and stride, I traveled for my whole lifespan of a hundred years—pausing only to eat and drink, go to the toilet, and sleep to dispel weariness—and I passed away along the way, never reaching the end of the world. 3.1

It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha. ‘Reverend, I say it’s not possible to know or see or reach the end of the world by traveling to a place where there’s no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn.’ 4.1

“But Reverend, I also say there’s no making an end of suffering without reaching the end of the world. For it is in this fathom-long carcass with its perception and mind that I describe the world, its origin, its cessation, and the practice that leads to its cessation.” 5.1

The end of the world can never

6.1

225. The coming of the dawn was greeted with priestly gifts offered by benefactors (*bhoja*). These benefactors may be the Aṅgīrasas, shining poets who ushered in the dawn (RV 3.53.7), or else the Aśvins, horse deities driving the Sun’s chariot and close with the Sun’s daughter (4.43.2, 8.8.2), or the dawns themselves (4.51.3, 7.79.3, 8.25.21).

226. Taught as a parable by the Buddha to two brahmin cosmologists (*lokāyatikā*) at AN 9.38:4.1. | In the Pali, as in my translation, there is no explicit logical connection between this phrase and the next. But there is in the parallel at SA 1307, which says Rohitassa (赤馬) could cross from sea to sea in the time an arrow crossed a palm tree shadow.

227. It has been pointed out that a swift arrow can fly at 250 feet/s, which would take 0.008 seconds to cross the width of a palm trunk of two feet. India ocean to ocean is about 2400 km. To cross it in 0.008 seconds would require a velocity of around 300,000 km/s—the speed of light.

228. This echoes Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.5.14 and 7.1.1.37, where the fire altar is measured out as a fathom (*vyāmanātra*), for this is the length of a human. The altar and the human person encompass the whole world.

be reached by traveling.
 But without reaching the end of the world,
 there's no release from suffering.

- 7.1 So an intelligent person, understanding the world,
 has completed the spiritual journey
 and gone to the end of the world.
 Assuaged, knowing the end of the world,
 they do not hope for this world or the next.”

SN 2.27

With Nanda

Nandasutta

- 1.1 Standing to one side, the godling Nanda spoke this verse in the
 Buddha's presence:²²⁹
- 2.1 “Time flies, nights pass by,
 the stages of life leave us one by one.
 Seeing this peril in death,
 do good deeds that bring you joy.”
- 3.1 “Time flies, nights pass by,
 the stages of life leave us one by one.
 Seeing this peril in death,
 a seeker of peace would drop the world's bait.”

229. Nanda (“delight”) is a common name. These verses are also at SN 1.4.

SN 2.28

With Nandivisāla

Nandivisālasutta

Standing to one side, the godling Nandivisāla addressed the Buddha 1.1
in verse:²³⁰

“Four are its wheels, and nine its doors;²³¹ 2.1
it’s stuffed full, bound with greed,
and born from a bog.
Great hero, how will I keep going?”

“Having cut the strap and harness— 3.1
wicked desire and greed—
and having plucked out craving, root and all:
that’s how you will keep going.”

SN 2.29

With Susīma

Susimasutta

At Sāvattḥi. 1.1

Then Venerable Ānanda went up to the Buddha, bowed, and sat 1.2
down to one side. The Buddha said to him, “Ānanda, do you endorse
Sāriputta?”

“Sir, who on earth would not endorse Venerable Sāriputta unless 2.1
they’re a fool, a hater, delusional, or mentally deranged? Venerable
Sāriputta is astute, he has great wisdom, widespread wisdom, laugh-
ing wisdom, swift wisdom, sharp wisdom, and penetrating wisdom.

230. At Bu Pc 2 = Ja 28 we meet an ox of this name. Perhaps the virtuous beast was reborn as a god, still concerned with pulling laden carts. Pāṇini lists it as a name, but no such individual has been identified in Sanskrit.

231. These verses are also at SN 1.29; see notes there.

He has few wishes, he's content, secluded, aloof, and energetic. He is a preacher, and he accepts advice; he accuses and criticizes wickedness. Who on earth would not endorse Venerable Sāriputta unless they're a fool, a hater, delusional, or mentally deranged?"

3.1 "That's so true, Ānanda! That's so true! Who on earth would not endorse Venerable Sāriputta unless they're a fool, a hater, delusional, or mentally deranged?" And the Buddha repeated all of Ānanda's terms of praise.

4.1 While this praise of Sāriputta was being spoken, the godling Susīma approached the Buddha, escorted by a large assembly of godlings. He bowed, stood to one side, and said to him:²³²

5.1 "That's so true, Blessed One! That's so true, Holy One! Who on earth would not endorse Venerable Sāriputta unless they're a fool, a hater, delusional, or mentally deranged?" And he too repeated all the terms of praise of Sāriputta, adding, "For I too, sir, whenever I go to an assembly of godlings, frequently hear the same terms of praise."

7.1 While this praise of Sāriputta was being spoken, the godlings of Susīma's assembly—uplifted and overjoyed, full of rapture and happiness—displayed a rainbow of bright colors.

8.1 Suppose there was a beryl gem that was naturally lustrous, eight-faceted, well-worked. When placed on a cream rug it would shine and glow and radiate. In the same way, the godlings of Susīma's assembly displayed a rainbow of bright colors.

9.1 Suppose there was a pendant of Black Plum River gold, fashioned by a deft smith, well wrought in the forge. When placed on a cream rug it would shine and glow and radiate.²³³ In the same way, the godlings of Susīma's assembly displayed a rainbow of bright colors.

232. This is perhaps the same godling Susīma who was too lazy to follow Sakka's orders (SN 11.2). Another Susīma is a renunciate at SN 12.70.

233. Legend has it that on the slopes of Mount Meru grows the vast Jambu tree that gives the continent of India her name, "the land of the black plum tree". The fruits of that tree are as big as elephants, and when they fall, their juice flows forth as a river named Jambu. The dried mud of that river yields gold nuggets whose unparalleled lustre is highly sought-after among the gods. This is that gold (Śīva Purāṇa 17.16–19).

Suppose that in the autumn the heavens were clear and cloudless. 10.1
At the crack of dawn, the morning star shines and glows and radiates. In the same way, the godlings of Susīma's assembly displayed a rainbow of bright colors.

Suppose that in the autumn the heavens were clear and cloudless. 11.1
As the sun is rising to the firmament, having dispelled all the darkness of space, shines and glows and radiates. In the same way, the godlings of Susīma's assembly displayed a rainbow of bright colors.

Then the godling Susīma spoke this verse about Venerable Sāri- 12.1
putta in the Buddha's presence:

"He's considered astute, 13.1
Sāriputta, free of anger.
Few in wishes, gentle, tamed,
the seer shines in the Teacher's praise!"

Then the Buddha replied to Susīma with this verse about Vener- 14.1
able Sāriputta:

"He's considered astute, 15.1
Sāriputta, free of anger.
Few in wishes, gentle, tamed;
developed and well-tamed, he awaits his time."²³⁴

SN 2.30

The Disciples of Various Monastics of Other Religions

Nānātitthiyasāvakaṣutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rā- 1.1
jagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.

234. For reading *kālaṃ kaṅkhati bhāvito sudanto*, see note in Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*.

- 1.3 Then, late at night, several glorious godlings lit up the entire Bamboo Grove. They were Asama, Sahālī, Niṅka, Ākoṭaka, Veṭambarī, and Māṇavagāmiya, and all of them were disciples of various monastics of other religions. They went up to the Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side.²³⁵
- 1.4 Standing to one side, the godling Asama spoke this verse about Pūraṇa Kassapa in the Buddha's presence:²³⁶
- 2.1 “In injuring and killing here,
in beating and extortion,
Kassapa saw no evil,
nor any merit for oneself.
What he taught should truly be trusted,
he's worthy of esteem as Teacher.”²³⁷
- 3.1 Then the godling Sahālī spoke this verse about the bamboo-staffed ascetic Gosāla in the Buddha's presence:²³⁸
- 4.1 “Through fervent mortification in disgust of sin he became well restrained.
He gave up quarreling with people.
Refraining from false speech, he spoke the truth.
Surely such a man does no wrong!”
- 5.1 Then the godling Niṅka spoke this verse about the Jain ascetic of the Ñātika clan in the Buddha's presence:
- 6.1 “Disgusted at sin, an alert mendicant,

235. Most of these individuals are unknown elsewhere. | For detailed presentations of the sectarian teachings that follow, see DN 2.

236. “Peerless”.

237. This is regarded as a pernicious wrong view, which results in rebirth in hell. This shows the complexity of kamma, as Asama must have done some other good kamma to be reborn as a godling.

238. A group of gods of this name (meaning “with plough”?) appeared alongside Vishnu at DN 20:14.1.

well restrained in the fourfold constraint;²³⁹
 explaining what is seen and heard:
 surely he can be no sinner!”

Then the godling Ākoṭaka spoke this verse about various sectarian teachers in the Buddha’s presence:²⁴⁰ 7.1

“Pakudhaka Kāṭiyāna and the Jain ascetic,²⁴¹ 8.1
 as well as this bamboo-staffed ascetic and Pūraṇa:
 Teachers of communities, attained ascetics,
 surely they weren’t far from truly good men!”

Then the godling Veṭambarī replied to the godling Ākoṭaka in verse:²⁴² 9.1

“Though the wretched jackal howls along, 10.1
 it never equals the lion.
 A nude liar with suspicious conduct,
 though they teach a community, is not like the good.”

Then Māra the Wicked took possession of the godling Veṭambarī 11.1
 and spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

“Those dedicated to mortification in disgust of sin, 12.1
 safeguarding their seclusion,
 entrenched in form,
 they rejoice in the heavenly realm.
 Indeed, those mortals give correct instructions
 regarding the next world.”

Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied 13.1
 to him in verse:

239. For this Jain teaching see DN 2:29.4, DN 25:16.3

240. “Pounder”.

241. Pakudhaka Kāṭiyāna is a variant spelling of Pakudha Kaccāyana.

242. Variant spelling *vegabbhari*.

- 14.1 “Whatever forms there are in this life or the next,
and those of shining beauty in the sky,
all of these you praise, Namuci,
like bait tossed out for catching fish.”
- 15.1 Then the godling Māṇavagāmiya spoke this verse about the Buddha in his presence:²⁴³
- 16.1 “Of all the mountains of Rājagaha,
Vepulla’s said to be the best.
Seta is the best of the Himalayan peaks,
and the sun, of travelers in space.
- 17.1 The ocean is the best of seas,
and the moon, of lights that shine at night.
But in all the world with its gods,
the Buddha is declared foremost.”

The Linked Discourses on Godlings are complete.

243. The celebration of Namuci’s defeat by Māṇavagāmiya is a striking verbal allusion to Rig Veda 5.30.7c, where the defeat of Namuci opened the way for “the progress of Manu” (*manave gātum*, Rig Veda 5.30.7c), i.e. the spread of the Aryan peoples who were Manu’s children. Reading Pali *gāmiya* as a secondary derivation from *gama*, “going”, yields the sense, “The Progress of Manu’s Children”. Here the term can have the Buddhist sense of the path of the Aryans.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH KING PASENADI OF KOSALA

Chapter One

SN 3.1

Young

Daharasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.3 Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him.²⁴⁴ When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to the Buddha,²⁴⁵ “Does the worthy Gotama claim to have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening?”
- 1.6 “If anyone should rightly be said to have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening, it’s me. For, Great King, I have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening.”
- 2.1 “Well, there are those ascetics and brahmins who lead an order and a community, and tutor a community. They’re well-known and

244. Pasenadi, son of Sañjaya Mahākosala, ruled the nation of Kosala from its capital Sāvattthī until his death shortly before the Buddha. Like the Buddha’s family, he claimed descent from the Solar lineage of Okkāka. He features throughout the Suttas as a well-meaning if sometimes naive ruler. During his realm, Kosala was a flourishing trade center with a vibrant religious life, a center not just for Buddhists but for Vedic brahmins and Jains, as well as local religious customs.

245. Pasenadi’s polite but not reverential behavior indicates that he is not yet a devotee of the Buddha. This may, in fact, record their first meeting.

famous religious founders, deemed holy by many people. That is,²⁴⁶ Pūraṇa Kassapa, the bamboo-staffed ascetic Gosāla, the Jain ascetic of the Nātika clan, Saṇjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Pakudha Kaccāyana, and Ajita of the hair blanket.²⁴⁷ I also asked them whether they claimed to have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening, but they made no such claim. So why do you, given that you're so young in age and newly gone forth?"

"Great king, these four things should not be looked down upon 3.1
or disparaged because they are young. What four? An aristocrat, a
serpent, a fire, and a mendicant. These four things should not be
looked down upon or disparaged because they are young."

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, 4.1
went on to say:

"A man should not despise 5.1
an aristocrat of impeccable lineage,
high-born and famous,
just because they're young.

For it's possible that that lord of mankind, 6.1
as aristocrat, will gain the throne.
And in his anger he'll execute a royal punishment,
and have you violently beaten.
Hence you should avoid him
for the sake of your own life.

Whether in village or wilderness, 7.1
wherever a serpent is seen,
a man should not look down on it

246. The six non-Vedic "ascetics" are referred to as "ascetics and brahmins". Some, such as Kassapa, may in fact have been brahmins, but the term is probably meant as a generic catch-all for "religious practitioners".

247. The sequence of names here differs from the usual (DN 2:2.2). We have met four of these already in SN 2.30, which gives a summary of their teachings. As for the remaining two, Saṇjaya's method of radical avoidance is taught at DN 2:32.2, while Ajita's materialistic denial of merit is at DN 2:23.2.

or despise it for its youth.

8.1 With its rainbow of colors,²⁴⁸
the serpent of fiery breath glides along.²⁴⁹
It lashes out and bites the fool,
both men and women alike.
Hence you should avoid it
for the sake of your own life.

9.1 A fire devours a vast amount,
a conflagration with a blackened trail.
A man should not look down on it
just because it's young.

10.1 For once it gets fuel
it'll become a big conflagration.
It'll lash out and burn the fool,
both men and women alike.
Hence you should avoid it
for the sake of your own life.

11.1 When a forest is burned by fire,
a conflagration with a blackened trail,
the shoots will spring up there again,
with the passing of the days and nights.

12.1 But if a mendicant endowed with ethics
burns you with their power,
you'll have no children or livestock,
nor will your heirs find wealth.

248. Compare the devas of SN 2.29:7.1.

249. This is an allusion to the venomous bite, *tejas* having roots in both “sharp” and “fiery”. This metaphor is the origin of the dragon’s fiery breath. For a fiery dragon defeated by the Buddha, whose flames are even more multi-colored, see Kd 1:15.1.1. For a dragon who shape-shifted to seem like a human, see Kd 1:63.1.1.

Childless and heirless you become,
like a palm-tree stump.²⁵⁰

That's why an astute person, 13.1
seeing what's good for themselves,
would always treat these properly:
a serpent, a conflagration,
a famous aristocrat,
and a mendicant endowed with ethics."

When this was said, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Buddha, 14.1
"Excellent, sir! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or
revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting
a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what's there, the
Buddha has made the teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to
the Buddha, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha.²⁵¹ From
this day forth, may the Buddha remember me as a lay follower who
has gone for refuge for life."

SN 3.2

A Person

Purisasutta

At Sāvatthī. 1.1

250. Indian legends are rife with ascetics who seek vengeance by means of deadly curses for slights real or imagined (eg. Snp 5.1:8.1, MN 56:13.27, MN 93:18.15). A true Buddhist mendicant, on the other hand, bears any slight or grievance with patience and loving-kindness, per the "simile of the saw" (MN 21:20.1, MN 28:24.3). It is, ironically, due to the very perfection of their virtue that any harmful deed done against them reaps a painful karmic result.

251. This marks the point at which Pasenadi becomes a follower of the Buddha. The Buddha persuaded him, not through talk on profound philosophy or deep meditation, but with practical advice that is useful for him as a ruler.

- 1.2 Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, “Sir, how many things arise inside a person for their harm, suffering, and discomfort?”²⁵²
- 2.1 “Great king, three things arise inside a person for their harm, suffering, and discomfort. What three? Greed, hate, and delusion. These three things arise inside a person for their harm, suffering, and discomfort.”
- 2.7 That is what the Buddha said. ...
- 3.1 “When greed, hate, and delusion,
originate inside oneself,
they harm a person of wicked heart,
as a bamboo is destroyed by its own fruit.”²⁵³

SN 3.3

Old Age and Death

Jarāmarāṇasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Sir, for someone who has been reborn, is there any exemption from old age and death?”²⁵⁴
- 1.4 “Great king, for someone who has been reborn, there’s no exemption from old age and death. Even for well-to-do aristocrats, brahmins, or householders—rich, affluent, and wealthy, with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain—when they’re born, there’s no exemption from old age and

252. While we cannot trace Pasenadi’s progress with confidence, we can see that here he has gone from questioning the Buddha’s awakening to learning fundamentals of Buddhist psychology.

253. *Tacasāra* (Sanskrit *tvaksāra*) is “that which has hardwood for its skin”, namely the bamboo (see SN 6.12:2.2).

254. The subtext is that once one has obtained kingship, immortality becomes tempting.

death. Even for mendicants who are perfected—who have ended the defilements, completed the spiritual journey, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, achieved their heart’s goal, utterly ended the fetter of continued existence, and are rightly freed through enlightenment—their bodies are liable to break up and be laid to rest.”

That is what the Buddha said. ... 1.9

“Fancy chariots of kings wear out, 1.1
and even this body gets old.
But the truth of the good never gets old—²⁵⁵
so the good proclaim to the good.”

SN 3.4

Loved

Piyasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Just now, 1.2
sir, as I was in private retreat this thought came to mind.²⁵⁶ ‘Who
are those who love themselves? And who are those who don’t love
themselves?’

Then it occurred to me: ‘Those who do bad things by way of body, 1.5
speech, and mind don’t love themselves. Even though they may say:
“I love myself”, they don’t really. Why is that? It’s because they treat
themselves like an enemy. That’s why they don’t love themselves.

255. These two lines contain three forms of the same word *santa*, “a good person”: *sataṃ* is genitive plural; *santo* is nominative plural; *sabbhi* is dative plural (following Brough and Norman).

256. Here again we see a progress in their relationship. Now Pasenadi is reflecting on the Dhamma and bringing his own thoughts to the Buddha. Even though Pasenadi is not said to have attained any of the noble paths, this Sutta reveals an insightful grasp of human psychology.

- 1.13 Those who do good things by way of body, speech, and mind do love themselves. Even though they may say: “I don’t love myself”, they do really. Why is that? It’s because they treat themselves like a loved one. That’s why they do love themselves.”²⁵⁷
- 2.1 “That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true!” said the Buddha. And he repeated the king’s statement, adding:
- 3.1 “If you knew your self as beloved,
you’d not yoke yourself to wickedness.
For happiness is not easy to find
by someone who does bad deeds.
- 4.1 When you’re seized by the terminator²⁵⁸
as you give up your human life,
what can you call your own?
What do you take when you go?
What goes with you,
like a shadow that never leaves?²⁵⁹
- 5.1 Both the good and the bad
that a mortal does in this life
is what they can call their own.²⁶⁰
That’s what they take when they go.
That’s what goes with them,
like a shadow that never leaves.
- 6.1 That’s why you should do good,

257. Action is paramount because it is the cause of feelings and emotions. The path forward starts with recognizing that it is within your power to change how you treat yourself.

258. The “terminator” (*antaka*) is death, sometimes personified as Māra (eg. SN 4.1:6.4).

259. This simile also employed at Dhp 2, Thag 17.3:28.4, and MN 91:8.4.

260. That deeds (*kamma*) are one’s own (*saka*) is a stock reflection (eg. MN 135:4.1, AN 5.57:1.7).

investing in the future life.²⁶¹

The good deeds of sentient beings
support them in the next world.”

SN 3.5

Self-Protected

Attarakkhitasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Just now, sir, as I was in private retreat this thought came to mind. ‘Who are those who protect themselves? And who are those who don’t protect themselves?’²⁶²

1.2

Then it occurred to me: ‘Those who do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind don’t protect themselves. Even if they’re protected by a company of elephants, cavalry, chariots, or infantry, they still don’t protect themselves. Why is that? Because such protection is exterior, not interior. That’s why they don’t protect themselves.

1.5

Those who do good things by way of body, speech, and mind do protect themselves. Even if they’re not protected by a company of elephants, cavalry, chariots, or infantry, they still protect themselves. Why is that? Because such protection is interior, not exterior. That’s why they do protect themselves.’”

1.13

“That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true!” said the Buddha. And he repeated the king’s statement, adding:

2.1

“Restraint of the body is good;
restraint of speech is good;
restraint of mind is good;

3.1

261. *Nicaya* (“investing”) is more literally, “piling up”.

262. For “protect themselves” (*rakkhito attā*) compare *rakkhitatta* at SN 6.13:2.4, Thag 2.11:2.4. The use of the term *attā* here is conventional, not metaphysical. “Personal safety” (*ātmarakṣā*) is a paramount concern of kings (eg. Arthaśāstra 1.1.3, 1.21.30, 5.4.16, 7.3.24, 9.6.40, 12.2.10).

everywhere, restraint is good.
A sincere person, restrained everywhere,
is said to be ‘protected.’”

SN 3.6

Few

Appakasutta

1.1 At Sāvattthī.

1.2 Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Just now, sir, as I was in private retreat this thought came to mind: ‘Few are the sentient beings in the world who, when they obtain luxury possessions, don’t grow indulgent and negligent, giving in to greed for sensual pleasures, and doing the wrong thing by others.’²⁶³ There are many more who, when they obtain luxury possessions, do grow indulgent and negligent, giving in to greed for sensual pleasures, and doing the wrong thing by others.’”

2.1 “That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true!” said the Buddha. And he repeated the king’s statement, adding:

3.1 “Full of desire for possessions and pleasures,
greedy, infatuated by sensual pleasures;
they don’t notice that they’ve gone too far,
like deer ensnared in a trap set out.
It’ll be bitter later on;²⁶⁴
for the result will be bad for them.”

263. Again Pasenadi shows his reflective side, expressing evergreen wisdom.

264. *Pacchāsaṃ* resolves to *pacchā esaṃ* (“later for them”).

Judgment

Aḍḍakaraṇasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Sir, when I’m sitting in court I see well-to-do aristocrats, brahmins, and householders—rich, affluent, and wealthy, with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain. But they tell deliberate lies for the sake of sensual pleasures.²⁶⁵ Then it occurred to me: ‘Enough with passing judgment today. Now my dearest will be known by the judgments he makes.’”²⁶⁶

1.2

“That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true! Those who are well-to-do aristocrats, brahmins, and householders tell deliberate lies for the sake of sensual pleasures. That is for their lasting harm and suffering.”

2.1

That is what the Buddha said. ...

2.4

“Full of desire for possessions and pleasures,
greedy, infatuated by sensual pleasures;

3.1

265. In the previous Sutta, Pasenadi lamented the corrupting influence of wealth. Here he talks of how he sees this corruption in his court. he speaks further of his frustrations at MN 98:13.1. | Read *aḍḍa* (variants *attha*, *aṭṭa*) which in Sanskrit has the senses “solve, infer, argue, discern”. The commentary interprets *aḍḍakaraṇa* as the “place of judgment” i.e. the court, which is clearly the case at DN 17:1.11.1.

266. *Bhadramukha* is used here by a king of his grown son. Elsewhere, by a family for a child (MN 40:6.2); by lay people addressing monks (MN 81:21.1); by a laywoman addressing a deity (AN 7.53:3.4); (SN 3.7:1.5); and, with the addition of the familiar *tāta*, by a brahmin wife to her husband (MN 100:3.5). The term is of Sanskritic form and is found commonly in the Avadāna literature. Turning to later Sanskrit sources, Nāṭyaśāstra 19.12 says it should be used when addressing inferiors, while Sāhityadarpaṇa 6.154 says it is used when addressing a prince (see SN 3.7 above). The early Pali usage, however, suggests it was an affectionate and respectful term of somewhat elevated usage, but not restricted by status. Since *bhadda* by itself is a common form of address in the sense “my dear”, I think the suffix *-mukha* has its intensive sense here, “dearest”, rather than “dear face”.

they don't notice that they've gone too far,
 like fish swiftly snared.
 It'll be bitter later on;
 for the result will be bad for them."

SN 3.8

With Queen Mallikā

Mallikāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattī.
- 1.2 Now at that time King Pasenadi of Kosala was upstairs in the royal longhouse together with Queen Mallikā.²⁶⁷
- 1.3 Then the king said to the queen, "Mallikā, is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?"²⁶⁸
- 1.5 "No, Great King, there isn't.²⁶⁹ But is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?"
- 1.7 "For me also, Mallikā, there's no one."

267. In addition to conversations on the theme of attachment to loved ones (MN 87, Ud 5.1), unrelated incidents with Mallikā appear at AN 4.197, Bu Pc 53:1.1, and Bu Pc 83:1.2.7. She is listed as an eminent lay disciple (AN 8.91–117:1.1) and maintained a monastery for philosophical debates (MN 78:1.3). Her passing is recorded at AN 5.49. This is what we know of her from early texts, while later Jātakas and other scriptures tell many colorful tales about her and her unique marriage. | Śvetāmbara Jains hold that, in the far distant past, the nineteenth founding teacher (*tīrthāṅkara*) was the lady Malli (Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacarita 6.6). Perhaps the Buddhist stories of the wise lady Mallikā helped inspire this legend.

268. This passage echoes Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.8: "The Self is more dear than a son, than wealth, than everything else." The reason, it argues, is that only the Self is immortal, not those who are dear. Pasenadi is of course using "self" in a conventional rather than metaphysical sense.

269. Mallikā's reply is brave, given that she is telling her king and husband she loves herself more than him. This passage alludes to the famous dialogue where Yājñavalkya explains to his wife Maitreyī that he is renouncing in order to seek the true Self.

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala came downstairs from the stilt longhouse, went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened. 2.1

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha spoke this verse: 3.1

“Having explored every quarter with the mind, 4.1
one finds no one dearer than oneself.
Likewise for others, each holds themselves dear;²⁷⁰
so one who desires self-knowledge would harm no
other.”

SN 3.9

Sacrifice

Yaññasutta

At Sāvattḥī. 1.1

Now at that time a big sacrifice had been set up for King Pasenadi of Kosala. Bulls, bullocks, heifers, goats and rams—five hundred of each—had been led to the pillar for the sacrifice.²⁷¹ His bondservants, servants, and workers did their jobs under threat of punishment and danger, weeping with tearful faces. 1.2

Then several mendicants robed up in the morning and, taking their bowls and robes, entered Sāvattḥī for alms. Then, after the meal, when they returned from almsround, they went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what was happening. 2.1

270. Care for oneself is not selfishness. This is an expression of the Golden Rule.

271. It would be strange for a devoted Buddhist to undertake such a sacrifice. Perhaps this was before Pasenadi converted. The commentary, however, says that it was in response to a terrifying nightmare, on the advice of his brahmin priest. While it is true that Buddhism has mostly ended cruel sacrifices, I have heard of such things in Buddhist communities even in modern times.

3.1 Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha recited these verses:²⁷²

4.1 “Horse sacrifice, human sacrifice,²⁷³
the ‘casting of the yoke-pin’,
the ‘royal soma drinking’,²⁷⁴
and the ‘unimpeded’—²⁷⁵
these big violent sacrifices yield no great fruit.

5.1 The great sages of right comportment
don’t attend sacrifices
where goats, sheep, and cattle
and various creatures are killed.

6.1 But the great sages of right comportment

272. The rituals listed are grand sacrifices requiring the slaughter of many beasts, intended to establish or grow the power of the king. Not all are readily identifiable in Vedic texts.

273. The horse sacrifice (*assamedha*, Sanskrit *aśvamedha*) was expensive, dangerous, and rarely performed. A horse was set free for a year, followed by the king and his army who would conquer any lands on which it strayed. Then it was killed in an obscene rite. It appears in the late stages of the Rig Veda (1.162, 1.163, and perhaps 10.86) and was a major feature of the sacrificial systems (eg. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13) and cosmic meditations (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.1). | Even before the Buddha, human sacrifice was regarded by the Vedists as a long-abandoned practice, substituted by a horse, then an ox, a sheep, and finally a goat, and finally as rice and barley (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.3.6; compare Genesis 22). It persisted, however, in darker corners of Indian folk religion.

274. The “casting of the yoke-pin” (*sammāpāsa*) is obscure. I think it originated as the pulling out of a yoke-pin (*śamyā*) of the beasts of the journey, which were cast about at journey’s end to establish one’s territory (see Manu 8.237). | The “royal soma drinking” (*vājapeyya*) is a rite where, after a horse race, the king drinks the soma, giving him superhuman strength and prowess in battle, and at which several animals, sometimes said to be seventeen, are sacrificed. This is said to be a higher sacrifice that establishes a king as emperor (see Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 5.1.1).

275. The *niragaḷa* is probably a form of the horse sacrifice where the horse is “unimpeded”, thus establishing the king as similarly unstoppable. The Buddha adopted the term for arahants (MN 22:34.1[]).

do attend those sacrifices
 that are non-violent and propitious,²⁷⁶
 where goats, sheep, and cattle,
 and various creatures are not killed.

An intelligent person should sacrifice like this, 7.1
 for this sacrifice is very fruitful.
 For a sponsor of sacrifices like this,
 things get better, not worse.
 Such a sacrifice is truly abundant,
 and even the deities are pleased.”

SN 3.10

Shackles

Bandhanasutta

Now at that time a large group of people had been put in shackles by 1.1
 King Pasenadi of Kosala—some in ropes, some in manacles, some
 in chains.²⁷⁷

Then several mendicants robed up in the morning and, taking 2.1
 their bowls and robes, entered Sāvattthī for alms. Then, after the meal,
 when they returned from almsround, they went up to the Buddha,
 bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what was happening.

276. The *anukula* (“propitious”) sacrifice is mentioned several times (eg. DN 5:22.4, AN 4.40:2.2). The Pali commentaries interpret it as “in line with (*anu-*) family (*kula*)”. But nothing in the contexts connects it with family customs, nor is such a term known in Sanskrit. It seems rather to be a misunderstanding of Sanskrit *anukūla*, literally “along the riverbank”, and in applied use, “in conformity with”, “favorable to”, as in the favor of the gods. This is the standard reading in Buddhist Sanskrit. Such a sacrifice is characterized, not by family custom, but by harmlessness. Thus *anukula* means “propitious, favored (by the gods and the Dhamma)”.

277. This story is expanded in Ja 201, where it is said that they were a gang of highwaymen and murderers.

3.1 Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha recited these verses:

4.1 “The attentive say that shackle is not strong
that’s made of iron, wood, or knots.
But obsession with jeweled earrings,
concern for your partners and children:

5.1 this, say the attentive, is a strong shackle
dragging the indulgent down, hard to escape.
Having cut this one too they go forth,
unconcerned, having given up sensual pleasures.”

Chapter Two

SN 3.11

Seven Matted-Hair Ascetics

Sattajaṭṭilasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattḥi in the stilt long- 1.1
house of Migāra’s mother in the Eastern Monastery.²⁷⁸

Then in the late afternoon, the Buddha came out of retreat and 1.2
sat outside the gate. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the
Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side.

Now at that time seven matted-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, 2.1
seven naked ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, and seven wanderers
passed by not far from the Buddha. Their armpits and bodies were
hairy, and their nails were long; and they carried their pack with
shoulder-poles.²⁷⁹

278. The same narrative introduces different verses at Ud 6.2. | After the Je-tavana, this was the best-known monastery in Sāvattḥi. It was offered by the lady Visākhā, known as Migāra’s mother.

279. “Matted-hair ascetics” (*jaṭṭilā*) were Vedic ascetics practicing bathing and worshipping the sacred flame (Ud 1.9; see note on MN 40:5.10). | “Jain ascetics” (*nigaṇṭhā*) were followers of Mahāvīra. The next two types might be the two main subsets of Jains: the Digambara were “naked ascetics” (*acelakā*), while Śvetāmbara were “one-cloth ascetics” (see AN 6.57:4.1). However, the suttas usually seem to mean the Ājīvakas when they speak of naked ascetics. | “Wanderers” (*paribbājakā*) were homeless religious renunciates—male or female—who wandered seeking alms (see note on DN 1:1.1.3). | For *khāri* (“pack”) see also SN 7.9:14.1.

- 2.2 Then King Pasenadi got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, raised his joined palms toward those various ascetics, and pronounced his name three times: “Sirs, I am Pasenadi, king of Kosala! ... I am Pasenadi, king of Kosala!”
- 3.1 Then, not long after those ascetics had left, King Pasenadi went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, “Sir, these are among those in the world who are perfected or who are on the path to perfection!”²⁸⁰
- 4.1 “Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures, living at home with your children, using sandalwood imported from Kāsi, wearing garlands, fragrance, and makeup, and accepting gold and currency, it’s hard for you to know who is perfected or on the path to perfection.
- 5.1 You can get to know a person’s ethics by living with them. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless. You can get to know a person’s purity by dealing with them. ... You can get to know a person’s resilience in times of trouble. ... You can get to know a person’s wisdom by discussion. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.”
- 6.1 “It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha. ...
- 7.1 Sir, these are my spies, my undercover agents returning after spying on the country.²⁸¹ I shall later make use of what they first spied

280. This sentence is phrased as a statement in all editions here. It is also a statement in the parallel passage at Ud 6.2:4.2, except the PTS edition, where it is a question. The commentary in both places confirms it is meant as a statement (*“ime arahanto”ti vutte*). Pasenadi is testing the Buddha.

281. The use of ascetics for spies (*cara*), which is still common today, is detailed by Kauṭilya in his Arthaśāstra. Those seeking a job can imitate bald (*muṇḍa*) or matted-hair (*jaṭila*) ascetics, pretending to live on a handful of greens but secretly eating what they like (as here). Other fake ascetics or spies disguised as merchants then acclaim them to build reputation (as Pasenadi here). When people seek prophecies, he foretells that those loyal to the king shall prosper and those who oppose him will suffer. The king’s minister then ensures that

out.²⁸² Now—when they have rinsed off the dust and dirt, and are nicely bathed and anointed, with hair and beard dressed, and dressed in white—they will amuse themselves, supplied and provided with the five kinds of sensual stimulation.”

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha 8.1
recited these verses:

“It’s not easy to know a man by his appearance. 9.1
You shouldn’t trust them at first sight.
For undisciplined men live in this world
disguised as the disciplined.

Like a fake earring made of clay, 10.1
like a copper halfpenny covered with gold,
they live hidden in the world,
corrupt inside but beautiful outside.”

SN 3.12

Five Kings

Pañcarājasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

such prophecies come true (1.11.13, 1.13.15). Female mendicants are especially useful for manipulating the wives of officials (5.1.19, 5.1.50, 12.2.20), or officials regarding their wives (11.1.52). Ascetic spies are taught to manipulate loyalties with morality tales (1.14) and to fool enemy kings by faking magical powers (13.2; cp. Devadatta using magic to seduce Ajātasattu at Kd 17:2.1.1). They conduct assassinations by tricking targets into consuming poisons in the guise of a ritual (5.1.33) or love-potions (11.1.40), or he may first instigate rape, then accuse the rapist (11.1.48). Princes may also don the guise of such ascetics in order to escape a coup, while forest ascetics misdirect pursuers (7.17.50). Such spies earn a solid middle income comparable to soldiers, superintendents, teachers, or accountants (5.3.22–3).

282. Readings for *osāpayissāmi* are highly uncertain, and the sentence may be corrupt. Udāna commentary glosses *paṭipajjissāmi karissāmi*, which suggests Sanskrit *apāśri*, “employ, practice, use”.

- 1.2 Now at that time five kings headed by Pasenadi were amusing themselves, supplied and provided with the five kinds of sensual stimulation, and this discussion came up among them.²⁸³ “What’s the best of sensual pleasures?”
- 1.4 Some of them said, “Sights are the best of sensual pleasures!”
- 1.6 Others said, “Sounds are best!”
- 1.8 Others said, “Smells are best!”
- 1.10 Others said, “Tastes are best!”
- 1.12 Others said, “Touches are best!”
- 1.14 Since those kings were unable to persuade each other, King Pasenadi said to them, “Come, good fellows, let’s go to the Buddha and ask him about this.”²⁸⁴ As he answers, so we’ll remember it.”
- 2.4 “Yes, good fellows,” replied those kings.
- 3.1 Then those five kings headed by Pasenadi went to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. King Pasenadi reported their conversation to the Buddha, and said, “Sir, what’s the best of sensual pleasures?”
- 4.1 “Great king, which kind of sensual stimulation is best is defined by which is most agreeable, I say.”²⁸⁵ The very same sights that are agreeable to some are disagreeable to others. When you’re happy with certain sights, as you’ve got all you wished for, you don’t want any other sight that’s better or finer. For you, those sights are perfect and supreme.
- 5.1 The very same sounds ... smells ... tastes ... touches that are agreeable to some are disagreeable to others. When you’re happy with certain touches, as you’ve got all you wished for, you don’t want

283. The five kings are not identified.

284. This term, usually used by gods of the Buddha, is here used among kings to indicate equal status (see SN 1.1:1.4 and note).

285. The Buddha could have simply rejected out of hand the idea that this was a worthwhile question. Instead, he educates the kings by proposing an analytical approach based in a psychology of empathy, encouraging the kings to remember that other people have different yet valid experiences.

any other touch that's better or finer. For you, those touches are perfect and supreme."

Now at that time the lay follower Candanaṅgalika was sitting in that assembly. Then he rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, "I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!" 9.1

"Then speak as you feel inspired," said the Buddha. 9.4

Then the lay follower Candanaṅgalika extolled the Buddha in his presence with an appropriate verse:²⁸⁶ 10.1

"Like a fragrant pink lotus 11.1
that blooms at daybreak, its fragrance unfaded—
see Āṅgīrasa shine,²⁸⁷
bright as the sun in the sky!"

Then those five kings clothed Candanaṅgalika with five upper robes. And Candanaṅgalika in turn endowed the Buddha with those robes. 12.1

SN 3.13

A Bucketful of Rice

Doṇapākasutta

At Sāvattthī.²⁸⁸

1.1

286. Candanaṅgalika is unknown elsewhere. The same verse, with a similar outcome, is spoken by the brahmin Piṅgīyānī at AN 5.195:3.1.

287. Āṅgīrasa was one of the Vedic sages and the Āṅgīrasas are his descendants. They were priestly poets who assisted Indra in freeing the cows from the Vāla cave, thus ushering in the dawn. Āṅgīrasa is regarded as the *pravara* or revered ancestor of the Gotama clan. Both names are associated with light: *āṅgīrasa* shares a root and is often synonymous with *agni* ("fire"), while *gotama* means "light dispelling dark".

288. This Sutta presents what is probably the world's first weight loss diet.

- 1.2 Now at that time King Pasenadi of Kosala used to eat boiled rice by the bucketful.²⁸⁹ Then after eating King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha, huffing and puffing. He bowed and sat down to one side.
- 2.1 Then, knowing that King Pasenadi was huffing and puffing after eating, on that occasion the Buddha spoke this verse:
- 3.1 “When a man is always mindful,
knowing moderation in eating,
his discomfort fades,²⁹⁰
and he ages slowly, taking care of his life.”
- 4.1 Now at that time the student Sudassana was standing behind the king.²⁹¹ Then King Pasenadi addressed him, “Please, dear Sudassana, memorize this verse in the Buddha’s presence and recite it to me whenever I am served a meal.²⁹² I’ll set up a regular daily allowance of a hundred dollars for you.”²⁹³
- 4.5 “Yes, Your Majesty,” replied Sudassana. He memorized that verse in the Buddha’s presence, and then whenever the king was served a meal he would repeat it:
- 5.1 “When a man is always mindful,
knowing moderation in eating,
his discomfort fades,

289. A *doṇa* (“bucketful”) was a wooden trough to receive the filtered Soma (Rig Veda 4.32.17). In the Arthaśāstra it measures feed for horses (2.30.12) and elephants (2.15.50). One *doṇa* was the monthly allotment of grain for a servant (Manu 7.126). Olivelle estimates it at 5 liters or 9.6 kg (*King, Governance, and Law*, appendix 2, pg. 458). | The use of present tense (*bhuñjati*) here indicates that it is an ongoing situation, not just a single large meal (compare the aorist in the previous Sutta).

290. For *vedanā* as “discomfort”, compare the stock reflection on eating (SN 35.120:4.3).

291. This Vedic student attending the king is otherwise unknown.

292. This passages well illustrates the meaning of *pariyāpuṇāti* as “memorize”.

293. *Niccabhikkhā* at Ja 398:4.1 refers to the daily offering of food to a *yakkha*. Here and at MN 94:33.1 it refers to money.

and he ages slowly, taking care of his life.”

Then the king gradually got used to having at most a cup of rice.²⁹⁴ 6.1
After some time King Pasenadi’s body slimmed right down. Stroking his limbs with his hands, at that time he expressed this heartfelt sentiment:²⁹⁵

“In both ways the Buddha has sympathy for me: in the good of 6.3
this life and the good of lives to come.”

SN 3.14

Battle (1st)

Paṭhamasaṅgāmasutta

At Sāvattḥi.

1.1

Then King Ajātasattu of Magadha, son of the princess of Videha, 1.2
mobilized an army of four divisions and marched to Kāsi to attack King Pasenadi of Kosala.²⁹⁶ When King Pasenadi heard of this, he mobilized an army of four divisions and marched to Kāsi to defend

294. *Nālikā* was a cup made from a hollow bamboo. It was a modest meal for a king (SN 22.96:4.10, DN 17:2.15.10), sufficient for a medium-sized mendicant’s bowl (Bi NP 1:2.1.10). It does not appear in this sense in the Arthaśāstra, but the *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* says it is one-sixteenth of a *doṇa* and equivalent to a *prastha*. Olivelle estimates the *prastha* at around 600 g, which is indeed one sixteenth of a *doṇa*. Bear in mind that rice constituted the bulk of the meal, and for monastics, it would often have been the only meal of the day.

295. Interesting use of *sallikhati* = *sallekha* (“cut down” = “slimmed”), related to the idea of “effacing” writing as the stone wears away. For the Jains, *sallekhanā* was the practice of refusing all food at the end of life (Tattvārthasūtra 7.22; compare the Buddhist practice at MN 8:4.3).

296. This was obviously after Ajātasattu’s regicide of his father Bimbisāra, and must therefore be in the last years of the Buddha’s life. It is just one of the indications of Ajātasattu’s aggressive nature and the breakdown of peace in the Buddha’s final years. | Kāsi, of which Varanasi was the capital, had lost its status as an independent kingdom to Pasenadi’s father. Here it has become the proxy for the struggle for dominance between the two largest kingdoms of the time, Kosala and Magadha, a struggle that Magadha would ultimately win. | The four divisions of the army are defined in the next Sutta (SN 3.15:1.9).

it against Ajātasattu. Then the two kings met in battle. And in that battle Ajātasattu defeated Pasenadi, who withdrew to his own capital at Sāvattḥī.

2.1 Then several mendicants robed up in the morning and, taking their bowls and robes, entered Sāvattḥī for alms. Then, after the meal, when they returned from almsround, they went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened. Then the Buddha said:

4.1 “Mendicants, King Ajātasattu has bad friends, companions, and associates.²⁹⁷ But King Pasenadi has good friends, companions, and associates.²⁹⁸ Yet on this day King Pasenadi will have a bad night’s sleep as one defeated.”

4.4 That is what the Buddha said. . . .

5.1 “Victory breeds enmity;
the defeated sleep badly.
The peaceful sleep at ease,
having left victory and defeat behind.”

SN 3.15

Battle (2nd)

Dutiyasaṅgāmasutta

1.1 Then King Ajātasattu of Magadha, son of the princess of Videha, mobilized an army of four divisions and marched to Kāsi to attack King Pasenadi of Kosala. When King Pasenadi heard of this, he mobilized an army of four divisions and marched to Kāsi to defend it against Ajātasattu. Then the two kings met in battle. And in that battle Pasenadi defeated Ajātasattu and captured him alive.

297. One of his bad friends was Devadatta.

298. The Buddha taught Pasenadi the value of good friends at SN 3.18.

Then King Pasenadi thought, “Even though I’ve never betrayed 1.7
this King Ajātasattu, he betrayed me. Still, he is my nephew.²⁹⁹ Now
that I’ve vanquished all of Ajātasattu’s elephant troops, cavalry, char-
iots, and infantry, why don’t I let him loose with just his life?”

And that’s what he did. 2.1

Then several mendicants . . . told the Buddha what had happened. 3.1

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha 6.1
recited these verses:

“A man goes on plundering 7.1
as long as it serves his ends.

But as soon as others plunder him,
the plunderer is plundered.³⁰⁰

For the fool thinks they’re on solid ground,³⁰¹ 8.1
so long as their wickedness has not ripened.
But as soon as that wickedness ripens,
they fall into suffering.

A killer creates a killer;³⁰² 9.1
a conqueror creates a conqueror;
an abuser creates abuse,
and a bully creates a bully.
And so as deeds unfold

299. The background is explained in Ja 239. Pasenadi’s father, Mahākosala, had forged an alliance by marrying his daughter to Bimbisāra, endowing her with the revenues of a Kāsi village. Ajātasattu gained the throne by murdering his father, and the queen—Pasenadi’s sister Kosaladevī—died of grief soon after. So when he claimed the village, Pasenadi was outraged at the thought of his father’s gift going to such a man. He took the village, and the series of back-and-forth battles began.

300. See Bodhi’s *Connected Discourses*, note 263 for this line.

301. The idiom here is tricky. Bodhi has, “The fool thinks fortune is on his side”. The commentary glosses *ṭhāna* with *kāraṇa* (“reason”). I think *ṭhāna* (“solid ground”) here sets up the “fall” at the end of the verse.

302. The Buddha speaks of the tendency for evil conduct to be passed down through generations, a fate that was to befall Ajātasattu himself.

the plunderer is plundered.”

SN 3.16

A Daughter

Mallikāsutta

1.1 At Sāvattī.

1.2 Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. Then a man went up to the king and whispered in his ear, “Your Majesty, Queen Mallikā has given birth to a daughter.” When this was said, King Pasenadi was disappointed.³⁰³

2.1 Then, knowing that King Pasenadi was disappointed, on that occasion the Buddha recited these verses:

3.1 “Well, some women are better than men,
O ruler of the people.³⁰⁴
Wise and virtuous, a devoted wife³⁰⁵
whose mother-in-law is her queen.³⁰⁶

4.1 And when she has a son,
he becomes a hero, O lord of the land.
The son of such a blessed lady

303. He had hoped for a son. The girl was probably princess Vajirī, for whom the king expresses his love at MN 87:24.1. This event must have been several years before the war between Kosala and Magadha, for the commentaries say she was married to Ajātasattu upon cessation of hostilities.

304. Read *posā*, which the commentary glosses *posehi*, i.e. ablative plural in comparative sense, “than men”.

305. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.17 gives a rite for those who wish to have a daughter who lives a full life and is an astute scholar (*pañḍitā*).

306. The compound *sassudeva* is attributive, “(she who has) mother-in-law as queen”. There is a subtle intertextual tragedy here, for her future mother-in-law was her aunt, who died because of the actions of her future husband Ajātasattu.

may even rule the realm.”³⁰⁷

SN 3.17

Diligence

Appamādasutta

- At Sāvatthī. 1.1
- Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Sir, is there 1.2
one thing that secures benefits for both³⁰⁸ this life and lives to come?”
- “There is, Great King.” 2.1
- “So what is that one thing?” 3.1
- “Diligence, Great King, is one thing that secures benefits for both 4.1
this life and lives to come. The footprints of all creatures that walk
can fit inside an elephant’s footprint. So an elephant’s footprint is
said to be the biggest of them all. In the same way, diligence is one
thing that secures benefits for both this life and lives to come.”
- That is what the Buddha said. ... 4.6
- “For one who desires high delights³⁰⁹ 5.1
again and again—
long life, beauty, and health,
heaven, and an eminent family—
- the astute praise diligence 6.1
in making merit.
Being diligent, an astute person
secures both benefits:
- the benefit in this life, 7.1

307. According to tradition this did turn out to be the case, as her son with Ajātasattu was Udāyibhadda, fondly recalled by the king at DN 2:12.3. But like his father, he ascended the throne by regicide (Mahāvamsa 4.1).

308. This discourse is similar to AN 6.53.

309. These verses are also at AN 5.43:9.1.

and in lives to come.

An attentive one, comprehending the meaning,
is said to be astute.”

SN 3.18

Good Friends

Kalyāṇamittasutta

1.1 At Sāvathī.

1.2 Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Just now, sir, as I was in private retreat this thought came to mind. ‘The teaching is well explained by the Buddha. But it’s for someone with good friends, companions, and associates, not for someone with bad friends, companions, and associates.’”

2.1 “That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true!” said the Buddha. And he repeated the king’s statement, adding:

3.1 “Great king, this one time I was staying in the land of the Sakyans where they have a town named Townsville.³¹⁰ Then the mendicant Ānanda came to me, bowed, sat down to one side, and said: ‘Sir, good friends, companions, and associates are half the spiritual life.’

4.1 When he had spoken, I said to him: ‘Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Good friends, companions, and associates are the whole of the spiritual life. A mendicant with good friends, companions, and associates can expect to develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path.

5.1 And how does a mendicant with good friends develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path? It’s when a mendicant develops right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion, which rely on seclu-

310. “Townsville” is a literal rendering of *nagaraka*. I translate it in homage to the town in northern Queensland where a chance encounter with a roadside joey set me on the path to the Dhamma. The event the Buddha refers to here is recorded at SN 45.2.

sion, fading away, and cessation, and ripen as letting go. That's how a mendicant with good friends develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path. And here's another way to understand how good friends are the whole of the spiritual life.

For, by relying on me as a good friend, sentient beings who are 6.1
liable to rebirth, old age, and death, to sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress are freed from all these things. This is another way to understand how good friends are the whole of the spiritual life.'

So, Great King, you should train like this: 'I will have good friends, 7.1
companions, and associates.' That's how you should train.

When you have good friends, companions, and associates, you 8.1
should live supported by one thing: diligence in skillful qualities.

When you're diligent, supported by diligence, your ladies of the 9.1
harem, aristocrat vassals, troops, and people of town and country will think: 'The king lives diligently, supported by diligence. We'd better live diligently, supported by diligence!'

When you're diligent, supported by diligence, then not only you 13.1
yourself, but your ladies of the harem, and your treasury and store-houses will be guarded and protected."

That is what the Buddha said. ... 13.3

"For one who desires high wealth 14.1
again and again,
the astute praise diligence
in making merit.
Being diligent, an astute person
secures both benefits:

the benefit in this life, 15.1
and in lives to come.
Attentive, comprehending the meaning,
they are said to be astute."

SN 3.19

Childless (1st)

Paṭhamaaputtakasutta

1.1 At Sāvattḥī.

1.2 Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha in the middle of the day, bowed, and sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him,³¹¹ “So, Great King, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”

2.1 “Sir, here in Sāvattḥī a financier householder has passed away. Since he died childless, I have come after transferring his fortune to the royal compound.³¹² There was eight million in gold coin, not to mention the silver coin.³¹³ And yet that financier ate meals of sour gruel with false black pepper. He wore clothes consisting of three patches of sunn hemp.³¹⁴ He traveled around in a vehicle that was a dilapidated little cart, holding a leaf as parasol.”³¹⁵

3.1 “That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true! When an untrue person has acquired notable wealth they don’t make themselves happy and pleased. Nor do they make their mother and father, partners and children, bondservants, workers, and staff, and friends and colleagues happy and pleased. And they don’t establish an uplifting religious donation for ascetics and brahmins that’s conducive to heaven, ripens in happiness, and leads to heaven.³¹⁶ Because they haven’t made proper use of that wealth, rulers or bandits take it, or fire consumes it, or flood sweeps it away, or unloved heirs take it. Since that wealth is not properly utilized, it’s wasted, not used.

311. The next discourse is similar.

312. This accords with Arthaśāstra 3.5.28, “A king should take property for which there is no heir”.

313. Sāvattḥī was a prosperous city.

314. Hemp (*sāṇa*) made a rough cloth. It was not known as an intoxicant.

315. Compare the splendid chariot of the brahmin Jānussoṇi (SN 45.4:1.3).

316. The proper use of wealth includes enjoying it oneself as well as helping others.

Suppose there was a lotus pond in an uninhabited region with 4.1
clear, sweet, cool water, clean, with smooth banks, delightful. But
people don't collect it or drink it or bathe in it or use it for any pur-
pose. Since that water is not properly utilized, it's wasted, not used.

In the same way, when an untrue person has acquired notable 4.4
wealth ... it's wasted, not used.

When a true person has acquired notable wealth they make them- 5.1
selves happy and pleased. And they make their mother and father,
partners and children, bondservants, workers, and staff, and friends
and colleagues happy and pleased. And they establish an uplifting
religious donation for ascetics and brahmins that's conducive to
heaven, ripens in happiness, and leads to heaven. Because they make
proper use of that wealth, rulers or bandits don't take it, fire doesn't
consume it, flood doesn't sweep it away, and unloved heirs don't take
it. Since that wealth is properly utilized, it's used, not wasted.

Suppose there was a lotus pond not far from a town or village 6.1
with clear, sweet, cool water, clean, with smooth banks, delightful.
And people collected it and drank it and bathed in it and used it for
their own purpose. Since that water is properly utilized, it's used,
not wasted.

In the same way, when a true person has acquired notable wealth 6.4
... it's used, not wasted.

As cool water in an uninhabited region 7.1
evaporates when not drunk;
so too when a reprobate acquires wealth,
they neither use it themselves nor give it away.

When the attentive and sensible acquire wealth, 8.1
they use it, being dutiful.
That boss, having supported the family unit,³¹⁷
blameless, goes to a heavenly place."

317. *Nisabha* means "bull" and "chief", both of which are covered by "boss".

SN 3.20

Childless (2nd)

Dutiyaaputtakasutta

- 1.1 Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha in the middle of the day ... The Buddha said to him, “So, Great King, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”
- 2.1 “Sir, here in Sāvattthī a financier householder has passed away. Since he died childless, I have come after transferring his fortune to the royal compound. There was ten million in gold coin, not to mention the silver coin. And yet that financier ate meals of sour gruel with false black pepper. He wore clothes consisting of three patches of sunn hemp. He traveled around in a vehicle that was a dilapidated little cart, holding a leaf as parasol.”
- 3.1 “That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true! Once upon a time, great king, that financier householder provided almsfood on behalf of an independent Buddha named Tagarasikhī.³¹⁸ He instructed: ‘Give alms to that ascetic,’ before getting up from his seat and leaving.³¹⁹ But after giving he regretted it: ‘It would have been better to feed the bondservants or workers with that almsfood.’³²⁰ What’s more, he murdered his brother’s only child for the sake of his fortune.

318. The concept of the *paccekabuddha* allows that there were awakened sages in the long periods of time when there is no *sambuddha* such as Gotama. Both are Buddhas in the sense of being awakened, but they differ in their relation to others. It is sometimes said that they do not teach, but the tradition attributes to them a number of sayings (notably Snp 1.3). They are sometimes said to be “solitary”, but in MN 116, 500 dwell on the same hill, while *pacceka* Brahmas appear in pairs (SN 6.6:1.3). Compare Bu NP 9:1.36.1, where “independent” funds are set up for “independent” robes (rather than combining them); the same idea occurs at AN 11.16:11.2. Likewise, SN 1.37:1.7 speaks of “independent” verses. Thus the burden of sense in the Pali is that *pacceka* means “independent”, which here has the sense of not forming a fourfold community, but simply living and practicing independently.

319. He did not give with his own hands.

320. Giving to workers is obviously good, but it is not good to regret one’s generosity.

Because that financier provided Tagarasikhī with almsfood, as a 4.1
 result of that deed he was reborn seven times in a good place, a heav-
 enly realm.³²¹ And as a residual result of that same deed he held the
 position of financier seven times right here in Sāvattthī. But because
 that financier regretted giving alms, as a result of that deed his mind
 didn't tend to enjoy nice food, clothes, vehicles, or the five refined
 kinds of sensual stimulation.³²² And because that financier mur-
 dered his brother's only child for the sake of his fortune, as a result
 of that deed he burned in hell for many years, for many hundreds,
 many thousands, many hundreds of thousands of years.³²³ And as a
 residual result of that same deed, he is childless for the seventh time,
 his fortune ending up in the royal treasury.³²⁴ Now the old merit
 of that financier has been used up, and he hasn't accumulated new
 merit. Today, Great King, that financier burns in the Great Hell of
 Screams."³²⁵

"Really, sir, that financier has been reborn in the Great Hell of 4.9
 Screams?"

"Yes he has, Great King." 4.10

That is what the Buddha said. ... 4.11

"Grain, money, silver, and gold, 5.1
 or whatever other possessions there are;
 bondservants, workers, servants,
 and those dependent for their livelihood:

you must go on without taking these; 6.1
 all of them are left behind.
 But the deeds you do
 by body, speech, and mind—

321. This sequence shows the complexity of deeds and their results.

322. The regret did not cancel out the good deed, but it took the shine off it.

323. The results are proportionate to the deeds.

324. Rebirth in hell was for the murder, while childlessness is because he tried to usurp the inheritance.

325. See SN 1.39:4.3 and note.

- 7.1 that's what you can call your own.
 That's what you take when you go.
 That's what goes with you,
 like a shadow that never leaves.
- 8.1 That's why you should do good,
 investing in the future life.
 The good deeds of sentient beings
 support them in the next world."

Chapter Three

SN 3.21

Individuals

Puggalasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him:

“Great king, these four individuals are found in the world.³²⁶ What four? 1.3

1. The dark bound for darkness,
2. the dark bound for light,
3. the light bound for darkness,
4. and the light bound for light.

And how is an individual dark and bound for darkness? It’s when 2.1
an individual is reborn in a low family—a family of corpse-workers,
bamboo-workers, hunters, chariot-makers, or scavengers—poor,
with little to eat or drink, where life is tough, and food and shelter
are hard to find.³²⁷ And they’re ugly, unsightly, deformed, sickly—

326. Also at AN 4.85 and DN 33:1.11.216.

327. *Caṇḍālas* (“corpse-workers”) are frequently depicted as the lowest of untouchables as seen by Brahmins. However, the usual rendering of “outcast” is unsatisfactory, as all the groups here are defined positively by their occupation, and moreover some, such as the scavengers, would also have been untouchable.

one-eyed, crippled, lame, or half-paralyzed. They don't get to have food, drink, clothes, and vehicles; garlands, fragrance, and makeup; or bed, house, and lighting. And they do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. When their body breaks up, after death, they're reborn in a place of loss, a bad place, the underworld, hell.

- 3.1 This individual is like someone who goes from darkness to darkness, from blackness to blackness, from bloodstain to bloodstain.³²⁸

That's how an individual is dark and bound for darkness.

- 4.1 And how is an individual dark and bound for light? It's when an individual is reborn in a low family—a family of corpse-workers, bamboo-workers, hunters, chariot-makers, or scavengers—poor, with little to eat or drink, where life is tough, and food and shelter are hard to find. And they're ugly, unsightly, deformed, sickly—one-eyed, crippled, lame, or half-paralyzed. They don't get to have food, drink, clothes, and vehicles; garlands, fragrance, and makeup; or bed, house, and lighting. But they do good things by way of body, speech, and mind. When their body breaks up, after death, they're reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm.

- 5.1 This individual is like someone who ascends from the ground to a couch; from a couch to horseback; from horseback to an elephant; and from an elephant to a stilt longhouse. That's how an individual is dark and bound for light.

- 6.1 And how is an individual light and bound for darkness? It's when an individual is reborn in an eminent family—a well-to-do family of aristocrats, brahmins, or householders—rich, affluent, and wealthy,

The Pali commentaries equate the *caṇḍāla* with the *chavaka* (or *chapaka*) of Bu Sk 69:1.12.1, a “corpse disposer” (*chavachaddakacaṇḍālā*; see also *chavakacaṇḍālo* at Mil 5.4.7:2.4). They were known for their “bone-washing” ceremony (DN 1:1.13.2, AN 10.107:1.1). This agrees with Rāmāyana 1.58.10, which describes a *caṇḍāla* as dark-complexioned, dirty, with disheveled hair, his body smeared with graveyard ash. Mahāvamsa 10.91–94 tells how King Paṇḍukābhaya employed *caṇḍālas* for cleaning streets and toilets, bearing the dead, and watching over cemeteries, with their village adjoining the cemetery. My grandfather was a corpse-worker, so in another world it might have been my inheritance.

328. Note the rare term *lohitamala*, “bloodstain”.

with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain. And they're attractive, good-looking, lovely, of surpassing beauty. They get to have food, drink, clothes, and vehicles; garlands, fragrance, and makeup; and bed, house, and lighting. But they do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. When their body breaks up, after death, they're reborn in a place of loss, a bad place, the underworld, hell.

This individual is like someone who descends from a stilt longhouse to an elephant; from an elephant to horseback; from horseback to a couch; and from a couch to the ground; and from the ground they enter darkness.³²⁹ That's how an individual is light and bound for darkness. 7.1

And how is an individual light and bound for light? It's when an individual is reborn in an eminent family—a well-to-do family of aristocrats, brahmins, or householders—rich, affluent, and wealthy, with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain. And they're attractive, good-looking, lovely, of surpassing beauty. They get to have food, drink, clothes, and vehicles; garlands, fragrance, and makeup; and bed, house, and lighting. And they do good things by way of body, speech, and mind. When their body breaks up, after death, they're reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm. 8.1

This individual is like someone who shifts from one couch to another; from the back of one horse to another; from one elephant to another; or from one stilt longhouse to another. That's how an individual is light and bound for light. These are the four individuals found in the world.” 9.1

That is what the Buddha said. ...

9.5

329. The last phrase is curious. It doesn't mirror the positive version of the simile, and it's not clear exactly what it means. Of course it can be interpreted spiritually, but it's a simile, the point is that it is describing something physical. Bodhi interprets it as “underground darkness”, but he misses the change in verb from “descend” to “enter”; and anyway, the text doesn't say “underground”. Commentary is silent.

- 10.1 “O King, some people are poor,
faithless and stingy.
Miserly, with bad intentions,
they lack regard, they have wrong view.
- 11.1 They abuse and insult
ascetics and brahmins
and other supplicants.
They’re nihilists and bullies,
- 12.1 who prevent others from giving
food to beggars.
O King, ruler of the people:
when such people die
they fall into the terrible hell—
from darkness they’re bound for darkness.
- 13.1 O King, some people are poor,
but faithful and not stingy.
They give with best of intentions,
that peaceful-hearted person.
- 14.1 They rise for and bow to
ascetics and brahmins
and other supplicants.
Training in moral conduct,
- 15.1 they don’t prevent others from giving
food to beggars.
O King, ruler of the people:
when such people die
they go to the Third Heaven—³³⁰

330. The *tidiva* was the realm of Indra/Sakka (DN 21:1.12.22, DN 30:2.27.12, Thag 10.1:8.4), as it was from the time of the Vedas (Rig Veda 9.113.9, Atharva Veda 10.9.5, 17.1.10). In Buddhist cosmology, this agrees with the fact that

from darkness they're bound for light.

O King, some people are rich, 16.1
 but faithless and stingy.
 Miserly, with bad intentions,
 they lack regard, they have wrong view.

They abuse and insult 17.1
 ascetics and brahmins
 and other supplicants
 They're nihilists and bullies,

who prevent others from giving 18.1
 food to beggars.
 O King, ruler of the people:
 when such people die
 they fall into the terrible hell—
 from light they're bound for darkness.

O King, some people are rich, 19.1
 faithful and not stingy.
 They give with best of intentions,
 that peaceful-hearted person.

They rise for and bow to 20.1
 ascetics and brahmins
 and other supplicants.
 Training in moral conduct,

Sakka's realm is the third of the heavens (after the earth gods and the four great kings). Thus the Third Heaven is the heaven of the Thirty-Three. Both ideas spring from an old association of Indra, or divinity generally, with the number three. Agni Purāṇa lists *tridiva* as a synonym for "heaven", as does Amarakośa 1.1.11. Kṣīrasvāmin clarifies that three here means "third", while also adding that some connect it with the Brahmā realm (Amarakośodghāṭana 1.1.6; see SN 7.18:4.2).

- 21.1 they don't prevent others from giving
food to beggars.
O King, ruler of the people:
when such people die
they go to the Third Heaven—
from light they're bound for light."

SN 3.22

Grandmother

Ayyikāśutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 King Pasenadi of Kosala sat to one side, and the Buddha said to him, "So, Great King, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?"
- 2.1 "Sir, my grandmother has passed away. She was old, elderly and senior. She was advanced in years and had reached the final stage of life; she was a hundred and twenty years old. But I loved my grandmother; she was dear to me. If by giving away the elephant-treasure I could get my grandmother back, I'd do it. If by giving away the horse-treasure I could get my grandmother back, I'd do it. If by giving away a prize village I could get my grandmother back, I'd do it. If by giving away the whole country I could get my grandmother back, I'd do it."
- 2.11 "Great king, all sentient beings are liable to die. Death is their end; they're not exempt from death."
- 2.12 "It's incredible, sir, it's amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha: 'All sentient beings are liable to die. Death is their end; they're not exempt from death.'"
- 3.1 "That's so true, Great King! That's so true! All sentient beings are liable to die. Death is their end; they're not exempt from death. It's like the vessels made by potters. Whatever kind they are, whether baked or unbaked, all of them are liable to break apart. Breaking

is their end; they're not exempt from breakage. In the same way, all sentient beings are liable to die. Death is their end; they're not exempt from death."

That is what the Buddha said. ... 3.5

"All beings will die,
for life ends in death. 4.1

They pass on according to their deeds,
reaping the fruits of good and bad.
Those who do bad go to hell,
and if you do good you go to heaven.

That's why you should do good,
investing in the future life. 5.1
The good deeds of sentient beings
support them in the next world."

SN 3.23

The World

Lokasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, "Sir, how many things arise in the world for its harm, suffering, and discomfort?" 1.2

"Great king, three things arise in the world for its harm, suffering, and discomfort. What three? Greed, hate, and delusion. These three things arise in the world for its harm, suffering, and discomfort." 1.4

That is what the Buddha said. ... 1.10

"When greed, hate, and delusion,
originate inside oneself, 2.1
they harm a person of wicked heart,
as a bamboo is destroyed by its own fruit."

SN 3.24

Archery

Issattasutta

1.1 At Sāvattthī.

1.2 Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Sir, where should a gift be given?”

1.4 “Wherever your heart feels inspired, Great King.”

1.5 “But sir, where is a gift very fruitful?”³³¹

1.6 “Where a gift should be given is one thing, Great King, but where a gift is very fruitful is another.³³² A gift is very fruitful when it’s given to an ethical person, not so much to an unethical person. Well then, Great King, I’ll ask you about this in return, and you can answer as you like.

1.9 What do you think, Great King? Suppose you were at war, ready to fight a battle. Then along comes an aristocrat youth who is untrained, inexperienced, unfit, inexperienced. And he’s fearful, scared, nervous, quick to flee. Would you employ such a man? Would he be of any use to you?”

1.13 “No, sir, I would have no use for such a man.”

1.14 “What about a brahmin youth,³³³ a peasant youth, or a menial youth who was similar?”

1.17 “No, sir, I would have no use for such a man.”

2.1 “What do you think, Great King? Suppose you were at war, ready to fight a battle. Then along comes an aristocrat youth who is trained, expert, fit, experienced. And he’s fearless, brave, bold, standing his

331. Also asked by the brahmin Devahita at SN 7.13:7.2 and by Sakka at SN 11.16:2.4.

332. Giving is not purely a matter of utilitarian calculation. It creates an emotional connection, which is why giving with one’s own hands is important. It’s not just about helping another; it’s also about elevating oneself.

333. Note that, while the *khattiyas* were often said to be the warrior class, there is no difference here.

ground. Would you employ such a man? Would he be of any use to you?”

“Yes, sir, I would have a use for such a man.” 2.5

“What about a brahmin youth, a peasant youth, or a menial youth who was similar? Would you employ such a man? Would he be of any use to you?” 2.6

“Yes, sir, I would have a use for such a man.” 2.10

“In the same way, a gift to anyone who has given up five factors and possesses five factors is very fruitful, no matter what family they’ve gone forth from. 3.1

What are the five factors they’ve given up? Sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. These are the five factors they’ve given up. 3.2

What are the five factors they possess? The entire spectrum of an adept’s ethics, immersion, wisdom, freedom, and knowledge and vision of freedom. These are the five factors they possess. 3.5

I say that a gift to anyone who has given up these five factors and possesses these five factors is very fruitful.” 3.8

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say: 3.9

“Any youth skilled at archery,
powerful and vigorous,
would be employed by a king going to war—
one is not a coward by reason of birth. 4.1

Just so, whoever is settled
in the qualities of patience and gentleness,
an intelligent person with noble conduct,
should be venerated even if they’re low born. 5.1

You should build lovely hermitages
and settle learned people in them. 6.1
You should set up water supplies in barren regions
and passages in places hard to travel.

- 7.1 Food, drink, edibles,
clothes, and lodgings
should be given to the upright ones,
with a clear and confident heart.
- 8.1 The thundering rain cloud,
its hundred peaks wreathed in lightning,
pours down over the rich earth,
soaking the uplands and valleys.
- 9.1 So too an astute person,
faithful and learned,
should prepare a meal to satisfy
supplicants with food and drink.
- 10.1 Rejoicing, they strew gifts about,
saying, ‘Give! Give!’
For that is their thunder,
like rain sent from the heavens.
That stream of merit so abundant
showers down on the giver.”

SN 3.25

The Simile of the Mountain

Pabbatūpamasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattī.
- 1.2 King Pasenadi of Kosala sat to one side, and the Buddha said to him, “So, Great King, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”
- 1.4 “Sir, there are anointed aristocratic kings who are infatuated with authority, and obsessed with greed for sensual pleasures. They have attained stability in the country, occupying a vast conquered territory. Today I have been busy fulfilling the duties of such kings.”

“What do you think, Great King? Suppose a trustworthy and depend- 2.1
able man were to come from the east. He’d approach you
and say: ‘Please, Great King, you should know this. I come from the
east. There I saw a big mountain that reached the clouds. And it was
coming this way, crushing all creatures.’³³⁴ So then, Great King, do
what you must!’

Then a second trustworthy and dependable man were to come 2.7
from the west ... a third from the north ... and a fourth from the
south. He’d approach you and say: ‘Please, Great King, you should
know this. I come from the south. There I saw a big mountain
that reached the clouds. And it was coming this way, crushing all
creatures. So then, Great King, do what you must!’

Should such a dire threat arise—a grim loss of human life, when 2.14
human birth is so rare—what would you do?”

“Sir, what could I do but practice the teachings, practice morality, 3.1
doing skillful and good actions?”

“I tell you, Great King, I announce to you: old age and death are 4.1
advancing upon you. Since old age and death are advancing upon
you, what would you do?”

“Sir, what can I do but practice the teachings, practice morality, 4.3
doing skillful and good actions?”

Sir, there are anointed aristocratic kings who are infatuated with 4.4
authority, and obsessed with greed for sensual pleasures. They have
attained stability in the country, occupying a vast conquered terri-
tory. Such kings engage in battles of elephants, cavalry, chariots, or
infantry. But there is no place, no domain for such battles when old
age and death are advancing.

In this royal court there are ministers of wise counsel who are 4.11
capable of dividing an approaching enemy by wise counsel. But

334. This extraordinary threat looms also in an Upaniṣadic passage: “Even if both the mountain ranges, the southern and the northern, were to rush at him determined to level him, they would not succeed in leveling him” (Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 2.13, translation Olivelle).

there is no place, no domain for such diplomatic battles when old age and death are advancing.

4.13 In this royal court there is abundant gold, both coined and uncoined, stored above and below ground. Using this wealth we can bribe an approaching enemy.³³⁵ But there is no place, no domain for such monetary battles when old age and death are advancing.

4.15 When old age and death are advancing, what can I do but practice the teachings, practice morality, doing skillful and good actions?”

5.1 “That’s so true, Great King! That’s so true! When old age and death are advancing, what can you do but practice the teachings, practice morality, doing skillful and good actions?”

5.3 That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

6.1 “Suppose there were vast mountains
of solid rock pressing against the sky
drawing in from all sides
and crushing the four quarters.

7.1 So too old age and death
advance upon all living creatures—
aristocrats, brahmins, peasants,
menials, corpse-workers, and scavengers.
They spare nothing.
They crush all beneath them.

8.1 There’s nowhere for elephants to take a stand,
nor chariots nor infantry.
They can’t be defeated
by diplomatic battles or by wealth.

335. *Bhūmigata* is explained as “underground” at Bu Pj 2:4.2.1 (there *bhūmatṭha*). | *Vehāsaṭṭha* is explained as “above ground” at Bu Pj 2:4.5.1. | *Upalāpetum* (“bribe”) is a means by which Vassakāra suggests the Vajjis can be overcome (DN 16:1.5.8, AN 7.22:12.3).

That's why an astute person, 9.1
seeing what's good for themselves,
being wise, would place faith
in the Buddha, the teaching, and the Sangha.

Whoever lives by the teaching 10.1
in body, speech, and mind,
is praised in this life
and departs to rejoice in heaven."

The Linked Discourses with the Kosalan are complete.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH MĀRA

Chapter One

SN 4.1

Mortification

Tapokammasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.³³⁶ At one time, when he was first awakened, the 1.1
Buddha was staying in Uruvelā at the root of the goatherd’s banyan
tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.³³⁷

336. The first five discourses of this chapter are set shortly after the Buddha’s awakening, and hence in the period of time covered in the first chapter of the Vinaya Khandhaka (Kd 1). However, despite the length of that narrative, only the fourth and fifth are included there. This situation mirrors the Mahāparinibbānasutta, where there are also events missing from the narrative as we have it. Either parts were lost, or the compilers left out some events for some reason.

337. In modern times this is the pilgrimage site Bodhgaya in the Gaya district of Bihar. It lies by a wide river that is dry in summer but abundant in the rains. In Pali the river is called Nerañjarā, which is of unclear meaning, but the commentary suggests “sweet waters” (*nela-jala*) or “blue waters” (*nīla-jala*). The Sanskrit is *nairañjanā*, which suggests the sense “unblemished”. Today it is called the Līlajan (or Nīlajan). | Uruvelā, which aptly means “Broadbanks”, was a locality centered around the market town of Senānigama (“Marshalltown”). There was also a sizable hermitage nearby with matted-hair Brahmanical ascetics (*jaṭilā*) who ritually bathed in the water (Kd 1:20.15.1). After teaching the five monks in Varanasi, the Buddha returned here to teach them, but there is no record of him visiting subsequently.

- 1.3 Then as he was in private retreat this thought came to his mind,
 “I am truly freed from that grueling work!³³⁸ Thank goodness I’m
 freed from that pointless grueling work. Thank goodness I’m freed
 and have attained awakening.”³³⁹
- 2.1 And then Māra the Wicked, knowing the Buddha’s train of
 thought, went up to him and addressed him in verse:³⁴⁰
- 3.1 “You’ve left the practice of mortification³⁴¹
 by which sons of men purify themselves.
 You’re impure, but think yourself pure;
 you’ve strayed from the path of purity.”
- 4.1 Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied
 to him in verse:
- 5.1 “I realized that it’s pointless;
 all that endless mortification³⁴²

338. “Grueling work” (*dukkarakārikā*) refers to the self-mortification he practiced for six years before awakening (MN 12:56.1, MN 100:27.5), which was similar to Jain practices (MN 14:17.5).

339. I follow the MS reading here. Sinhalese editions have “steady, mindful” instead of “freed”. Commentary is silent.

340. Māra is sometimes called Namuci, and in fact seems to descend from the Vedic adversary of that name. Vedic Namuci “the wicked” (*pāpmā vai namuciḥ*, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 12.7.3, Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 4.4.4) was a wily trickster (*māyin*, Rig Veda 1.53.7c) who was nonetheless outsmarted by Indra (Rig Veda 5.30.6c), and possessed ineffectual armies reliant on women (Rig Veda 5.30.9a). Buddhist Māra “the wicked” (*māro pāpimā*) was a wily trickster (*passim*) who was nonetheless outsmarted by the Buddha and his followers (*passim*); he possessed ineffectual armies (DN 20:21.3, AN 4.13:2.3, Snp 3.2), and sent his daughters to do his dirty work (SN 4.25). The decapitated head of Namuci introduced death (*mṛtyu*) in the form of blood to the deathless (*amṛta*) soma (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 12.7.3.4, Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 4.4.4), establishing his Pali names Maccurāja, “King of Death” and Māra, “Death”. He appears in a similar guise in Jainism too (Ācaraṅga 1.3.1.3).

341. Māra pretends to favor asceticism. Truth means nothing to him, as words are merely devices for him to get what he wants.

342. The split compound *amaraṃ tapaṃ* also occurs at Thag 3.1:1.4, and at Snp 2.2:11.4 we have *amarā bahū tapā*. The commentary explains that *amara* here is

is as futile
as oars and rudder on dry land.³⁴³

Ethics, immersion, and wisdom: 6.1
by developing this path to awakening
I attained ultimate purity.
You're beaten, terminator!"³⁴⁴

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, "The Buddha knows me! The 7.1
Holy One knows me!" miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.2

In the Form of an Elephant King

Hatthirājavaṇṇasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time, when he was first awakened, the 1.1
Buddha was staying in Uruvelā at the root of the goatherd's banyan
tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.

Now at that time the Buddha was meditating in the open during 1.3
the dark of night, while a gentle rain drizzled down.³⁴⁵

Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the Buddha feel fear, 1.4
terror, and goosebumps, manifested in the form of a big elephant

"immortality", and the phrase means "fervent mortification aimed at immortality". However, I find this unconvincing, one reason being that *amara* is an adjective (and thus must be glossed with an abstract noun in dative, *amarabhāvatthāya*). It is simpler to assume Pali has an idiomatic sense of *amara* as "endless", which occurs here, in the phrase *amarāvikkhepa* (DN 1:2.23.1), and in the Niddesa's *amarāvitakka* (Cnd 12:6.1). Then *amarā* and *bahū* are synonyms. I cannot find any use in Sanskrit that parallels this, but *amara* is noted by Edgerton in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit as "a high number".

343. *Phiyāritta* is the fittings for a boat at AN 4.196:8.12. *Phiya* is perhaps Hybrid Sanskrit *sphija*, "broom". *Aritta* is Sanskrit *aritra*, "oar, rudder". | *Dhammani* (Vedic *dhanvan*, "desert") is the neuter noun *dhamman* in locative singular.

344. By calling Māra "terminator", the Buddha makes plain the threat implicit in his name.

345. At SN 41.4:3.3 such a rain is regarded as pleasantly cooling.

king and approached him. Its head was like a big block of soapstone. Its tusks were like pure silver. Its trunk was like a long plough pole.

1.11 Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, addressed him in verse:

2.1 “Transmigrating for such a long time,
you’ve made forms beautiful and ugly.
Enough of this, Wicked One!
You’re beaten, terminator!”

3.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.3

Beautiful

Subhasutta

1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time, when he was first awakened, the Buddha was staying in Uruvelā at the root of the goatherd’s banyan tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.

1.3 Now at that time the Buddha was meditating in the open during the dark of night, while a gentle rain drizzled down.

1.4 Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the Buddha feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, approached him, and while not far away, displayed a rainbow of bright colors, both beautiful and ugly.³⁴⁶

1.5 Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to him in verse:

2.1 “Transmigrating for such a long time,
you’ve made forms beautiful and ugly.
Enough of this, Wicked One!
You’re beaten, terminator.

346. Māra appears like the godlings of Susīma’s assembly (SN 2.29:10.2). It is not easy to know what gods to trust.

Those who are well restrained 3.1
in body, speech, and mind
don't fall under Māra's sway,
nor are they your footmen."³⁴⁷

Then Māra ... vanished right there. 4.1

SN 4.4

Māra's Snares (1st)

Paṭhamamārapāśasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Varanasi 1.1
in the deer park at Isipatana.³⁴⁸ There the Buddha addressed the
mendicants, "Mendicants!"

"Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this: 1.5

"Mendicants, I have attained and realized supreme freedom 2.1
through rational application of mind and rational right effort."³⁴⁹
You too should attain and realize supreme freedom through rational
application of mind and rational right effort."

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him 2.3
in verse:

"You're bound by Māra's snares, 3.1
both human and heavenly.
You're bound by Māra's bonds:
you won't escape me, ascetic!"

347. *Paddhagū* seems to be *pa + addha + gū* (or *cara* at SN 6.4:10.1), "one who travels in front". They serve kings (Thag 13.1:1.2). The use of this term here suggests that they will not make Māra's job easier for him by smoothing his path.

348. The Buddha had come to Varanasi after his Awakening to teach the five ascetics (SN 56.11). This event is also preserved at Kd 1:13.1.1.

349. "Rational application of mind and rational right effort" is *yoniso manasikārā yoniso sammappadhānā*. The term *yoniso* ("by way of womb") indicates that the cause and effect are aligned.

- 4.1 “I’m freed from Māra’s snares,
both human and heavenly.
I’m freed from Māra’s bonds.
You’re beaten, terminator!”

- 5.1 Then Māra ... vanished right there.

SN 4.5

Māra’s Snares (2nd)

Dutiyamārapāsasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Varanasi in the deer park at Isipatana.³⁵⁰ There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!”
- 1.4 “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:
- 2.1 “Mendicants, I am freed from all snares, both human and heavenly. You are also freed from all snares, both human and heavenly.
- 2.3 Wander forth, mendicants, for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans. Let not two go by one road.
- 2.5 Teach the Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes. They’re in decline because they haven’t heard the teaching.³⁵¹ There will be those who understand the teaching!
- 2.8 I will travel to the town of Senā in Uruvelā in order to teach the Dhamma.”³⁵²

350. This event is also told in the Vinaya (Kd 1:11.1.2). It is regarded as an archetypal event for all Buddhas, and hence is told in the context of the past Buddha Vipassī (DN 14:3.22.4).

351. Also at SN 6.1:5.6, MN 26:20.6, etc.

352. Senā was where the Buddha attained Awakening, the pilgrimage site of Bodhgaya (MN 26:17.1). The events on his return to Uruvelā are told in the

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him 2.9
in verse:

“You’re bound by all snares, 3.1
both human and heavenly.
You’re bound by the great bond:
you won’t escape me, ascetic!”

“I’m freed from all snares, 4.1
both human and heavenly.
I’m freed from the great bonds;
You’re beaten, terminator!”

Then Māra ... vanished right there. 5.1

SN 4.6

A Cobra

Sappasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels’ feeding ground. 1.1

Now at that time the Buddha was meditating in the open during 1.3
the dark of night, while a gentle rain drizzled down.

Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the Buddha feel fear, 2.1
terror, and goosebumps, manifested in the form of a big cobra king
and approached him.³⁵³ Its body was like a big canoe carved from a
single tree. Its hood was like a large brewer’s sieve. Its eyes were like
big bronze cups from Kosala. Its tongue flickered from its mouth
like lightning flashes in a thunderstorm. The sound of its breathing
was like the puffing of a blacksmith’s bellows.

Vinaya (Kd 1:15.1.1). The Buddha encountered three Kassapa brothers who were fire-worshipping matted-hair ascetics, and converted them with their retinues.

353. The *sappa* is described as black, powerful, and hooded, so probably a cobra.

3.1 Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to him in verse:

4.1 “One who frequents empty buildings
for lodging—that sage is self-restrained.³⁵⁴
It’s appropriate for that sort
to live there after relinquishing.

5.1 Though there are lots of creepy crawlies,
and lots of flies and reptiles,
they wouldn’t stir a hair
of a great sage in that empty hut.

6.1 Though the firmament may split
and the earth may quake,
and all creatures be stricken with fear;
and even if an arrow’s aimed at their breast,
the Buddhas take no shelter in attachments.”

7.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.7

Sleeping

Supatisutta

1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels’ feeding ground.

1.2 He spent much of the night walking mindfully in the open. At the crack of dawn he washed his feet and entered his dwelling. He laid down in the lion’s posture—on the right side, placing one foot on

354. Some editions read *seyyo* (“superior”) here, but the commentary requires *seyyā* (“lodging”, glossed *seyyatthāya*) per MS and BJT editions.

top of the other—mindful and aware, and focused on the time of getting up.

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him 1.4
in verse:

“What, you’re asleep? 2.1

Really, you’re asleep?³⁵⁵

You sleep like a loser—

what’s up with that?

You sleep, thinking that the hut is empty.

You sleep when the sun has come up—

what’s up with that?”

“For them there is no craving— 3.1

the weaver, the clinger—

to track them anywhere.

With the ending of all attachments

the awakened Buddha sleeps.

What’s that got to do with you, Māra?”

Then Māra ... vanished right there. 4.1

SN 4.8

Delighting

Nandatisutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattī 1.1
in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and spoke this 1.3
verse in the Buddha’s presence:

“Children bring you delight! 2.1

Cattle also bring you delight!

355. Lacking substantive arguments, Māra picks on the Buddha for sleeping.

For attachments are a man's delight;
without attachments there's no delight."

- 3.1 "Your children bring you sorrow.
Your cattle also bring you sorrow.
For attachments are a man's sorrow;
without attachments there are no sorrows."

- 4.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, "The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!" miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.9

Lifespan (1st)

Paṭhamaāyusutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"
- 1.5 "Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:
- 2.1 "Mendicants, the lifespan of humans is short. We are headed for lives to come. So we must do what is skillful, we must practice the spiritual life. No one born is immortal. A long life is a hundred years or a little more."
- 3.1 Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:
- 4.1 "The life of humans is long!
A true person wouldn't scorn it.
Live like a suckling babe,
for Death has not come for you."
- 5.1 "The life of humans is short,
and a true person scorns it.
They should live as though their head was on fire,
for Death comes for everyone."

Then Māra ... vanished right there.

6.1

SN 4.10

Lifespan (2nd)

Dutiyaāyusutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.³⁵⁶ There the Buddha ... said:

“Mendicants, the lifespan of humans is short. We are headed for lives to come. We must do what is skillful, we must practice the spiritual life. No one born is immortal. A long life is a hundred years or a little more.”³⁵⁷

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

“The days and nights don’t rush by,
and life isn’t cut short.
The life of mortals keeps rolling on,
like a chariot’s rim around the hub.”³⁵⁸

4.1

“The days and nights rush by,
and then life is cut short.
The life of mortals wastes away,
like the water in tiny streams.”

5.1

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

6.1

356. The Bamboo Grove was a major monastery near Rājagaha. According to Kd 1:22.16.1, it was offered by King Bimbisāra as the very first monastery dedicated to the Saṅgha.

357. A hundred years was the standard long life (eg. Snp 3.8:16.1, DN 14:3.30.5, AN 7.74:10.3).

358. This echoes the idea that a wheeled chariot was unstoppable (SN 56.11:12.2), an idea arising from the Vedic conception of the Sun as a wheel.

Chapter Two

SN 4.11

Boulders

Pāsāṇasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, on the Vulture’s Peak Mountain. Now at that time the Buddha was meditating in the open during the dark of night, while a gentle rain drizzled down.
- 1.3 Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the Buddha feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, approached him, and crushed some large boulders close by him.
- 2.1 Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, addressed him in verse:
 - 3.1 “Even if you shake
this entire Vulture’s Peak,
the rightly released,
the awakened, are unshaken.”
- 4.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.12

Lion

Kinnusīhasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, 1.1
Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now, at that time the Buddha was teach-
ing Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly.

Then Māra thought, "The ascetic Gotama is teaching Dhamma, 2.1
surrounded by a large assembly. Why don't I go and pull the wool
over their eyes?"

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him 2.4
in verse:

"Why now do you roar like a lion? 3.1

You're so self-assured in the assembly!

For there is someone who'll wrestle with you,
so why do you imagine you're the victor?"

"The great heroes they roar, 4.1
self-assured in the assemblies.

The Realized One, attained to power,³⁵⁹
has crossed over clinging to the world."

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, "The Buddha knows me! The 5.1
Holy One knows me!" miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.13

A Splinter

Sakalīkasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rā- 1.1
jagaha in the Maddakucchi deer park.

359. The ten powers of a Realized One are detailed at AN 10.21 and MN 12:9.1.

1.3 Now at that time the Buddha's foot had been cut by a wooden splinter. The Buddha was stricken by harrowing pains; physical feelings that were painful, sharp, severe, acute, unpleasant, and disagreeable. But he endured unbothered, with mindfulness and situational awareness. And then he spread out his outer robe folded in four and laid down in the lion's posture—on the right side, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful and aware.

1.7 Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

2.1 “Are you feeble that you lie down?
Or are you drunk on poetry?³⁶⁰
Are your goals not amply satisfied?
Alone in a secluded lodging,
why this sleeping, sleepyhead?”

3.1 “I'm not feeble that I lie down,
nor am I drunk on poetry.
Having reached the goal, I'm rid of sorrow.
Alone in a secluded lodging,
I lie down full of sympathy for all living creatures.

4.1 Even those with a dart stuck in the breast,
piercing the heart moment by moment,
are able to get some sleep.
So why not I, whose dart is drawn out?

5.1 I don't lie awake tense, nor do I fear to sleep.
The days and nights don't disturb me,
as I see no decline for myself in the world.

360. Māra thinks that “drunk on poetry” (*kāveyyamatta*, see SN 8.12:2.1) means literally drunk. In Rig Veda 10.131.4, Indra, drunk on an excess of *soma*, needs the illicit beer of Namuci (= Māra) to revive him. Perhaps we see in this phrase an echo of the Vedic tradition of taking intoxicants so that the god speaks through you in inspired verse.

That’s why I lie down full of sympathy for all living creatures.”

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there. 6.1

SN 4.14

Appropriate

Patirūpasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kosalans near the brahmin village of Ekasālā.³⁶¹ 1.1

Now, at that time the Buddha was teaching Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly of laypeople. 1.2

Then Māra thought, “The ascetic Gotama is teaching Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly of laypeople. Why don’t I go and pull the wool over their eyes?” 2.1

Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse: 2.4

“It’s not appropriate for you³⁶² to instruct others. 3.1

As you engage in this,
don’t get caught up in favoring and opposing.”³⁶³

“The Buddha instructs others out of compassion for their welfare. 4.1

The Realized One is liberated

361. Ekasālā (“One Hall”) is mentioned only here in Pali, although a village of the same name is occasionally mention in Sanskrit and epigraphical sources. Compare the similarly-named villages of Sālā (MN 41:1.2, etc.) and Pañcasālā (SN 4.18:1.1).

362. The challenge and response are similar to SN 10.2.

363. Māra is projecting. Since he only uses words to manipulate people and get what he wants, he assumes that others do the same.

from favoring and opposing.”

- 5.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.15

A Mental Snare

Mānasasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattṭhi in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.3 Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:
- 2.1 “There’s a mental snare
wandering in midair.³⁶⁴
I’ll bind you with it—
you won’t escape me, ascetic!”
- 3.1 “Sights, sounds, tastes, smells,
and touches so delightful:
desire for these is gone from me.
You’re beaten, terminator!”
- 4.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

364. Elsewhere there are mind-made deities who are said to “wander in midair” (*antalikkhacara*, DN 1:2.2.3). The idea goes back to the Vedas (eg. Rig Veda 6.58.3, *antarikṣe caranti*).

SN 4.16

The Alms Bowls

Pattasutta

At Sāvatthī.

1.1

Now at that time the Buddha was educating, encouraging, firing 1.2
up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk on the topic
of the five grasping aggregates. And those mendicants were paying
attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and
actively listening.

Then Māra thought, “This ascetic Gotama is educating, encour- 2.1
aging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk
on the topic of the five grasping aggregates. And the mendicants are
paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly,
and actively listening. Why don’t I go and pull the wool over their
eyes?”³⁶⁵

At that time several alms bowls were placed in the open air. Then 3.1
Māra the Wicked manifested in the form of an ox and approached
those bowls.³⁶⁶

One of the mendicants said to another, “Mendicant, mendicant, 3.3
that ox will break the bowls.”³⁶⁷

When this was said, the Buddha said to that mendicant, “Men- 3.5
dicant, that’s no ox. That’s Māra the Wicked come to pull the wool
over your eyes!”

Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, ad- 3.8
dressed him in verse:

“Form, what is felt, and perception,

4.1

365. Literally “make them eyeless”.

366. The ox was a metaphor for the senses, which are “yoked” like an ox by desire (SN 35.232:4.1). The relation between Māra, sense control, and oxen is emphasized in SN 4.19.

367. The bowl is a symbol of mendicant life. Within it is the food that sustains life, but which also tempts desire. The rampant ox is unrestrained desire, which threatens to crack open the bounds of monastic life.

consciousness, and what is chosen:³⁶⁸

‘I am not this’ and ‘this is not mine’;
that’s how they become free of desire for them.

- 5.1 When you’re detached, secure,
all fetters transcended,
though Māra and his army chase everywhere
they never find you.”

- 6.1 Then Māra ... vanished right there.

SN 4.17

The Six Fields of Contact

Chaphassāyatanasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Vesālī, at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof.
- 1.2 Now at that time the Buddha was educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk on the topic of the six fields of contact.³⁶⁹ And those mendicants were paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening.
- 2.1 Then Māra thought, “This ascetic Gotama is educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk on the topic of the six fields of contact. And those mendicants are paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening. Why don’t I go and pull the wool over their eyes?”
- 2.5 Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and made a terrifyingly loud noise close by him. It seemed as if the earth were

368. These are the five aggregates. To fit the metre, *vedayitam* (“the felt”) is used for *vedanā* (“feeling”), and *saṅkhatam* (“the chosen”) is used for *saṅkhārā* (“choices”).

369. Continuing the theme of Māra and the senses.

shattering, so that one of the mendicants said to another, “Mendicant, mendicant, it seems like the earth is shattering!”

When this was said, the Buddha said to that mendicant, “Mendicant, that’s not the earth shattering. That’s Māra the Wicked come to pull the wool over your eyes!” 2.7

Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, addressed him in verse: 2.10

“Sights, sounds, tastes, smells, 3.1
touches, and ideas, the lot of them—
this is the terrible bait
that the world’s infatuated by.

But a mindful disciple of the Buddha 4.1
has transcended all that.
Having slipped free of Māra’s dominion,
they shine like the sun.”

Then Māra ... vanished right there. 5.1

SN 4.18

Alms Food

Piṇḍasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Magadhans 1.1
near the brahmin village of Pañcasālā.³⁷⁰

Now at that time in Pañcasālā the young maidens were occupied 1.2
with guests.³⁷¹ Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and,
taking his bowl and robe, entered Pañcasālā for alms.

370. “Fivehall”.

371. *Pāhunaka* means “(honored) guest”. When such arrived they were to be looked after (Mil 5.1.2:11.2). It seems that there was an influx of travelers who were being attended by the youngsters. Māra took advantage of the situation to possess the adults, the implication being that they were already stretched thin. The commentary, alternatively, offers a story of a gift festival. | The youngsters’

- 1.4 Now at that time Māra had possessed the brahmins and householders of Pañcasālā, so that they thought, “Don’t let the ascetic Gotama get any alms!”
- 2.1 Then the Buddha left the village with his bowl as clean-washed as it was when he entered for alms.
- 2.2 Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and said to him, “Well, ascetic, did you get any alms?”
- 2.4 “Wicked One, did you make sure I didn’t get any alms?”
- 2.5 “Well then, sir, let the Buddha enter Pañcasālā a second time for alms. I’ll make sure you get alms.”³⁷²
- 3.1 “Māra has produced wickedness
in attacking the Realized One.
Wicked One, do you imagine that
your wickedness won’t bear fruit?
- 4.1 Let us live so very happily,
we who have nothing.
We shall feed on rapture,
like the gods of streaming radiance.”
- 5.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 4.19

A Farmer

Kassakasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Now at that time the Buddha was educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk about extin-

gender varies in manuscripts, sometimes feminine, sometimes masculine (i.e. universal). But the commentary favors the feminine.

372. He is of course lying.

guishment. And those mendicants were paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening.

Then Māra thought, “The ascetic Gotama is giving a Dhamma talk about extinguishment ... and the mendicants are listening well. Why don’t I go and pull the wool over their eyes?” 2.1

Then Māra the Wicked manifested in the form of a farmer carrying a large plough on his shoulder. He held a long goad, his hair was messy, he was clad in sunn hemp, and his feet were muddy. He went up to the Buddha and said to him, “So, ascetic, did you happen to see any oxen?” 2.4

“But what have you to do with oxen, Wicked One?”³⁷³ 2.6

“Mine alone, ascetic, is the eye, mine are sights, mine is the field of eye contact consciousness.³⁷⁴ Where can you escape me, ascetic? Mine alone is the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind, mine are ideas, mine is the field of mind contact consciousness. Where can you escape me, ascetic?” 2.7

“Yours alone, Wicked One, is the eye, yours are sights, yours is the field of eye contact consciousness. Where there is no eye, no sights, no eye contact consciousness—you have no place there, Wicked One!³⁷⁵ Yours alone is the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind, yours are ideas, yours is the field of mind contact consciousness. Where there is no mind, no ideas, no mind contact consciousness—you have no place there, Wicked One!” 3.1

“The things they call ‘mine’,
and those who say ‘it’s mine’:
if your mind remains there,
you won’t escape me, ascetic!” 4.1

373. Good question! As we have seen in SN 4.16, the senses are yoked by desire like an ox (SN 35.232:4.1).

374. “Field of eye contact consciousness” (*cakkhusamphassaviññāṇāyatanaṃ*) sounds like a Buddhist psychological term, and the commentary explains it in line with much later Abhidhamma. But it is not standard. More likely Māra is simply using an odd term because he is a fake.

375. This is Nibbāna.

- 5.1 “The things they speak of aren’t mine;
I’m not someone who speaks like that.
So know this, Wicked One:
you won’t even see the path I take.”

- 6.1 Then Māra ... vanished right there.

SN 4.20

Ruling

Rajjasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kosalans, in a wilderness hut on the slopes of the Himalayas.
- 1.2 Then as he was in private retreat this thought came to his mind, “I wonder if it’s possible to rule legitimately, without killing or having someone kill for you; without conquering or having someone conquer for you; without sorrowing or causing sorrow?”³⁷⁶
- 2.1 And then Māra the Wicked, knowing the Buddha’s train of thought, went up to him and said, “Rule, Blessed One! Rule, Holy One! Rule legitimately, without killing or having someone kill for you; without conquering or having someone conquer for you; without sorrowing or causing sorrow!”³⁷⁷
- 2.3 “But what do you see, Wicked One, that you say this to me?”
- 2.5 “The Blessed One, sir, has developed and cultivated the four bases for psychic power, made them a vehicle and a basis, kept them up, consolidated them, and properly implemented them. If he wished, the Blessed One need only determine that the Himalaya, king of mountains, was gold, and it would turn into gold.”

376. Legend has it that the Buddha’s destiny was either to be Awakened or become a Wheel Turning Monarch. If he took the second path, he would indeed have ruled without violence (MN 91:5.8). Here the Buddha wonders whether this is really possible.

377. Māra knows that even the most righteous ruler is afflicted with compromises and remains within his realm.

“Take a golden mountain, 3.1
entirely of native gold, and double it—
it’s still not enough for one!
Knowing this, live a moral life.

When a personage has seen where suffering comes 4.1
from
how could they incline toward sensual pleasures?
Realizing that attachment is a chain in the world,
a personage would train to remove it.”

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The Buddha knows me! The 5.1
Holy One knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

Chapter Three

SN 4.21

Several

Sambahulasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans near Silāvati.
- 1.3 Now at that time several mendicants were meditating not far from the Buddha, diligent, keen, and resolute.³⁷⁸
- 1.4 Then Māra the Wicked manifested in the form of a brahmin with a large matted dreadlock, wearing an antelope hide. He was old, bent double, wheezing, and held a staff made of cluster fig tree wood. He went up to those mendicants and said,³⁷⁹ “You’ve gone forth while young, reverends. With pristine black hair, you’re blessed with youth, in the prime of life, and you’ve never flirted with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures. Don’t give up what is apparent in the present to chase after what takes effect over time.”
- 1.8 “Brahmin, that’s not what we’re doing.³⁸⁰ We’re giving up what takes effect over time to chase after what is apparent in the present.

378. As often, here *viharanti*, literally “dwell”, means “meditate”.

379. The matted hair and antelope hide are well known symbols of the Brahmins. The “cluster fig tree” (*udumbara*) was used for ritual vessels, posts, and firewood, and was regarded as Prajāpati’s tree, a special source of vitality (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.6.1.3).

380. Even though these mendicants were diligent, their wisdom was not developed enough for them to recognize Māra.

For the Buddha says that sensual pleasures take effect over time; they give much suffering and distress, and they are all the more full of drawbacks. But this teaching is apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves.”

When they had spoken, Māra the Wicked shook his head, waggled 1.12
his tongue, raised his eyebrows until his brow puckered in three
furrows, and left leaning on his staff.

Then those mendicants went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down 2.1
to one side, and told him what had happened. The Buddha said,
“Mendicants, that was no brahmin. That was Māra the Wicked who
came to pull the wool over your eyes!”

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha 3.3
spoke this verse:

“When a personage has seen where suffering comes 4.1
from
how could they incline toward sensual pleasures?
Realizing that attachment is a chain in the world,
a personage would train to remove it.”

SN 4.22

With Samiddhi

Samiddhisutta

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans near 1.1
Silāvati.

Now at that time Venerable Samiddhi was meditating not far 1.2
from the Buddha, diligent, keen, and resolute.³⁸¹ Then as Venerable
Samiddhi was in private retreat this thought came to his mind, “I’m
so fortunate, so very fortunate, to have a teacher who is a perfected
one, a fully awakened Buddha! I’m so fortunate, so very fortunate,

381. For Samiddhi, see note on SN 1.20:1.3.

to have gone forth in a teaching and training so well explained! I'm so fortunate, so very fortunate, to have spiritual companions who are ethical and of good character."

1.10 And then Māra the Wicked, knowing Samiddhi's train of thought, went up to him and made a terrifyingly loud noise close by him. It seemed as if the earth was shattering.

2.1 Then Samiddhi went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened. The Buddha said, "Samiddhi, that's not the earth shattering. That's Māra the Wicked come to pull the wool over your eyes! Go back to that same place, Samiddhi, and meditate, diligent, keen, and resolute."

3.4 "Yes, sir," replied Samiddhi. He rose from his seat, bowed, and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before leaving.

3.5 And for a second time Samiddhi was meditating in that same place, diligent, ardent, and resolute. And for a second time he had the same thought ... and Māra made an earth-shattering noise.

3.9 Then Samiddhi addressed Māra the Wicked in verse:

4.1 "I went forth out of faith
from the lay life to homelessness.
My mindfulness and wisdom are mature,³⁸²
my mind is serene in immersion.
Make whatever illusions you want,
it won't bother me."

5.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, "The mendicant Samiddhi knows me!" miserable and sad, vanished right there.

382. Read *vuḍḍhā*.

SN 4.23

With Godhika

Godhikasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.³⁸³ At one time the Buddha was staying near 1.1
Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.

Now at that time Venerable Godhika was staying on the slopes 1.3
of Isigili at the Black Rock.³⁸⁴ Then Venerable Godhika, meditat-
ing diligent, keen, and resolute, experienced temporary freedom
of heart.³⁸⁵ But then he fell away from that temporary freedom of
heart.³⁸⁶ For a second ... third ... fourth ... fifth ... sixth time God-
hika experienced temporary freedom of heart. But for a sixth time he
fell away from it. For a seventh time Godhika, meditating diligent,
keen, and resolute, experienced temporary freedom of heart.

Then he thought, "I've fallen away from this temporary freedom 2.1
of heart no less than six times. Why don't I commit suicide?"³⁸⁷

383. Compare the stories of Channa (MN 144, SN 35.87), Vakkali (SN 22.87), and the suicidal Saṅgha (SN 54.9, Bu Pj 3).

384. Godhika's verse is at Thag 1.51.

385. "Temporary" (*sāmayikam*) liberation is mentioned at MN 122:4.1, where it contrasts with the "irreversible" liberation of the perfected one. It also appears in AN 6.44 and AN 10.75, and is defined in the Paṭisambhidāmagga as the four absorptions and four formless attainments (Ps 1.5:26.2).

386. The commentary explains that he was chronically ill, so could not progress in meditation despite strenuous efforts over a long time.

387. The idiomatic phrase *satthahāraka* (its verbal form here *sattham āhareyyam* is reflexive optative first singular) is difficult. The obvious reading is to take *sattha* as "knife". However, that yields the sense "knife-bringer", "assassin", whereas the use of *idam* in MN 145:5.32 shows it must be neuter, i.e. it is a thing not a person. Richard Gombrich suggests we read *sattha* here as equivalent to Sanskrit *śvasita*, "breathing, life" (see Brahmalī's note on Bu Pj 3:2.49.1), yielding the sense "life-taker", "breath-stealer", "deadly weapon". This agrees with the Vinaya commentary, which explains, "What does it take? Life." (*Kim harati? Jīvitam*). Since this idiom is only used in the context of suicide, I use the normal English term.

2.4 And then Māra the Wicked, knowing Godhika's train of thought,
went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

3.1 "O great hero, O greatly wise!³⁸⁸
Shining with power and glory.
You've gone beyond all enmities and fears,
I bow to your feet, O Clear-eyed One!

4.1 Great hero, master of death,
your disciple longs for death,
he's planning for it.
Stop him, O light-bringer!³⁸⁹

5.1 For Blessed One, renowned among men,
your disciple who loves your teaching,
a trainee who hasn't achieved their heart's desire—
how can they kill themselves?"

6.1 Now at that time Venerable Godhika had already committed suicide.

6.2 Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, addressed him in verse:

7.1 "This is how the attentive act,
for they don't long for life.
Having plucked out craving, root and all,
Godhika is quenched."³⁹⁰

388. Māra uncharacteristically showers the Buddha with praise. It seems he is afraid that Godhika will slip beyond his grasp.

389. "Light-bringer" (*jutindhara*) is a curious epithet for Māra to use, not least because it is etymologically parallel to "Lucifer".

390. The Buddha confirms that he had attained arahantship, or irreversible liberation, which must have been shortly before he died. The Buddhist tradition says that only an arahant is allowed to take their own life, and only then in cases of terminal illness. However, it is possible to read the scriptural passages the other way. Since an arahant is incapable of doing anything wrong, the fact that they killed themselves shows there is nothing wrong with voluntary euthanasia in cases of incurable and imminent terminal illness.

Then the Buddha said to the mendicants, “Come, mendicants, 8.1
let’s go to the Black Rock on the slopes of Isigili where Godhika,
who came from a good family, committed suicide.”

“Yes, sir,” they replied. 8.3

Then the Buddha together with several mendicants went to the 9.1
Black Rock on the slopes of Isigili. The Buddha saw Godhika off in
the distance on his cot, lying with aggregates cast off.³⁹¹

Now at that time a cloud of black smoke was moving east, west, 9.3
north, south, above, below, and in-between.

Then the Buddha said to the mendicants, 10.1

“Mendicants, do you see that cloud of black smoke moving east, 10.2
west, north, south, above, below, and in-between?”

“Yes, sir.” 10.3

“That’s Māra the Wicked searching for Godhika’s consciousness, 10.4
wondering: ‘Where is Godhika’s consciousness established?’ But
since his consciousness is not established, Godhika is quenched.”

Then Māra, carrying his arched harp made from the pale timber of 10.7
wood-apple, went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:³⁹²

“Above, below, all round, 11.1
in the four quarters and in-between,
I’ve been searching without success:
where has that Godhika got to?”

“He was an attentive and steadfast sage, 12.1
a meditator who loved absorption.
By day and by night he applied himself,
without concern for his life.

391. *Vivatta* (or *vivaṭṭa*) often means “cast off”, as in “the fetters” (*vivattayi saṃyojanani*) or the “veil” (*vivaṭṭacchada*). Here it describes the dead monk’s body after attaining final Nibbāna.

392. For the “arched harp” (*viṇa*), see SN 35.246 and notes. Pañcasikha’s harp is described in the same way (DN 21:1.2.4), and tradition says they were in fact the same instrument.

- 13.1 He defeated the army of death,
and won't return for any future life.
Having plucked out craving, root and all
Godhika is quenched.”
- 14.1 So stricken with sorrow³⁹³
that his harp dropped from his armpit,
that spirit, downcast,³⁹⁴
vanished right there.

SN 4.24

Seven Years of Pursuit

Sattavassānubandhasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying in Uruvelā
at the goatherd's banyan tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.³⁹⁵
- 1.3 Now at that time Māra the Wicked had been pursuing the Buddha
for seven years hoping to find a vulnerability without success.³⁹⁶
- 1.4 Then Māra the Wicked went up to the Buddha and addressed him
in verse:
- 2.1 “Are you swamped by sorrow
that you meditate in the forest?³⁹⁷

393. This verse, which must have been added by redactors, also occurs at Snp 3.2:25.1.

394. Māra is referred to as a *yakkha*.

395. According to the commentarial reckoning, this was in the fifth week after Awakening.

396. This series of verses is a cleverly structured argument where Māra tries one method after another, always seeking to find something in the Buddha's words or deeds that make him vulnerable. | Siddhattha had practiced for six years and had now only just realized Awakening, so either the number seven has been rounded up, or else Māra began his work before Siddhattha left home.

397. Māra begins the contest of wits by insinuating that something must have gone wrong for the Buddha to end up where he is, trying to play on feelings of self-doubt.

Have you lost a fortune, or do you long for one?
 Or perhaps you've committed
 some crime in the village?
 Why don't you get too close to people?
 And why does no one get close to you?"

"I've dug out the root of sorrow completely.³⁹⁸ 3.1
 I practice absorption free of guilt or sorrow.
 I've cut off all greed and muttered prayer for future
 lives.
 Undefined, I practice absorption,
 O kinsman of the negligent!"

"The things they call 'mine',³⁹⁹ 4.1
 and those who say 'it's mine':
 if your mind remains there,
 you won't escape me, ascetic!"

"The things they speak of aren't mine;⁴⁰⁰ 5.1
 I'm not someone who speaks like that.
 So know this, Wicked One:⁴⁰¹
 you won't even see the path I take."

"If you've discovered the path⁴⁰² 6.1
 that's safe, and leads to freedom from death,

398. The Buddha rejoins with a series of bold and incontrovertible claims, shutting down the idea that he is self-loathing.

399. Māra changes tack. Having failed to insinuate self-doubt, now he tries to use the Buddha's very confidence against him. Surely he must be conceited to make such claims.

400. The Buddha rejects the charge of conceit, as he has merely spoken of the truth, not of what he is attached to.

401. The Buddha goes on the attack, asserting the limits of Māra's knowledge.

402. Māra accepts, for rhetorical purposes, the Buddha's claim that he has found a path Māra cannot see. Better, he argues, for the Buddha to walk it alone and not teach anyone.

go and walk that path alone—
why teach it to anyone else?”

- 7.1 “Those crossing to the far shore⁴⁰³
ask what’s beyond the domain of Death.
When I’m asked, I explain to them
the truth without attachments.”
- 8.1 “Sir, suppose there was a lotus pond not far from a town or village,⁴⁰⁴ and a crab lived there. Then several boys or girls would leave the town or village and go to the pond, where they’d pull out the crab and put it on solid ground. Whenever that crab extended a claw, those boys or girls would snap, crack, and break it off with a stick or a stone.⁴⁰⁵ And when that crab’s claws had all been snapped, cracked, and broken off it wouldn’t be able to return down into that lotus pond.
- 8.6 In the same way, sir, the Buddha has snapped, cracked, and broken off all my twists, ducks, and dodges. Now I’m not able to approach the Buddha again in hopes of finding a vulnerability.”
- 8.8 Then Māra the Wicked recited these verses of disappointment in the Buddha’s presence:
- 9.1 “A crow once circled a stone
that looked like a lump of fat.
‘Perhaps I’ll find something tender,’ it thought,
‘perhaps there’s something tasty.’
- 10.1 But finding nothing tasty,
the crow left that place.
Like the crow that pecked the stone,
I leave Gotama disappointed.”

403. The Buddha rejects this final parry, asserting that he will teach anyone who asks.

404. The same simile appears at MN 35:23.4.

405. The crab “extends” a claw as a meditator after absorption “extends” the mind to insight (MN 4:27.1). See too the simile at SN 35:240.

SN 4.25

Māra's Daughters

Māradhītusutta

And then Māra the Wicked, after reciting these verses of disillusion- 1.1
ment in the Buddha's presence, left that place. He sat cross-legged
on the ground not far from the Buddha, silent, dismayed, shoulders
drooping, downcast, depressed, with nothing to say, scratching the
ground with a stick.⁴⁰⁶

Then Māra's daughters Craving, Malignancy, and Lust went up to 1.2
Māra the Wicked, and addressed him in verse:⁴⁰⁷

“Why so downhearted, dad? 2.1
What man are you upset about?⁴⁰⁸
We'll catch him with the snare of lust,
like an elephant in the wild.⁴⁰⁹
We'll tie him up and bring him back—
he'll fall under your sway!”

“In this world he is the perfected one, the Holy One. 3.1
He's not easily seduced by lust.
He has slipped free of Māra's dominion;
that's why I'm so upset.”⁴¹⁰

406. For *appaṭibhāna* in the sense “nothing to say”, see Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.7.2.

407. Marcus Bingenheimer proposes emending *arati* to *rati* (“delight”), which is in line with the senses of the other names, and is found in certain sources (*Studies in Āgama Literature* 4.5). However, Sanskrit knows a malignant she-demon *arāti*, who must be chased away from children (Atharva Veda 118.1). Probably the Chinese translators normalized the term.

408. Māra's fascination with the Buddha seems more than professional. He was taking it personally.

409. Apparently cow elephants were used to trap wild bulls.

410. At this point, Māra has given up hope.

- 4.1 Then Māra's daughters Craving, Malignancy, and Lust went up to the Buddha, and said to him, "We serve at your feet, ascetic." But the Buddha ignored them, since he was freed with the supreme ending of attachments.⁴¹¹
- 5.1 Then Craving, Malignancy, and Lust withdrew to one side to think up a plan. "Men have a diverse spectrum of tastes. Why don't we each manifest in the form of a hundred young maidens?"
- 5.4 So that's what they did. Then they went up to the Buddha and said to him, "We serve at your feet, ascetic." But the Buddha still ignored them, since he was freed with the supreme ending of attachments.
- 6.1 Then Craving, Malignancy, and Lust withdrew to one side to think up a plan. "Men have a diverse spectrum of tastes. Why don't we each manifest in the form of a hundred women who have never given birth?" So that's what they did. Then they went up to the Buddha and said to him, "We serve at your feet, ascetic."⁴¹² But the Buddha still ignored them, since he was freed with the supreme ending of attachments.
- 7.1 Then Craving, Malignancy, and Lust ... each manifested in the form of a hundred women who have given birth once ... women who have given birth twice ... middle-aged women ... old women ... But the Buddha still ignored them, since he was freed with the supreme ending of attachments.
- 9.6 Then Craving, Malignancy, and Lust withdrew to one side and said, "What our father said is true:
- 10.1 'In this world he is the perfected one, the Holy One.
He's not easily seduced by lust.
He has slipped free of Māra's dominion;
that's why I'm so upset.'

411. In this idiom, the locative *saṅkhaye* acts as an instrumental or ablative of cause (*saṅkhayā*), that is, "with" or "due to" (rather than "in") the ending of attachments. In similar contexts, *khayā* is usually ablative.

412. They approach an unknown ascetic with an extravagant gesture of submission.

For if we had come on to any ascetic or brahmin like this who 11.1
was not free of lust, his heart would explode, or he'd spew hot blood
from his mouth, or he'd go mad or lose his mind. He'd dry up, wither
away, and shrivel up like a green reed that was mowed down."

Then Māra's daughters Craving, Malignancy, and Lust went up 12.1
to the Buddha, and stood to one side. Māra's daughter Craving
addressed the Buddha in verse:

"Are you swamped by sorrow 13.1
that you meditate in the forest?⁴¹³
Have you lost a fortune, or do you long for one?
Or perhaps you've committed
some crime in the village?
Why don't you get too close to people?
And why does no one get close to you?"

"I've reached the goal, peace of heart.⁴¹⁴ 14.1
Having conquered the army
of the likable and pleasant,
alone, practicing absorption, I awakened to bliss.
That's why I don't get too close to people,
and no one gets too close to me."

Then Māra's daughter Malignancy addressed the Buddha in verse: 15.1

"How does a mendicant who has crossed five floods 16.1
usually meditate here while crossing the sixth?⁴¹⁵

413. Repeating her father's argument.

414. The Buddha's responds more closely to the accusations than he did with her father. | This verse is quoted and discussed, and the Sutta cited by name as "The Maidens' Questions" (*kumāripaṇhā*) at AN 10.26.

415. Bodhi notes that the Sanskrit parallels here have present tense *tarati* for the Pali's aorist *atari*. I translate assuming present tense. | Here the five floods must be the five senses, against which the Buddha has proven himself immune. Delight wants to know how to transcend the mind.

How do they usually practice absorption
 so that sensual perceptions
 are blocked out and don't get hold of them?"

- 17.1 "With tranquil body and mind well freed,
 without making choices, mindful, homeless;⁴¹⁶
 understanding the teaching,
 they practice absorption without placing the
 mind;
 they're not shaking or drifting or rigid.

- 18.1 That's how a mendicant who has crossed five floods
 usually meditates here while crossing the sixth.
 That's how they usually practice absorption
 so that sensual perceptions
 are blocked out and don't get hold of them."

- 19.1 Then Māra's daughter Lust addressed the Buddha in verse:

- 20.1 "He lives with his community after cutting off craving,
 and many of the faithful will cross over for sure.⁴¹⁷
 Alas, this homeless one will snatch many men away,
 and lead them past the King of Death!"

- 21.1 "The great heroes they lead⁴¹⁸
 by means of the true teaching.
 When the Realized Ones are leading by the teaching,
 how could anyone who knows be jealous?"

- 22.1 Then Māra's daughters Craving, Malignancy, and Lust went up
 to Māra the Wicked. Māra the Wicked saw them coming off in the
 distance, and addressed them in verse:

416. The present participle *asaṅkharāno* is a unique form. The meaning is not entirely clear in this context. The commentary says it means not generating the three kinds of kamma that lead to rebirth.

417. Read *tarissanti*.

418. This verse also at Kd 1:24.6.10.

“Fools! You drill into a mountain
with lotus stalks!
You dig up a hill with your nails!
You chew iron with your teeth!

23.1

You seek a footing in the abyss, as it were,
while lifting a rock with your head!
After attacking a stump with your breast, as it were,
you leave Gotama disappointed.”

24.1

They came dazzling—⁴¹⁹
Craving, Malignancy, and Lust.
But the Teacher brushed them off right there,
like the gale, a fallen tuft.

25.1

The Linked Discourses with Māra are complete.

419. Like the concluding verse of the previous Sutta, this must have been added by redactors.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH NUNS

The Chapter on Nuns

SN 5.1

With Ālavikā

Ālavikāsutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.⁴²⁰ At one time the Buddha was staying near 1.1
Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Then the nun Ālavikā robed up in the morning and, taking her 1.3
bowl and robe, entered Sāvattthī for alms.⁴²¹ She wandered for alms
in Sāvattthī. After the meal, on her return from almsround, she went
to the Dark Forest seeking seclusion.⁴²²

420. This chapter naturally follows the previous, as it features Māra challenging various bhikkhunīs. Some of these verses are also included in the Therīgāthā, without the prose narrative. The commentarial backgrounds for the nuns are available in many sources, including Malalasekera’s *Dictionary of Pali proper Names*, and I will not repeat them here.

421. Her name means “of Ālavī”. This exchange (lacking Ālavikā’s first verse) is echoed in Thig 3.7, where the author is named Selā. The commentary confirms that she is the same person, Selā of Ālavī.

422. Normally one goes “for the day’s meditation” (*divāvihārāya*), whereas here, uniquely, the text has “seeking seclusion” (*vivekatthini*). In line with this, the next sentence has Māra wanting her to “fall away from seclusion”, whereas normally it is “fall away from immersion”. Seclusion also occurs in Māra’s challenge. | The Dark Forest (*andhavana*) was a thick grove south of Sāvattthī often visited by monks and nuns for meditation. The commentary says the name means “Blind Man’s Forest”, giving an improbable origin story. But compare Sanskrit *andhakūpa*, “dark well” or “blind well”, a well covered over with a lid or overgrowth; also the name of a hell.

- 1.5 Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun ĀḶavikā feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make her fall away from seclusion, went up to her and addressed her in verse:
- 2.1 “There’s no escape in the world,
so what will seclusion do for you?
Enjoy erotic delights;
don’t regret it later.”
- 3.1 Then the nun ĀḶavikā thought, “Who’s speaking this verse, a human or a non-human?”
- 3.3 Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from seclusion!”⁴²³
- 3.5 Then ĀḶavikā, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to him in verse:
- 4.1 “There is an escape in the world,
and I’ve personally experienced it with wisdom.
O Wicked One, kinsman of the negligent,
you don’t know that state.
- 5.1 Sensual pleasures are like swords and spears;⁴²⁴
the aggregates are their chopping block.⁴²⁵
What you call erotic delight
is now no delight for me.”
- 6.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun ĀḶavikā knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

423. She immediately recognizes him.

424. This image is often found independently, and along with other similes at MN 22:3.17 and AN 5.76:15.4. The verse as a whole is found thrice in Therīgāthā: the verses of Selā (Thig 3.7:2.1), Khemā (Thig 6.3:3.1), and Uppalavaṇṇā (Thig 11.1:11.1).

425. *Khandāsaṃ* resolves to *khandā esaṃ*.

With Somā

Somāsutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Then the nun Somā robed up in the morning and, taking her bowl and robe, entered Sāvattthī for alms.⁴²⁶ She wandered for alms in Sāvattthī. After the meal, on her return from almsround, she went to the Dark Forest for the day’s meditation, plunged deep into it, and sat at the root of a tree to meditate.

1.2

Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun Somā feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make her fall away from immersion, went up to her and addressed her in verse:

1.5

“That state’s very challenging;

2.1

it’s for the sages to attain.

With her two-inch wisdom,⁴²⁷

it’s not possible for a woman.”⁴²⁸

426. For Pasenadi’s wife of the same name, see MN 90:3.1 and note.

427. “Two-inch wisdom” (*dvaṅgulapaññā*) is literally “two finger(-breadth’s) wisdom”. It is explained by the commentary as limited wisdom; or because women hold thread between two fingers. The subcommentary and the commentary to the Therīgāthā say it is because women test whether rice is cooked by pressing a grain between two fingers. Normally, *aṅgula* with a number is a unit of length equal to the width of the middle finger. For example, the time past noon is measured when the sun’s shadow moves two inches (Kd 22:1.10.16), which is the same distance the shadow moves each month (Arthaśāstra 2.20.42). Thus the first commentarial explanation is the most plausible: “two-inch wisdom” means “limited wisdom”.

428. It is Māra, not the Buddha, who doubts women’s capacity. It is interesting to see who adopts Māra’s view. In Mahāvastu 3.391, a brahmin ascetic urges a female competitor to throw a debating match with him, lest people say that he was beaten by “a mere woman’s two-inch wisdom”. In Vv 18:8.4, a former serving woman celebrates how she as a woman attained the Dhamma, but the commentary says this was “despite her two-inch thick intelligence”. In the late literary text *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha* the idiom is employed by a woman to dismiss women’s wit (22.35)—as so often, a woman makes the best misogynist—

- 3.1 Then the nun Somā thought, “Who’s speaking this verse, a human or a non-human?”
- 3.3 Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from immersion!”
- 3.5 Then Somā, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to him in verse:
- 4.1 “What difference does womanhood make
when the mind is serene,
and knowledge is present
as you rightly discern the Dhamma.”⁴²⁹
- 5.1 Surely someone who might think:⁴³⁰
‘I am woman’, or ‘I am man’,
or ‘I am’ anything at all,⁴³¹
is fit for Māra to address.”
- 6.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Somā knows me!”
miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.3

With Kisāgotamī

Kisāgotamīsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.

or by a man who muses that perhaps men like him are the real fools since they allow women to entice them (22.302–3).

429. Gender categories apply in a limited sense to the realm of bodily conduct, but are entirely irrelevant when it comes to meditative immersion and wisdom.

430. Somā’s verses at Thig 3.8 lack this verse.

431. Read *asmīti*. Somā rejects not just the limited categories of binary gender, but any form of self-identification.

Then the nun Kisāgotamī robed up in the morning and, taking 1.2
her bowl and robe, entered Sāvattthī for alms.⁴³² She wandered for
alms in Sāvattthī. After the meal, on her return from almsround, she
went to the Dark Forest for the day’s meditation, plunged deep into
it, and sat at the root of a tree to meditate.

Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun Kisāgotamī feel 1.5
fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make her fall away from
immersion, went up to her and addressed her in verse:

“Why do you sit alone and cry 2.1
as if your children have died?
You’ve come to the woods all alone—
are you looking for a man?”⁴³³

Then the nun Kisāgotamī thought, “Who’s speaking this verse, a 3.1
human or a non-human?”

Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me 3.3
feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from
immersion!”

Then Kisāgotamī, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied 4.1
to him in verse:

“I’ve got over the death of children, 5.1
and I’m finished with men.
I don’t grieve or lament,
and I’m not afraid of you, sir!”⁴³⁴

Relishing is banished in every respect, 6.1
and the mass of darkness is shattered.

432. Regarded as the foremost of those who wear coarse robes (AN 1.246:1.1), she has a different set of verses at Thig 10.1:0.3.

433. Māra evidently believes that a grieving mother’s first priority is to seek a lover in a dark forest.

434. She addresses Māra as *āvuso*. This is obviously a case where *āvuso* does not mean “friend”.

I’ve defeated the army of death,
and live without defilements.”

- 7.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Kisāgotamī knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.4

With Vijayā

Vijayāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Then the nun Vijayā robed up in the morning ...⁴³⁵ and sat at the root of a tree for the day’s meditation.
- 1.4 Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun Vijayā feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make her fall away from immersion, went up to her and addressed her in verse:
- 2.1 “You’re so young and beautiful,⁴³⁶
and I’m a youth in my prime.
Come, my lady, let us enjoy
the music of a five-piece band.”⁴³⁷
- 3.1 Then the nun Vijayā thought, “Who’s speaking this verse, a human or a non-human?”
- 3.3 Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from immersion!”
- 3.5 Then Vijayā, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to him in verse:

435. A different set of verses are attributed to her at Thig 6.8:0.3.

436. This challenge and response is similar to the verses of Khemā (Thig 6.3).

437. Explained by the commentary as one-skinned and two-skinned drums, a stringed instrument, a wind instrument, and metal percussion such as gongs, cymbals, etc.

“Sights, sounds, tastes, smells, 4.1
and touches so delightful.
I hand them right back to you, Māra,
for I have no use for them.

This body is rotting, 5.1
decaying and frail.
I’m horrified and repelled by it,
and I’ve eradicated sensual craving.

There are beings in the realm of luminous form,⁴³⁸ 6.1
and others stuck in the formless.
I’ve destroyed the darkness
regarding all such peaceful attainments.”

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Vijayā knows me!” 7.1
miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.5

With Uppalavaṇṇā

Uppalavaṇṇāsutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Then the nun Uppalavaṇṇā robed up in the morning ...⁴³⁹ and 1.2
stood at the root of a sal tree in full flower.

Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun Uppalavaṇṇā 1.4
feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make her fall away from
immersion, went up to her and addressed her in verse:

438. In this verse she declares that, not only has she transcended attachment to the senses, she has even surmounted attachment to meditative absorption.

439. Regarded as the greatest in psychic power (AN 1.237:1.1), and, with Khemā, the ideal nun (AN 2.131:1.2, AN 4.176:2.2). She taught other nuns (Thig 13.5:27.3), and was devoted to the Buddha (Bu NP 5:1.1.1).

- 2.1 “You’ve come to this sal tree all crowned with flowers,⁴⁴⁰
and stand at its root all alone, O nun.
Your beauty is second to none—⁴⁴¹
silly girl, aren’t you afraid of rascals?”
- 3.1 Then the nun Uppalavaṇṇā thought, “Who’s speaking this verse,
a human or a non-human?”
- 3.3 Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me
feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from
immersion!”
- 3.5 Then Uppalavaṇṇā, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked,
replied to him in verse:
- 4.1 “Even if 100,000 rascals like you
were to come here,
I’d stir not a hair nor panic.
I’m not scared of you, Māra, even alone.
- 5.1 I’ll vanish,
or I’ll enter your belly;
I could stand between your eyebrows
and you still wouldn’t see me.
- 6.1 I’m the master of my own mind,
I’ve developed the bases of psychic power well.
I’m free from all bonds,

440. These verses are included in Uppalavaṇṇā’s at Thig 11.1:7.1, with some differences.

441. Literally, “There is no one to whom you are second in the element of beauty” (*na catthi te dutiyā vaṇṇadhātu*). Thig 11.1:7.3 reads *Na cāpi te dutiyo atthi koci*, “There is no male companion with you”. The two lines use *dutiya* (“second”) in different senses, as the ordinal number, and as “companion”. The Therīgāthā commentary offers two explanations, the second of which appears to lean on a version of the line similar to that found here. This, together with the fact that the unusual term *vaṇṇadhātu* seems like a direct reference to her name, suggests that this version may be the original one.

and I'm not afraid of you, sir!"⁴⁴²

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, "The nun Uppalavaṇṇā knows 7.1
me!" miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.6

With Cālā

Cālāsutta

At Sāvathī. 1.1

Then the nun Cālā robed up in the morning ...⁴⁴³ and sat at the 1.2
root of a tree for the day's meditation.

Then Māra the Wicked went up to Cālā and said to her, "Nun, 1.4
what don't you approve of?"

"I don't approve of rebirth, sir." 1.6

"Why don't you approve of rebirth? 2.1

When you're born, you get to enjoy sensual pleasures.

Who put this idea in your head:

'Nun, don't approve of rebirth?'

"Death comes to those who are born, 3.1

when you're born you undergo sufferings—

killing, caging, misery—

that's why you shouldn't approve of rebirth.

442. Despite her dauntless rejection of Māra here, a story in the Vinaya says she was once raped by a Vedic student who was infatuated with her (Bu Pj 1:10.5.1). The Buddha declared that one who does not consent is innocent. It seems hard to reconcile the two events, unless the Vinaya incident was when she was young and not yet accomplished. If that were the case, perhaps Māra is deliberately capitalizing on the past assault, assuming she will be traumatized by it.

443. The eldest of three sisters whose verses are recorded respectively: Cālā at SN 5.6 and Thig 7.2; Upacālā at SN 5.7 and Thig 7.3; Sīsūpacālā at SN 5.8 and Thig 8.1. There is considerable confusion, as verses ascribed to one sister in SN are attributed to another in the Therīgāthā. The three sisters were taught meditation by Revata (Thag 1.42).

- 4.1 The Buddha taught me the Dhamma
for transcending rebirth,
for giving up all suffering;
he settled me in the truth.
- 5.1 There are beings in the realm of luminous form,
and others stuck in the formless.
Not understanding cessation,
they return in future lives.”
- 6.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Cālā knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.7

With Upacālā

Upacālāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Then the nun Upacālā robed up in the morning ...⁴⁴⁴ and sat at the root of a tree for the day’s meditation.
- 1.4 Then Māra the Wicked went up to Upacālā and said to her, “Nun, where do you want to be reborn?”
- 1.6 “I don’t want to be reborn anywhere, sir.”
- 2.1 “There are the gods of the thirty-three,
and those of Yama;⁴⁴⁵
also the Joyful Deities,
the gods who love to create,
and the gods who control what is created by others.
Set your heart on such places,
and you’ll undergo delight.”

444. The younger sister of Cālā, her verses are at Thig 7.3.

445. Māra mentions five of the sense-sphere heavens, omitting only the lowest of them, the realm of the Four Great Kings.

“The gods of the thirty-three, 3.1
 and those of Yama;⁴⁴⁶
 also the Joyful Deities,
 the gods who love to create,
 and the gods who control what is created by others—
 they’re bound with the bonds of sensuality;
 they fall under your sway again.

All the world is on fire, 4.1
 all the world is smoldering,
 all the world is ablaze,
 all the world is rocking.

My mind adores that place 5.1
 where Māra cannot go;
 it’s not shaking or burning,
 and not frequented by ordinary people.”

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Upacālā knows me!” 6.1
 miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.8

With Sīsūpacālā

Sīsūpacālāsutta

At Sāvatthī. 1.1

Then the nun Sīsūpacālā robed up in the morning ... and sat at 1.2
 the root of a tree for the day’s meditation.

Then Māra the Wicked went up to Sīsūpacālā and said to her, 1.4
 “Nun, whose creed do you approve of?”⁴⁴⁷

“I don’t approve anyone’s creed, sir.” 1.6

446. These verses are attributed to Sīsūpacālā at Thig 8.1:5.1.

447. *Pāsaṇḍa* (“creed”) is unique in the Suttas, but we find it also at Bu Pc 32:8.1.

- 2.1 “In whose name did you shave your head?
You look like an ascetic,
but you don’t approve any creed.
Why do you wander as if lost?”
- 3.1 “Followers of other creeds
are confident in their views.
But I don’t approve their teaching,
for they’re no experts in the Dhamma.
- 4.1 But there is one born in the Sakyan clan,
the unrivaled Buddha,
vanquisher of all, dispeller of Māra,
everywhere undefeated,
- 5.1 everywhere freed, and unattached,
the Clear-eyed One sees all.
He has attained the end of all deeds,
freed with the ending of attachments.
That Blessed One is my Teacher,
and I approve his instruction.”
- 6.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Sīsūpacālā knows me!”
miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.9
With Selā
Selāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.

Then the nun Selā robed up in the morning ...⁴⁴⁸ and sat at the 1.2
root of a tree for the day's meditation.

Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun Selā feel fear, 1.4
terror, and goosebumps ... addressed her in verse:

“Who created this puppet?⁴⁴⁹ 2.1
Where is its maker?
Where has the puppet arisen?
And where does it cease?”

Then the nun Selā thought, “Who’s speaking this verse, a human 3.1
or a non-human?”

Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me 3.3
feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from
immersion!”

Then Selā, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to him 3.5
in verse:

“This puppet isn’t self-made,⁴⁵⁰ 4.1
nor is this gloom made by another.⁴⁵¹
It comes to be because of a cause,
and ceases when the cause breaks up.

It’s like a seed that’s sown⁴⁵² 5.1
in a field; it grows
relying on both the soil’s nutrients
as well as moisture.

448. As noted, the verses of Selā at Thig 3.7 are attributed to Āḷavikā at SN 5.1. The verses here have no Pali parallels, and it is unclear whether this is the same person.

449. “Puppet” is *bimba*; the similarity to English “bimbo” seems a coincidence.

450. This contradicts eg. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.10, “for he is the maker”.

451. Neither of the two Chinese parallels at SA2 219 or SA 1203 contain any parallel to *agha* (“gloom”).

452. Selā uses the imagery of agriculture to illustrate the organic, changing nature of an individual, who survives supported by multiple conditions.

- 6.1 In the same way the aggregates and elements
and these six sense fields
come to be because of a cause,
and cease when the cause breaks up.”
- 7.1 Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Selā knows me!” miserable and sad, vanished right there.

SN 5.10

With Vajirā

Vajirāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Then the nun Vajirā robed up in the morning and, taking her bowl and robe, entered Sāvattthī for alms.⁴⁵³ She wandered for alms in Sāvattthī. After the meal, on her return from almsround, she went to the Dark Forest for the day’s meditation, plunged deep into it, and sat at the root of a tree to meditate.
- 1.5 Then Māra the Wicked, wanting to make the nun Vajirā feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make her fall away from immersion, went up to her and addressed her in verse:
- 2.1 “Who created this sentient being?⁴⁵⁴
Where is its maker?
Where has the being arisen?
And where does it cease?”
- 3.1 Then the nun Vajirā thought, “Who’s speaking this verse, a human or a non-human?”

453. Although these verses are much-quoted in Buddhist literature, Vajirā is only known from this Sutta.

454. The challenge is the same as the previous, with “sentient being” for “puppet”.

Then she thought, “This is Māra the Wicked, wanting to make me 3.3
feel fear, terror, and goosebumps, wanting to make me fall away from
immersion!”

Then Vajirā, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, replied to 3.5
him in verse:

“Why do you believe there’s such a thing as a 4.1
‘sentient being’?

Māra, is this your theory?
This is just a pile of conditions,
you won’t find a sentient being here.

When the parts are assembled 5.1
we use the word ‘chariot’.
So too, when the aggregates are present
‘sentient being’ is the convention we use.⁴⁵⁵

But it’s only suffering that comes to be, 6.1
lasts a while, then expires.
Naught but suffering comes to be,
naught but suffering ceases.”

Then Māra the Wicked, thinking, “The nun Vajirā knows me!” 7.1
miserable and sad, vanished right there.

The Linked Discourses on Nuns are complete.

455. Vajirā directly opposes the Upaniṣadic view that the Self underlying the diversity of experience is no mere convention, but the true reality masked by appearances. Compare Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.5.15 and Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.15.1, where all beings are fixed in Divinity like spokes in the hub of a wheel. The Upaniṣads say that the Self or the mind is the charioteer and the body the chariot (Katha Upaniṣad 1.3.3–9, Maitri Upaniṣad 2.6, Paīṅgala Upaniṣad 4.1).

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH DIVINITIES

Chapter One

SN 6.1

The Appeal of the Divinity

Brahmāyācanasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.⁴⁵⁶ At one time, when he was first awakened, the 1.1
Buddha was staying in Uruvelā at the root of the goatherd’s banyan
tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.

Then as he was in private retreat this thought came to his mind, 1.3
“This principle I have discovered is deep, hard to see, hard to under-
stand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the scope of logic, subtle, compre-
hensible to the astute. But people like clinging, they love it and enjoy
it. It’s hard for them to see this topic; that is, specific conditionality,
dependent origination.⁴⁵⁷ It’s also hard for them to see this topic;
that is, the stilling of all activities, the letting go of all attachments,
the ending of craving, fading away, cessation, extinguishment. And

456. A similar account is told of Gotama Buddha at MN 26:19.2, MN 85:43.2, and Kd 1:5.2.2, and of Vipassī at DN 14:3.1.4.

457. “Specific conditionality” (*idappaccayatā*) refers to the fact that dependent origination traces the specific conditions for other specific things: this conditions that. It is not a general principle of universal conditionality (“everything is interconnected”). | Dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is treated throughout SN 12.

if I were to teach this principle, others might not understand me, which would be wearying and troublesome for me.”⁴⁵⁸

1.9 And then these verses, which were neither supernaturally inspired, nor learned before in the past, occurred to the Buddha:⁴⁵⁹

2.1 “I’ve struggled hard to realize this,
there’s no need to reveal it now!
Those mired in greed and hate
can’t really understand this teaching.

3.1 It goes against the stream, subtle,
deep, obscure, and very fine.
Those besotted by greed cannot see,
for they’re cloaked in a mass of darkness.”

4.1 And as the Buddha reflected like this, his mind inclined to remaining passive, not to teaching the Dhamma.⁴⁶⁰

5.1 Then, knowing the Buddha’s train of thought, it occurred to the divinity Sahampati,⁴⁶¹ “Oh lord! The world will be lost, the world

458. Up to this point, the Bodhisatta has been solely concerned with finding the answer to his quest, and only now does he think of sharing it with others. The idea that he had made an aspiration for Buddhahood in the long ago past out of a desire to help all sentient beings is not supported in early texts.

459. “Not supernaturally inspired” (*anacchariyā*) rejects the Vedic “channeling” of scripture from the Divinity, while “not learned before in the past” (*pubbe assuta-pubbā*), echoing the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta (SN 56.11:5.1), rejects the oral tradition.

460. Had he followed this inclination he would have been a *paccekabuddha*, a Buddha “awakened for himself”.

461. While Sahampati features prominently in the suttas, no deity of that name is found in early Brahmanical texts. He seems, however, to be the Buddhist version of Brahmā Svayambhū, the “Self-born Divinity”, to whom Yājñavalkya traces the authority of his teaching lineage (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.6.3, 4.5.3, 6.5.4). Yājñavalkya identifies this “self-born” with the sun (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.9.3.16; see also Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā 4.6.6) and with Prajāpati (13.5.3.1). Explaining the origin of the soma rite of the “All-Sacrifice”, he says that Brahmā Svayambhū, while performing fervent austerities, decided to offer his self to all creatures and all creatures to his self, thus establishing lordship (*adhipatyā*)

will perish! For the mind of the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha, inclines to remaining passive, not to teaching the Dhamma.”⁴⁶²

Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from the realm of divinity and reappeared in front of the Buddha. He arranged his robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, raised his joined palms toward the Buddha, and said:

“Sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma! Let the Holy One teach the Dhamma! There are beings with little dust in their eyes. They’re in decline because they haven’t heard the teaching. There will be those who understand the teaching!”⁴⁶³

That is what the divinity Sahampati said. Then he went on to say:

“Among the Magadhans there appeared in the past an impure teaching thought up by the stained.”⁴⁶⁴

over all creatures (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.7.1.1). The root *pati* (“lord”) here establishes a linguistic link with *sahampati*. Further, in the earliest use of *svayambhū* at Rig Veda 10.83.4, the “self-born” deity Manyu “prevails” (*sahuriḥ sahāvān*) in battle. Thus we can identify Sahampati, the “Lord Who Prevails”, with the highest divinity recognized by Yājñavalkya, who originated as victor in battle, whose physical manifestation is the sun, whose spiritual function is to imbue all creatures with divinity, and who serves as the ultimate source of authority. Meanwhile, the epithet *sayambhū* was taken for the Buddha (Kd 11:35.1.37).

462. Having surpassed the greatest of the Brahmanical contemplatives, the Buddha’s achievement is recognized by the chief Brahmanical divinity. | The Pali *vata bho* works much like the English exclamation “oh lord” as an appeal to authority (*bho*), often in a purely rhetorical sense.

463. Sahampati is the one who recognizes the potential in all beings, since it was he who imbued them with divinity. He did this to ensure dominance, but now his motive has transformed into compassion.

464. The “impure teaching” was, according to the commentary, that of the six ascetic teachers, who are regularly associated with Magadha (eg. SN 2.30, Snp 3.6, DN 2). Less likely it refers to Brahmanical teachers like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, who are more closely associated with Kosala and whose system is regarded as passed down rather than “thought up”.

Fling open the door to freedom from death!⁴⁶⁵
 Let them hear the teaching
 the immaculate one discovered.

7.1 Standing high on a rocky mountain,
 you can see the people all around.
 In just the same way, All-seer, so intelligent,
 having ascended the Temple of Truth,
 rid of sorrow, look upon the people
 swamped with sorrow,
 oppressed by rebirth and old age.

8.1 Rise, hero! Victor in battle, caravan leader,⁴⁶⁶
 wander the world free of debt.⁴⁶⁷
 Let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma!
 There will be those who understand!”

9.1 Then the Buddha, understanding the Divinity’s invitation, surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha, out of his compassion for sentient beings. And the Buddha saw sentient beings with little dust in their eyes, and some with much dust in their eyes; with keen

465. “Freedom from death” (*amata*, Sanskrit *amṛta*) is yet another Brahmanical term transformed by the Buddha. Its Vedic meaning was “immortality”, and hence the “ambrosia” of soma through which immortality was gained. For the Buddha, as seen in the “noble quest” itself, it was the freedom from the cycles of birth, aging, and death.

466. Here we see a verbal echo of Sahampati’s martial origins.

467. A “caravan leader” (*satthavāha*) guides their flock through treacherous deserts and wastelands, as illustrated at DN 23:23.3. | *Anaṇa* (“debtless”) is a technical term in the Vedic system. According to Manu 6.35–7, a renunciate must first pay off three debts: study of Vedas, begetting a son, and offering of sacrifices. One who goes forth with these debts unpaid is headed for a downfall. The Buddha has indeed paid off all these debts: he studied the Vedas under his former teachers (MN 26:15.6); he has a son Rāhula; and his path is regarded as the highest form of sacrifice (DN 5:24.1). But in Buddhism the concept is reinterpreted as meaning one has let go of all defilements, becoming a “perfected”, literally “worthy” one, after which one can eat almsfood free of debt (MN 124:38.1, SN 16.11:13.2).

faculties and with weak faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. And some of them lived seeing the danger in the fault to do with the next world, while others did not.⁴⁶⁸

It's like a pool with blue water lilies, or pink or white lotuses. Some of them sprout and grow in the water without rising above it, thriving underwater. Some of them sprout and grow in the water reaching the water's surface. And some of them sprout and grow in the water but rise up above the water and stand with no water clinging to them. 9.3

In the same way, the Buddha saw sentient beings with little dust in their eyes, and some with much dust in their eyes; with keen faculties and with weak faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. And some of them lived seeing the danger in the fault to do with the next world, while others did not. 9.4

When he had seen this he replied in verse to the divinity Sahampati: 9.5

“Flung open are the doors to freedom from death! 10.1
 Let those with ears to hear commit to faith.⁴⁶⁹
 Thinking it would be troublesome, Divinity,
 I did not teach
 the sophisticated, sublime Dhamma among mankind.”

468. Here we see the sense of *indriya* as “spiritual potential”. Originally it was the state of excited energy produced by soma that allowed Indra to manifest his full power and overcome his foes. It implicitly links back to the five spiritual qualities that the Buddha attributed to his teachers, which he later formalized as “faculties”. Here as there, the idea creates a connection between beings, a recognition of shared qualities that, when properly nurtured, can mature into awakening. | For the “fault to do with the next world” see AN 2.1.

469. *Pamuñcantu saddham* has long troubled translators, as the basic sense of *pamuñcantu* is “release”. The problem is a long-standing one, for Sanskrit variants include *pramodantu* (“celebrate”) or *praṇudantu kāṅkṣāḥ* (“dispel doubts”). I think it is a poetic variant of *adhimuñcantu*, to “decide” or “commit” to faith; it is extremely common in Pali to use a synonymous verb to reinforce the sense of the noun. In Snp 5.19, *muttasaddho*, *pamuñcassu saddham*, and *adhimuttacittam* are all used in this sense.

- 11.1 Then the divinity Sahampati, knowing that his request for the Buddha to teach the Dhamma had been granted, bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.

SN 6.2

Respect

Gāravasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD.⁴⁷⁰ At one time, when he was first awakened, the Buddha was staying in Uruvelā at the root of the goatherd's banyan tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.
- 1.3 Then as he was in private retreat this thought came to his mind, "One without respect and reverence lives in suffering. What ascetic or brahmin should I honor and respect and rely on?"
- 2.1 Then it occurred to him:
- 2.2 "I'd honor and respect and rely on another ascetic or brahmin so as to complete the entire spectrum of ethics, if it were incomplete. But I don't see any other ascetic or brahmin in this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans—who is more accomplished than myself in ethics, who I should honor and respect and rely on.
- 3.1 I'd honor and respect and rely on another ascetic or brahmin so as to complete the entire spectrum of immersion, if it were incomplete. But I don't see any other ascetic or brahmin ... who is more accomplished than myself in immersion ...
- 4.1 I'd honor and respect and rely on another ascetic or brahmin so as to complete the entire spectrum of wisdom, if it were incomplete. But I don't see any other ascetic or brahmin ... who is more accomplished than myself in wisdom ...

470. The Buddha relates this event at AN 4.21.

I'd honor and respect and rely on another ascetic or brahmin so 5.1
 as to complete the entire spectrum of freedom, if it were incom-
 plete. But I don't see any other ascetic or brahmin ... who is more
 accomplished than myself in freedom ...

I'd honor and respect and rely on another ascetic or brahmin so 6.1
 as to complete the entire spectrum of the knowledge and vision of
 freedom, if it were incomplete. But I don't see any other ascetic or
 brahmin in this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this
 population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans—
 who is more accomplished than myself in the knowledge and vision
 of freedom, who I should honor and respect and rely on. Why don't
 I honor and respect and rely on the same Dhamma to which I was
 awakened?"

Then the divinity Sahampati knew the Buddha's train of thought. 7.1
 As easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he
 vanished from the realm of divinity and reappeared in front of the
 Buddha. He arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped
 palms toward the Buddha, and said:

"That's so true, Blessed One! That's so true, Holy One! All the 7.3
 perfected ones, the fully awakened Buddhas who lived in the past
 honored and respected and relied on this same teaching. All the
 perfected ones, the fully awakened Buddhas who will live in the
 future will honor and respect and rely on this same teaching. May the
 Blessed One, who is the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha
 at present, also honor and respect and rely on this same teaching."

That is what the divinity Sahampati said. Then he went on to say: 7.7

"All Buddhas in the past, 8.1
 the Buddhas of the future,
 and the Buddha at present—
 destroyer of the sorrows of many—

respecting the true teaching 9.1
 they did live, they do live,
 and they also will live.

This is the nature of the Buddhas.

- 10.1 Therefore someone who desires self-knowledge,⁴⁷¹
and aspires to greatness themselves,⁴⁷²
should respect the true teaching,
remembering the instructions of the Buddhas.”

SN 6.3

With Brahmadeva

Brahmadevasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattṭhi in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.3 Now at that time a certain brahmin lady had a son named Brahmadeva, who had gone forth from the lay life to homelessness in the presence of the Buddha.⁴⁷³
- 2.1 Then Venerable Brahmadeva, living alone, withdrawn, diligent, keen, and resolute, soon realized the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life. He lived having achieved with his own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.
- 2.2 He understood: “Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been completed; what had to be done has been done; there is nothing further for this place.” And Venerable Brahmadeva became one of the perfected.

471. For *attakāma* (“desires self-knowledge”) see MN 31:3.5.

472. These lines always appear in a Brahmanical context (AN 4.21:11.1, AN 7.62:12.1), and it seems the Buddha is playing with two senses of *mahatta*. Normally it means “greatness” but it can also stand for the Sanskrit *mahātman*, “great Self”. Read in that way the two phrases *attakāma* and *mahattamabhikaṅkhatā* would both mean “desiring the True Self” in the Upaniṣadic system. For the Buddha, they meant perfecting oneself through development.

473. This pair is found only here.

Then Brahmadeva robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl 3.1
and robe, entered Sāvattḥi for alms. Wandering indiscriminately for
almsfood in Sāvattḥi, he approached his own mother's home.

Now at that time Brahmadeva's mother, the brahmin lady, was 3.3
presenting a regular oblation to the Divinity.⁴⁷⁴

Then the divinity Sahampati thought, "This Venerable Brah- 3.4
madeva's mother, the brahmin lady, offers up a regular oblation to
the Divinity. Why don't I go and stir up a sense of urgency in her?"

Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their 3.7
arm, he vanished from the realm of divinity and reappeared in the
home of Brahmadeva's mother. Then the divinity Sahampati, while
standing in the air, addressed Brahmadeva's mother in verse:

"Far from here is the realm of divinity, madam, 4.1
to which you present a regular oblation.
But the Divinity doesn't eat that kind of food.⁴⁷⁵
Why pray, when you don't know the path to divin-
ity?⁴⁷⁶

This Brahmadeva, madam, 5.1
free of attachments, has surpassed the gods.
Owning nothing, providing for no other,
a mendicant
has entered your house for alms.

474. For "presenting a regular oblation" (*āhutīm niccam paggaṇhāti*) compare Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.9.2.19, where the sacrificer "seizes" (*sampragrṇāti*) the cup and spoon to make an oblation (*āhuti*). This is a householder "sacrifice with wife" (*patnīsaṃyāja*), where an oblation of ghee is offered to four pairs of gods with their wives for the sake of offspring. The lady of the house sits to the south-west of the fire. Here, however, she appears to be the chief sponsor.

475. See Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.3.7, where Brahmā is said to be the most magnificent because he eats what is not food.

476. The "path to divinity" (*brahmapatha*) is said to be for one who sees the Self in the eye as the immortal Divinity. One such, even should they have no proper funeral service, travels after death along the path of light where they are received by a non-human who leads them to Divinity, from which there is no return (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.15).

- 6.1 He's worthy of offerings dedicated to the gods,
a knowledge master, evolved.⁴⁷⁷
He's worthy of a religious donation
from gods and men.⁴⁷⁸
Having banished all evils, he's unsullied.
Cool at heart, he wanders searching for food.
- 7.1 He has no before and after,
peaceful, unclouded, untroubled,
with no need for hope,
he has laid down the rod
for all creatures firm and frail.⁴⁷⁹
So let him enjoy your offering of alms for the high-
est.⁴⁸⁰
- 8.1 With peaceful mind, he has left the crowd,
he wanders like a tamed elephant, unperturbed.
He's a mendicant fair in ethics, with heart well freed.
So let him enjoy your offering of alms for the highest.
- 9.1 With unwavering confidence in him,
present your religious donation
to one who is worthy of it.

477. The familiar terms for recollection of the Saṅgha were repurposed from the Vedic meanings. | *Āhuneyyo* (Sanskrit *āhavanīya*) refers to oblations offered to Agni; specifically the consecrated fire lit from the householder's perpetual fire. Hence the Pali sense, "worthy of offerings (*āhuti*) dedicated to the gods".

478. *Dakkhiṇeyyo* means "worthy of a religious donation", the regular fee payable to priests for their services.

479. Creatures "firm and frail" (*tasathāvare*) is a common Jain idiom (eg. U-ttarādhyayana 5.8: *tasesu thāvaresu ya*, Sūyagaḍa 3.4.20: *je keī tasathāvarā*, Da-saveyāliya 4.1.42: *tasam vā thāvaram vā*, Ācāraṅgasūtra 9.1.14 *tasa-jīvā ya thā-varattāe*).

480. Commentary explains *aggapiṇḍa* as "alms for the senior Saṅgha", in line with AN 4.34:7.1.

Now that you've seen the sage who has crossed over,
 madam,
 make merit for the sake of future happiness!"

With unwavering confidence in him,⁴⁸¹ 10.1
 she presented her religious donation
 to one who is worthy of it.
 After seeing the sage who had crossed over,
 the brahmin lady
 made merit for the sake of future happiness.

SN 6.4

With Baka the Divinity

Bakabrahmasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī 1.1
 in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.⁴⁸²

Now at that time Baka the Divinity had the following harmful 1.3
 misconception:⁴⁸³ "This is permanent, this is everlasting, this is
 eternal, this is whole, this is not liable to pass away. For this is where
 there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being
 reborn. And there's no other escape beyond this."⁴⁸⁴

481. According to the commentary, this verse was added by redactors.

482. The opening is shared with MN 49, except there the Buddha recalls an encounter at Ukkaṭṭhā. See also Ja 405.

483. Baka maintains the same wrong view at MN 49:2.2, where he engages the Buddha in philosophical debate. The word *baka* means "stork" or "crane". To search for a high divinity of this name in Brahmanism is to be disappointed, for instead we find a man-eating demon (*rakṣasa*) in bird form whose fate is to be slain by the hero Bhīma (or Kṛṣṇa). Pali stories tell of how the stork dozes peacefully as if meditating by the water, while in reality he is trying to fool fish into approaching so he can snatch them up (Ja 38, Ja 236). A cunning, large, white, high-flying, predatory bird who fakes meditation is a fitting image for the antagonist of these suttas.

484. The use of the impersonal pronoun (*idam*) to refer to the self as divinity is a characteristic Upaniṣadic idiom: "you are that" (*tat tvam asi*, Chāndogya

- 2.1 Then the Buddha knew Baka the Divinity's train of thought. As easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from Jeta's Grove and reappeared in that realm of divinity.
- 2.2 Baka the Divinity saw the Buddha coming off in the distance and said to him, "Come, good fellow! Welcome, good fellow! It's been a long time since you took the opportunity to come here. For this is permanent, this is everlasting, this is eternal, this is whole, this is not liable to pass away. For this is where there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn. And there's no other escape beyond this."
- 3.1 When he had spoken, the Buddha said to him, "Alas, Baka the Divinity is lost in ignorance! Alas, Baka the Divinity is lost in ignorance! Because what is actually impermanent, not lasting, transient, incomplete, and liable to pass away, he says is permanent, everlasting, eternal, whole, and not liable to pass away. And where there is being born, growing old, dying, passing away, and being reborn, he says that there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn. And although there is another escape beyond this, he says that there's no other escape beyond this."
- 4.1 "Gotama, we seventy-two merit-makers
are now wielders of power,⁴⁸⁵
having passed beyond rebirth and old age.
This is our last rebirth as the Divinity,
O knowledge master.
And now many people pray to us."

Upaniṣad 6.8.7); "that self is divinity" (*ayam ātmā brahma*, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 1.2); "I am that" (*so'ham asmi*, Īśa Upaniṣad 16); "this is that self hidden in all" (*eṣa ta ātmā sarvāntaraḥ*, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.4.1, etc.); "this, verily, is that" (*etad vai tat*, Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.1.5). | For *idaṃ nīccam* see *eṣa nityo* (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.23); for *idaṃ dhuvam* see *etad apramayam dhruvam* (4.4.20). | "Whole" (*kevala*) is a Brahmanical term indicating complete union with Divinity.

485. Neither text nor commentary is helpful here. Perhaps the number seventy-two indicates his former royal status, as Manu 7.157 tells us king's retinue consists of six circles of twelve people. | From this point the text diverges from MN 49:5.1.

“But, Baka, the lifespan here is short, not long,
though you think it’s long.
A hundred thousand times a hundred million years—
I understand your lifespan, Divinity.”⁴⁸⁶ 5.1

“I am the blessed one of infinite vision,⁴⁸⁷
who has gone beyond rebirth and old age and sorrow.
What was my past practice of precept and obser-
vance?⁴⁸⁸ 6.1
Explain to me so that I may understand.”

“You gave drink to many humans⁴⁸⁹
who were oppressed by thirst and heat.
That’s your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.”⁴⁹⁰ 7.1

When people at Deer River Bank were seized,
you released the captives as they were led away. 8.1

486. For the math, see note to SN 6.10:10.1.

487. The commentary thinks Baka is quoting the Buddha here, but I doubt it. First, the phrasing *aḥamasmi* (“I am”) is characteristic of Brahmā (eg. DN 1:2.5.2). Second, the Buddha does not, in fact, claim to be one of “infinite vision” (*anantadassī*) in early Pali. Third, the text reads straightforwardly as a statement by Baka. Fourth, *bhagavā* is widely used as a term of respectful address in the Upaniṣads, while later Sanskrit uses *anantaḍṛṣṭi* as an epithet of Indra or Śiva. The rhetorical posture is similar to DN 11:83.6; Baka is overcompensating, his bluster betraying his insecurity.

488. Normally it is understood that rebirth as a high Divinity requires the practice of deep meditative absorption (*jhāna*), which is not mentioned here. However, Baka is not asking about the kamma that led to him becoming a Divinity, but about the bodily acts he did in the past.

489. These stories are explained at length in the commentary.

490. This unusual phrase is, I think, suggestive of a key difference between the Upaniṣads and the Buddha. The Upaniṣads frequently treat the state of sleep and dream as a mystical union, where a person draws closer to divinity, and which appears as a mysterious analogue or manifestation of deep contemplation or realization (eg. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.1.16ff.). I believe the Buddha is called the “Awakened One” in deliberate contrast with that way of knowing.

That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.

9.1 When a boat on the Ganges River was seized
by a fierce dragon desiring human flesh,
you freed it wielding mighty force.
That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.

10.1 I used to be your footman named Kappa.⁴⁹¹
You thought he was intelligent and loyal.
That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.”

11.1 “You certainly understand this lifespan of mine.⁴⁹²
And others, too, you know;
that's why you're the Buddha.
And that's why your blazing glory
lights up even the realm of divinity.”

SN 6.5

A Certain Divinity

Aññatarabrahmasutta

1.1 At Sāvatthī.

1.2 Now at that time a certain divinity had the following harmful
misconception: “No ascetic or brahmin can come here!”⁴⁹³

491. This shows the changeability of status. See Kesava Jātaka (Ja 346).

492. Despite his praise, here as in MN 49 Baka does not declare himself a follower of the Buddha.

493. “Here” is the realm of divinity. It is characteristic of Indian religion to depict a struggle for supremacy between sages and the gods. From a Buddhist point of view, all the gods are simply beings who did good things in the past and hence will enjoy an exalted status for a while.

Then the Buddha knew that divinity's train of thought. As easily 1.4
as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished
from Jeta's Grove and reappeared in that realm of divinity. Then the
Buddha sat cross-legged in the air above that divinity, having entered
upon the fire element.

Then Venerable Mahāmoggallāna thought,⁴⁹⁴ "Where is the Bud- 2.1
dha staying at present?" With clairvoyance that is purified and super-
human, he saw the Buddha seated cross-legged in the air above that
divinity, having entered upon the fire element. Then, as easily as a
strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from
Jeta's Grove and reappeared in that realm of divinity. Then Mahāmo-
ggallāna—positioning himself in the east, below the Buddha—sat
cross-legged in the air above that divinity, having entered upon the
fire element.

Then Venerable Mahākassapa ...⁴⁹⁵ positioned himself in the 3.1
south ...

Venerable Mahākappina ...⁴⁹⁶ positioned himself in the west ... 4.1

Venerable Anuruddha ...⁴⁹⁷ positioned himself in the north, be- 5.1
low the Buddha, sitting cross-legged in the air above that divinity,
having entered upon the fire element.

Then Mahāmoggallāna addressed that divinity in verse: 6.1

"Reverend, do you still have the same view 7.1
that you had in the past?
Or do you see the radiance
surpassing the realm of divinity?"

"Good fellow, I don't have that view 8.1
that I had in the past.
I see the radiance
surpassing the realm of divinity.

494. He is heavily featured in the *Lakkhaṇasaṃyutta* starting at SN 19.1.

495. A *Saṃyutta* is devoted to him starting with SN 16.1.

496. See SN 21.11 and SN 54.7. His verses are at *Thag* 10.3.

497. A *Saṃyutta* is devoted to him starting with SN 52.1.

So how could I say today
that I am permanent and eternal?”⁴⁹⁸

9.1 Having inspired a sense of awe in the Divinity, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, the Buddha vanished from the realm of divinity and reappeared in Jeta’s Grove.

9.2 Then that divinity addressed a member of his retinue, “Please, good fellow, go up to Venerable Mahāmoggallāna and say to him: ‘Moggallāna my good fellow, are there any other disciples of the Buddha who have power and might comparable to the worthies Moggallāna, Kassapa, Kappina, and Anuruddha?’”

9.6 “Yes, good fellow,” replied that retinue member. He went to Moggallāna and asked as instructed.

9.9 Then Mahāmoggallāna addressed that member of the retinue of Divinity in verse:

10.1 “There are many disciples of the Buddha
who have the three knowledges,
and have attained psychic power,
expert in encompassing minds,
they’re perfected ones with defilements ended.”

11.1 Then that member of the retinue of Divinity, having approved and agreed with what Mahāmoggallāna said, went to that divinity and said to him, “Good fellow, Venerable Mahāmoggallāna said this:

12.1 “There are many disciples of the Buddha
who have the three knowledges,
and have attained psychic power,
expert in encompassing minds,

498. This is not the view stated by the Divinity in the prose narrative at the start. When these verses were quoted by Moggallāna in a list of his great deeds at MN 50:29.3 and Thag 20.1:59.3, the prose narrative is omitted, avoiding this problem. Moreover, both those passages identify the location as “the Hall of Justice before the assembly”, which does not fit the current discourse. It seems the verses and prose may have different origins.

they're perfected ones with defilements ended.'"

That is what that member of the retinue of Divinity said. Satisfied, 13.1
that divinity approved what the member of his retinue said.

SN 6.6

The Negligent Divinity

Brahmalokasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Now at that time the Buddha had gone into retreat for the day's 1.2
meditation.

Then the independent divinities Subrahmā and Suddhāvāsa went 1.3
to the Buddha and stationed themselves one by each door-post. But
Subrahmā said to Suddhāvāsa,⁴⁹⁹ "Good fellow, it's the wrong time
to pay homage to the Buddha. He has gone into retreat for the day's
meditation. But such-and-such realm of divinity is successful and
prosperous, while the divinity living there is negligent. Come, let's
go to that realm of divinity and inspire awe in that divinity!"

"Yes, good fellow," replied Suddhāvāsa. 1.8

Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their 2.1
arm, they vanished from in front of the Buddha and appeared in that
realm of divinity.

That divinity saw those divinities coming off in the distance and 2.2
said to them, "Well now, good fellows, where have you come from?"

499. This pair feature in the next two suttas as well. For Subrahmā, see note on SN 2.17:1.1. The name Suddhāvāsa suggests he was from the Pure Abodes. Perhaps both were, which would explain their devotion to the Buddha and the Dhamma. But the commentary is silent. | Independent divinities (*pa-ccekabrahmā*) are without a retinue, although not, it seems, without a friend.

- 2.4 “Good fellow, we’ve come from the presence of the Blessed One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha. Shouldn’t you go to attend on that Blessed One?”⁵⁰⁰
- 3.1 When they had spoken, that divinity refused to accept their advice. He multiplied himself a thousand times and said to Subrahmā,⁵⁰¹ “Good fellow, can’t you see that I have such psychic power?”
- 3.3 “I see that, good fellow.”
- 3.4 “Since I have such psychic power and might, what other ascetic or brahmin should I go to and attend upon?”
- 4.1 Then Subrahmā multiplied himself two thousand times and said to that divinity, “Good fellow, can’t you see that I have such psychic power?”
- 4.3 “I see that, good fellow.”
- 4.4 “That Buddha has even more psychic power and might than you or me. Shouldn’t you go to attend on that Blessed One?”
- 4.6 Then that divinity addressed Subrahmā in verse:
- 5.1 “There are three hundreds of phoenixes, four of swans,⁵⁰²
and five of tigerhawks. To he who practiced absorption⁵⁰³
belongs this palace; it shines, Divinity,⁵⁰⁴
lighting up the northern quarter!”
- 6.1 “So what if your palace shines,

500. The Pali is ambiguous, but I think this should be a question. Compare the similar syntax at AN 6.62:7.8.

501. As so often, divinities in Buddhist texts try to distinguish themselves by power, not by wisdom or compassion.

502. The *haṁsa* is a swan or goose. Though rarely seen in most of India today, the swan is a fitting image in such elevated contexts. | The “hundred” of the next line should be distributed to the numbers in this line, too, per the commentary.

503. *Byagghinīsā* (“night-tiger”?) appears only here and in another list of birds at Ja 547:420.1 (variant *byagghinasā*), where the commentary glosses *sena*, a “raptor”. “Tigerhawk” is not a real name, but it sounds cool.

504. *Jalate* (“shines”) here and below is reflexive indicative.

lighting up the northern quarter?
A clever person, seeing the strife in form,
its chronic trembling, takes no pleasure in it.”

Then after inspiring awe in that divinity, the independent divini- 7.1
ties Subrahmā and Suddhāvāsa vanished right there. And after some
time that divinity went to attend on the Buddha.

SN 6.7

About Kokālika

Kokālikasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Now at that time the Buddha had gone into retreat for the day’s 1.2
meditation. Then the independent divinities Subrahmā and Suddhā-
vāsa went to the Buddha and stationed themselves one by each door-
post.

Then Subrahmā spoke this verse about the mendicant Kokālika 1.4
in the Buddha’s presence:⁵⁰⁵

“What wise person here would judge 2.1
the immeasurable by measuring them?
I think anyone who’d do such a thing
is an ordinary person, shrouded.”

505. Kokālika features several times in the suttas (SN 6.9, SN 6.10, AN 10.89, Snp 3.10). In the Vinaya he appears, along with Katamorakatissaka and others, as a reprobate follower of Devadatta (Kd 17:3.14.1). In Ja 331 we learn of a past life as a cuckoo (*kokila*) laid in a crow’s nest, who is betrayed to his doom by his heedless cry.

SN 6.8

About Katamorakatissaka

Katamodakatissasutta

1.1 At Sāvatthī.

1.2 Now at that time the Buddha had gone into retreat for the day's meditation. Then the independent divinities Subrahmā and Suddhāvāsa went to the Buddha and stationed themselves one by each door-post.

1.4 Then Suddhāvāsa spoke this verse about the mendicant Katamorakatissaka in the Buddha's presence:

2.1 “What wise person here would judge
the immeasurable by measuring them?
I think anyone who'd do such a thing
is an ignoramus, shrouded.”⁵⁰⁶

SN 6.9

With the Divinity Tudu

Turūbrahmasutta

1.1 At Sāvatthī.

1.2 Now at that time the mendicant Kokālīka was sick, suffering, gravely ill.⁵⁰⁷

1.3 Then, late at night, the glorious independent divinity Tudu, lighting up the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the mendicant Kokālīka, and standing in the air he said to him, “Kokālīka, have confidence in Sāriputta and Moggallāna, they're good monks.”

1.6 “Who are you, reverend?”

506. *Akissava* is a unique term, glossed as “lacking wisdom”. I take it as *a + kim + (s)sava(na)*, “one who does not listen to anyone”, i.e. “narrow-minded”.

507. His illness was caused by slandering Sāriputta and Moggallāna (SN 6.10, AN 10.89, Snp 3.10:3.3). | AN 10.89 combines this Sutta and the next.

- “I am Tudu the independent divinity.” 1.7
- “Didn’t the Buddha declare you a non-returner? So what then are you doing back here? See how far you have strayed!” 1.8
- “A person is born 2.1
with an axe in their mouth.
A fool cuts themselves with it
when they say bad words.
- When you praise someone worthy of criticism, 3.1
or criticize someone worthy of praise,
you choose a losing hand with your own mouth:⁵⁰⁸
you’ll never find happiness that way.
- A losing hand at dice is a trivial thing, 4.1
if all you lose is your money
and all you own, even yourself.
What’s a really terrible hand
is to hate the holy ones.
- For a hundred thousand times a hundred million,⁵⁰⁹ 5.1
times five hundred and thirty-six times
a thousand times ten million years
a slanderer of noble ones goes to hell,
having aimed bad words and thoughts at them.”

508. The ancient Indian game of dice involved casting *vibhītaka* seeds (also known as “bedda nuts”, from *Terminalia bellirica*) in a hollow, from which the players would take a handful. A number divisible by four was “perfect” (*kaṭa*), so the fifth seed meant a “losing” hand (*kali*; cf. *apaṇṇaka* in MN 60 and notes).

509. The interpretation and calculation of these lines is explained at Snp 3.10:12.2.

SN 6.10

With Kokālika

Kokālikasutta

1.1 At Sāvattḥī.⁵¹⁰

1.2 Then the mendicant Kokālika went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, “Sir, Sāriputta and Moggallāna have corrupt wishes. They’ve fallen under the sway of corrupt wishes.”

1.4 When this was said, the Buddha said to Kokālika, “Don’t say that, Kokālika! Don’t say that, Kokālika! Have confidence in Sāriputta and Moggallāna, they’re good monks.”

1.7 For a second time Kokālika said to the Buddha, “Despite my faith and trust in the Buddha, Sāriputta and Moggallāna have corrupt wishes. They’ve fallen under the sway of corrupt wishes.”

1.9 For a second time, the Buddha said to Kokālika, “Don’t say that, Kokālika! Don’t say that, Kokālika! Have confidence in Sāriputta and Moggallāna, they’re good monks.”

1.12 For a third time Kokālika said to the Buddha, “Despite my faith and trust in the Buddha, Sāriputta and Moggallāna have corrupt wishes. They’ve fallen under the sway of corrupt wishes.”

1.14 For a third time, the Buddha said to Kokālika, “Don’t say that, Kokālika! Don’t say that, Kokālika! Have confidence in Sāriputta and Moggallāna, they’re good monks.”

2.1 Then Kokālika rose from his seat, bowed, and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before leaving. Not long after he left his body erupted with boils the size of mustard seeds. The boils grew to the size of mung beans, then chickpeas, then jujube seeds, then jujubes, then myrobalans, then unripe wood-apples, then ripe wood-apples. Finally they burst open, and pus and blood oozed

510. A difficult problem of this text is the meaning of the numbers of the duration of hell. See the extended version at Snp 3.10 for full discussion; it has an extra passage which is essential for decoding.

out. Then the mendicant Kokālika died of that illness. He was reborn in the Pink Lotus hell because of his resentment for Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

Then, late at night, the glorious divinity Sahampati, lighting up 3.1
the entire Jeta's Grove, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one
side, and said to him, "Sir, the mendicant Kokālika has passed away.
He was reborn in the Pink Lotus hell because of his resentment for
Sāriputta and Moggallāna."

That is what the divinity Sahampati said. Then he bowed and 3.4
respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before
vanishing right there.

Then, when the night had passed, the Buddha told the mendicants 4.1
all that had happened.

When he said this, one of the mendicants said to the Buddha, "Sir, 5.1
how long is the lifespan in the Pink Lotus hell?"

"It's long, mendicant. It's not easy to calculate how many years, 5.3
how many hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousands of years
it lasts."

"But sir, is it possible to give a simile?" 5.6

"It's possible," said the Buddha. 5.7

"Suppose there was a Kosalan load of twenty packs of sesame 6.1
seed. And at the end of every hundred years someone would remove
a single seed from it.⁵¹¹ By this means the Kosalan load of twenty
packs of sesame seed would run out faster than a single lifetime in
the Abbuda hell.⁵¹²

511. Duration by the "Kosalan load" comes to either 150 billion years (using the Arthaśāstra *khāri*) or 25 billion years (using the Pali *khāri*). Neither of these results agrees with the other calculations in this Sutta. The correspondence is not in the result but the simple numbers: twenty packs each hundred years correspond to the twenty times ten of the hells.

512. Ten hells are listed here, the names of which do not correspond with the 21 or 28 listed in Purāṇas, nor with the seven Jain hells, nor with the hells of MN 130. The commentary offers three explanations for the obscure names of these hells: they are numbers reflecting the duration spent in Avīci; or they are

- 6.3 Now, twenty lifetimes in the Abbuda hell equal one lifetime in the Nirabbuda hell.⁵¹³ Twenty lifetimes in the Nirabbuda hell equal one lifetime in the Ababa hell. Twenty lifetimes in the Ababa hell equal one lifetime in the Aṭaṭa hell. Twenty lifetimes in the Aṭaṭa hell equal one lifetime in the Ahaha hell. Twenty lifetimes in the Ahaha hell equal one lifetime in the Yellow Lotus hell. Twenty lifetimes in the Yellow Lotus hell equal one lifetime in the Fragrant Water Lily hell. Twenty lifetimes in the Fragrant Water Lily hell equal one lifetime in the Blue Water Lily hell.⁵¹⁴ Twenty lifetimes in the Blue Water Lily hell equal one lifetime in the White Lotus hell. Twenty lifetimes in the White Lotus hell equal one lifetime in the Pink Lotus hell.⁵¹⁵
- 6.12 The mendicant Kokālika has been reborn in the Pink Lotus hell because of his resentment for Sāriputta and Moggallāna.”
- 6.13 That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:
- 7.1 “A person is born
with an axe in their mouth.
A fool cuts themselves with it
when they say bad words.
- 8.1 When you praise someone worthy of criticism,
or criticize someone worthy of praise,
you choose a losing hand with your own mouth:
you’ll never find happiness that way.
- 9.1 A losing hand at dice is a trivial thing,
if all you lose is your money

the cries uttered by those suffering there; or they are simply the cold hells. | For other meanings of *abbuda*, see SN 10.1:3.2, SN 1.77:1.4.

513. The Sanskrit *nyarbuda* (or *nirbuda*) is said, rather, to be ten times the *arbuda*. The expansion in a series of twenty is required to reach the final number, a multiple of 512.

514. The “Fragrant Water Lily” (*sogandhika*) is variously identified as blue or white.

515. By this calculation, the Pink Lotus lasts for $10^7 \times 20^9 = 5.12 \times 10^{18}$ years.

and all you own, even yourself.
 What's a really terrible hand
 is to hate the holy ones.

For a hundred thousand times a hundred million, 10.1
 times five hundred and thirty-six times
 a thousand times ten million years⁵¹⁶
 a slanderer of noble ones goes to hell,
 having aimed bad words and thoughts at them.”

516. Here, take an *abbuda* as 10 million and a *nirabbuda* as 100 million, and distribute the terms of the first line to the second, for a duration of 5.36×10^{25} years. This is an amplified version of the same number as previous: triple twelve to thirty-six, and multiply by ten million.

Chapter Two

SN 6.11

With Sanañkumāra

Sanañkumārasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, on the bank of the Serpentine River.⁵¹⁷
- 1.3 Then, late at night, the glorious divinity Sanañkumāra, lighting up the entire Serpentine riverbank, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side,⁵¹⁸ and spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:
- 2.1 “The aristocrat is best among people
who take clan as the standard.
But one accomplished in knowledge and conduct
is best among gods and humans.”
- 3.1 That is what the divinity Sanañkumāra said, and the Teacher concurred. Then the divinity Sanañkumāra, knowing that the Teacher

517. The Serpentine (*sappini*) is probably the modern Panchane (from *pañcānana*, “five-mouthed”). There was a wanderer's hermitage on its banks (AN 3.64, AN 4.30, AN 4.185).

518. Sanañkumāra (“Everyyoung”) became a Hindu deity closely associated with the worship of Krishna. He first appears in the seventh chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. He speaks this verse also at DN 3:1.28.2, DN 27:32.2, MN 53:25.3, AN 11.10:6.1, and it was endorsed by the Buddha. He features in two extended discussions among the gods, his appearance heralded by a great light in the north (DN 18:15.1, DN 19:15.1). He also appears in DN 20:20.3.

concurred, bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.

SN 6.12

About Devadatta

Devadattasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.⁵¹⁹ At one time the Buddha was staying near 1.1
Rājagaha, on the Vulture’s Peak Mountain, not long after Devadatta
had left.

Then, late at night, the glorious divinity Sahampati, lighting up 1.3
the entire Vulture’s Peak, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to
one side, and spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence:

“The banana plant is destroyed by its own fruit, 2.1
as are the bamboo and the reed.⁵²⁰
Honor destroys a reprobate,
as pregnancy destroys a mule.”

SN 6.13

At Andhakavinda

Andhakavindasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Magadhans at 1.1
Andhakavinda.⁵²¹

519. Also at AN 4.68, the verse is spoken by the Buddha with additional explanation at SN 17.35 = Kd 17:2.5.12.

520. Compare SN 3.2:3.4.

521. The Buddha taught Ānanda there (AN 5.114). It lay to the west of Rājagaha on the road from Varanasi. Once, arriving there from Varanasi, the Buddha allowed porridge (Kd 6:24.1.1, cf. AN 5.207). At Kd 2:12.1.1, Mahākassapa was swept away in a river while returning from Andhakavinda. That river is identified by the commentary as the Serpentine, but that is usually said to be the Panchane,

- 1.2 Now at that time the Buddha was meditating in the open during the dark of night, while a gentle rain drizzled down.
- 1.3 Then, late at night, the glorious divinity Sahampati, lighting up the entirety of Andhakavinda, went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and recited these verses in the Buddha's presence:
- 2.1 "One should frequent secluded lodgings,⁵²²
and practice to be released from fetters.
If you don't find enjoyment there,
live in the Saṅgha, self-protected and mindful.
- 3.1 Walking for alms from family to family,
with senses guarded, alert and mindful.⁵²³
One should frequent secluded lodgings,
free of fear, freed in the fearless.
- 4.1 Where dreadful reptiles slither,
where the lightning flashes and the heavens thunder
in the dark of the night;
there meditates a mendicant, free of goosebumps.
- 5.1 For this is ever seen by me,
it isn't just the testament of hearsay.
Within a single spiritual dispensation
there are a thousand conquerors of Death.⁵²⁴

which lies to the east of Rājagaha. Perhaps the river near Andhakavinda was, rather, the Paimar, which lies about three hours walk to the west of Rājagaha.

522. This verse was spoken by Mahācunda at Thag 2.11:2.1.

523. *Nipaka* ("alert") is explained in the Pali tradition as "wise". The root *pāl*, rather, suggests the sense "on guard, alert", which is supported by such phrases as "mindfully alert and on guard" (*ārakkhasatino nipakkasatino*, AN 5.114:3.1), where *nipaka* parallels *ārakkha* ("guarding"). Here it is close to *gutta*, another word for "guarded". Likewise, the Vedic sense is "one who keeps watch, a protector" (Rig Veda 4.45.6, 10.44.4).

524. *Maccuhāyi* is glossed by the commentaries as either "abandoner" (*maccuhāyinenti maraṇapariccāginam*) or "conqueror" (*marañābhibhū maccuhāyi*). The

And of trainees, more than five hundred,⁵²⁵ 6.1
 and ten times ten tens,⁵²⁶
 are all stream-enterers,
 freed from rebirth in the animal realm.

And as for the rest of folk 7.1
 who I think have shared in merit—
 I couldn't even number them,
 for fear of speaking falsely.”

SN 6.14

About Aruṇavatī

Aruṇavatīsutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sā- 1.1
 vatthī. There he addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!”

“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this: 1.5

“Once upon a time, mendicants, there was a king named Aru- 2.1
 ṇavā.⁵²⁷ He had a capital named Aruṇavatī. Sikhī the Blessed One,
 the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha lived supported by
 Aruṇavatī.⁵²⁸ Sikhī had a fine pair of chief disciples named Abhibhū
 and Sambhava.⁵²⁹

phrase seems to be used in martial contexts where it carries a similar force to
jetvā māraṃ just below.

525. “More than five hundred” is the count of stream-enterers also at SN
 55.10:3.3 = DN 18:1.7 = DN 16:2.7.15; see too MN 73:7.3ff. and MN 76:53.2.

526. The *ca* here indicates the numbers should be added, totaling 1,500.

527. At DN 14:1.12.4 he is called Aruṇa.

528. Sikhī means “halo” or “crown”. DN 14:1.12.4 says Aruṇa was his father,
 and Pabhāvatī his mother. The son of King Dawn and Queen Radiant in the
 City of the Dawn, Sikhī is the streaming rays of sunrise. These names recall a
 solar myth.

529. Abhibhū (“Victor”) and Sambhava (“son of Śambhu the blessed”) are
 also at DN 14:1.9.2. Śambhu is commonly found in the Rīg Veda in the sense,
 “blessing, benefit”, and became a common name or epithet of gods, etc.

- 2.5 Then the Buddha Sikhī addressed the mendicant Abhibhū, ‘Come, brahmin, let’s go to one of the realms of divinity until it’s time for our meal.’⁵³⁰
- 2.7 ‘Yes, sir,’ replied Abhibhū. Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, they vanished from Aruṇavatī and appeared in that realm of divinity.
- 3.1 Then the Buddha Sikhī addressed the mendicant Abhibhū, ‘Brahmin, teach the Dhamma as you feel inspired for that divinity, his assembly, and the members of his retinue.’
- 3.3 ‘Yes, sir,’ replied Abhibhū. Then he educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired them with a Dhamma talk.
- 3.4 But the Divinity, his assembly, and his retinue complained, grumbled, and objected, ‘Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! How on earth can a disciple teach Dhamma in the presence of the Teacher?’
- 4.1 Then the Buddha Sikhī addressed the mendicant Abhibhū, ‘Brahmin, the Divinity, his assembly, and his retinue are complaining that a disciple teaches Dhamma in the presence of the Teacher. Well then, brahmin, stir them up even more!’⁵³¹
- 4.5 ‘Yes, sir,’ replied Abhibhū. Then he taught Dhamma with his body visible; with his body invisible; with the lower half visible and the upper half invisible; and with the upper half visible and the lower half invisible.⁵³²
- 4.6 And the Divinity, his assembly, and his retinue, their minds full of wonder and amazement, thought, ‘Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! The ascetic has such psychic power and might!’

530. Gotama occasionally addresses a mendicant as brahmin, but only by way of special encouragement (eg. MN 86:17.6).

531. The Buddha understood that you do not have to always give the audience what they want.

532. This display is unique in the Suttas. It is referred to at Ps 3.2:15.2, which calls it “the power of transformation” (*vikubbanā iddhi*), for which see DN 18:22.3 and Thag 20.1:44.3.

Then Abhibhū said to the Buddha Sikhī, ‘Sir, I recall having said 5.1
this in the middle of the Saṅgha: “Standing in the realm of divinity,
I can make my voice heard throughout the thousandfold galaxy.”’⁵³³

‘Now is the time, brahmin! Now is the time, brahmin! Stand- 5.4
ing in the realm of divinity, make your voice heard throughout the
thousandfold galaxy.’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Abhibhū. Standing in the realm of divinity, he 5.6
spoke this verse:

‘Rouse yourselves! Try harder!’⁵³⁴ 6.1
Devote yourselves to the teachings of the Buddha!
Crush the army of Death,
as an elephant a hut of reeds.

Whoever shall meditate diligently 7.1
in this teaching and training,
giving up transmigration through rebirths,
will make an end of suffering.’

Having inspired that divinity, his assembly, and his retinue with a 8.1
sense of awe, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract
their arm, Sikhī and Abhibhū vanished from that realm of divinity
and appeared in Aruṇavatī.

Then the Buddha Sikhī addressed the mendicants, ‘Mendicants, 8.3
did you hear the mendicant Abhibhū speaking a verse while standing
in a realm of divinity?’

‘We did, sir.’ 8.5

‘But what exactly did you hear?’ 8.6

‘This is what we heard, sir: 8.7

“Rouse yourselves! Try harder! 9.1
Devote yourselves to the teachings of the Buddha!

533. Ānanda asks the Buddha about this at AN 3.80.

534. These verses are spoken by the otherwise unknown monk Abhibhūta at
Thag 3.13. Perhaps there has been some confusion in the name.

Crush the army of Death,
as an elephant a hut of reeds.

- 10.1 Whoever shall meditate diligently
 in this teaching and training,
 giving up transmigration through rebirths,
 will make an end of suffering.”
- 11.1 That’s what we heard, sir.’
- 11.2 ‘Good, good, mendicants! It’s good that you heard the mendicant
Abhibhū speaking this verse while standing in a realm of divinity.’”
- 12.1 That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, the mendicants approved
what the Buddha said.

SN 6.15

Full Extinguishment

Parinibbānasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying between a pair of sal trees in
the sal forest of the Mallas at Upavattana near Kusinārā at the time
of his full extinguishment.⁵³⁵
- 1.2 Then the Buddha said to the mendicants: “Come now, men-
dicants, I say to you all: ‘Conditions fall apart. Persist with dili-
gence.’”⁵³⁶
- 1.5 These were the Realized One’s last words.⁵³⁷

535. This is an excerpt from the Mahāparinibbānasutta, picking up at DN 16:6.7.1.

536. This is perhaps the briefest summary possible of the Buddha’s teaching. The world as it is, and all the beings in it, are created and sustained through conditions. Since the conditions that sustain them are finite, the conditioned phenomena are also finite and must come to an end. Reflecting on this gives rise to gratitude for the life we have and the opportunities it grants us, and determination to live and practice dedicated to the realization of the unconditioned, Nibbāna.

537. The commentary says this line was added at the Council.

Then the Buddha entered the first absorption. Emerging from 2.1
that, he entered the second absorption. Emerging from that, he suc-
cessively entered into and emerged from the third absorption, the
fourth absorption, the dimension of infinite space, the dimension
of infinite consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, and the di-
mension of neither perception nor non-perception. Then he entered
the cessation of perception and feeling.⁵³⁸

Then he emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling and 3.1
entered the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.
Emerging from that, he successively entered into and emerged from
the dimension of nothingness, the dimension of infinite conscious-
ness, the dimension of infinite space, the fourth absorption, the third
absorption, the second absorption, and the first absorption. Emerg-
ing from that, he successively entered into and emerged from the
second absorption and the third absorption. Then he entered the
fourth absorption. Emerging from that the Buddha immediately
became fully extinguished.

When the Buddha was fully quenched, along with the full extin- 3.2
guishment, the divinity Sahampati spoke this verse:

“All creatures in this world⁵³⁹ 4.1
must lay down this bag of bones.⁵⁴⁰
For even a Teacher such as this,
unrivalled in the world,
the Realized One, attained to power,⁵⁴¹
the Buddha was fully quenched.”

538. Even on his deathbed, the Buddha retains mastery over his mind. | At this point in DN 16:6.8.2, Ānanda and Anuruddha discuss whether the Buddha is dead.

539. Each of these characters reveal something of themselves in their verses. Sahampati, as a royal deity, emphasizes the universal nature of the teaching and the grandeur of the Buddha.

540. “Bag of bones” is a loose rendering of *samussaya*.

541. The ten powers of a Realized One are detailed at AN 10.21 and MN 12:9.1.

5.1 When the Buddha was fully quenched, Sakka, lord of gods, spoke this verse:

6.1 “Oh! Conditions are impermanent,⁵⁴²
their nature is to rise and fall;
having arisen, they cease;
their settling is such bliss.”

7.1 When the Buddha was fully quenched, Venerable Ānanda spoke this verse:⁵⁴³

8.1 “Then there was terror!
Then they had goosebumps!
When the Buddha, endowed with all fine qualities,
was fully quenched.”

9.1 When the Buddha was fully quenched, Venerable Anuruddha spoke this verse:

10.1 “There was no more breathing⁵⁴⁴
for the unaffected one of steady heart.
Imperturbable, committed to peace,
the Clear-eyed One was fully quenched.

11.1 He put up with painful feelings
without flinching.
The liberation of his heart
was like the extinguishing of a lamp.”

The Linked Discourses on the Divinity are complete.

542. Less creative than Brahmā, Sakka repeats a famous verse spoken by the Buddha at SN 15.20:8.1 and DN 17:2.17.5.

543. This verse follows Anuruddha’s in DN 16.

544. Anuruddha was a reclusive meditator who specialized in mindfulness of breathing. Here he remarks on the fact that, since breathing ceases in the fourth absorption (SN 36.11:2.19), the Buddha’s breathing had already stopped before he died.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH BRAHMINS

The Chapter on the Perfected Ones

SN 7.1

With Dhanañjānī

Dhanañjānīsutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.
- 1.3 Now at that time the wife of a certain brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan, a brahmin lady named Dhanañjānī, was devoted to the Buddha, the teaching, and the Saṅgha.⁵⁴⁵ Once, while she was bringing her husband his meal, she tripped and expressed this heartfelt sentiment three times:

545. Bhāradvāja features as the default Brahmanical clan in the Suttas, especially as antagonists who nonetheless are liable for conversion. The clan founder Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya, who is occasionally mentioned as a deity (DN 32:10.3), authored Maṇḍala 6 of the Rīg Veda (DN 13:13.1). It would seem their star had dimmed, for they are listed as a low family (Bu Pc 2:2.1.18). | A devotee named Dhanañjānī appears in MN 100. She is perhaps the same person, although the setting and most of the narrative details are different. | The two names have the same sense: *bhāradvāja* is the “swift plunderer of booty”, while *dhanañjānī* is the “winner of wealth”, an epithet of Indra (and the name of a tariff-skimming brahmin at MN 97:2.13). These recall a much earlier age, when a raider on horseback or chariot would descend on villages and make off with the booty. Compare Vedic *vājambhara* (the swift “prize-winning” horse), and see O.H. De A. Wijesekera, *Buddhist and Vedic Studies*, p. 249.

“Homage to him, the blessed one, the perfected one, the fully 2.1
awakened Buddha!”⁵⁴⁶

Homage to him, the blessed one, the perfected one, the fully 3.1
awakened Buddha!

Homage to him, the blessed one, the perfected one, the fully 4.1
awakened Buddha!”

When she said this, the brahmin said to Dhanañjānī: 5.1

“That’d be right. For the slightest thing this lowlife woman praises 5.2
that shaven ascetic.⁵⁴⁷ Right now, lowlife woman, I’m going to refute
your teacher’s doctrine!”

“Brahmin, I don’t see anyone in this world—with its gods, Māras, 5.4
and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its
gods and humans—who can refute the doctrine of the Blessed One,
the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha. But anyway, you
should go. When you’ve gone you’ll understand.”

Then the brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan, angry and upset, went to 6.1
the Buddha and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings
and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side, and
addressed the Buddha in verse:

“When what is slain do you sleep at ease?⁵⁴⁸ 7.1
When what is slain is there no sorrow?
What is the one thing
whose killing you approve?”

546. This now-ubiquitous phrase is spoken only nine times in the Suttas: seven times by brahmins, and once each by Indra and Pasenadi. | The pronoun *tassa* (“to him”) is sometimes rendered with the impersonal “that” or “the”. But similar phrases take the personal pronoun (eg. “homage to you” at Snp 3.6:44.2, SN 2.9:2.1, “homage to them” at SN 2.25:6.4).

547. The term “lowlife” (*vasala*, literally “little bullock”) is used of a degenerate gambler (Rig Veda 10.34.11). It is a word for one who violates *dharma* (justice, duty, goodness) through one’s actions, rather than being a description of birth (Manu 8.16). | The reading at MN 100:3.4 is slightly different.

548. Read *jhatvā* in line with SN 1.71. This question is asked by the famously violent Indra under the names Māgha (SN 2.3) and Sakka (SN 11.21).

8.1 “When anger’s slain you sleep at ease.
 When anger’s slain there is no sorrow.
 Anger has a poisonous root
 and a sweet tip, O brahmin.
 The noble ones praise its killing,
 for when it’s slain there is no sorrow.”

9.1 When he said this, the brahmin said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what’s there, worthy Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways.⁵⁴⁹ I go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. May I receive the going forth, the ordination in the worthy Gotama’s presence?”

10.1 And the brahmin received the going forth, the ordination in the Buddha’s presence. Not long after his ordination, Venerable Bhāradvāja, living alone, withdrawn, diligent, keen, and resolute, soon realized the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life. He lived having achieved with his own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.

10.3 He understood: “Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been completed; what had to be done has been done; there is nothing further for this place.” And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.

549. The Buddha answered the question inside the brahmin’s question, hence his quick conversion.

SN 7.2

With Bhāradvāja the Rude

Akkosāsutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. 1.1

The brahmin Bhāradvāja the Rude heard a rumor that a brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan had gone forth from the lay life to homelessness in the presence of the ascetic Gotama. Angry and displeased he went to the Buddha and abused and insulted him with rude, harsh words. When he had spoken, the Buddha said to him:⁵⁵⁰ 1.2

“What do you think, brahmin? Do friends and colleagues, relatives and kin, and guests still come to visit you?” 2.2

“Sometimes they do, worthy Gotama.” 2.4

“Do you then serve them with fresh and cooked foods and savories?” 2.5

“Sometimes I do.” 2.6

“But if they don't accept it, brahmin, who does it belong to?” 2.7

“In that case it still belongs to me.” 2.8

“In the same way, brahmin, when you abuse, harass, and attack us who do not abuse, harass, and attack, we don't accept it. It still belongs to you, brahmin, it still belongs to you!” 2.9

Someone who, when abused, harassed, and attacked, abuses, harasses, and attacks in return is said to eat the food and have a reaction to it. But we neither eat your food nor do we have a reaction to it. It still belongs to you, brahmin, it still belongs to you!” 3.1

“The king and his retinue believe of the worthy Gotama, ‘the ascetic Gotama is a perfected one.’ And yet he still gets angry.” 3.5

“Whence anger for one free of anger,
tamed, living justly,
freed by right knowledge, 4.1

550. Apparently a reference to the previous Sutta.

peaceful and unaffected?

- 5.1 When you get angry at an angry person
you just make things worse for yourself.
When you don't get angry at an angry person
you win a battle hard to win.
- 6.1 When you know that the other is angry,
you act for the good of both
yourself and the other
if you're mindful and stay calm.
- 7.1 People inexpert in the teaching⁵⁵¹
consider one who heals both
oneself and the other
to be a fool."
- 8.1 When he had spoken, Bhāradvāja the Rude said to the Buddha,
"Excellent, worthy Gotama! ... I go for refuge to the worthy Gotama,
to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. Sir, may I receive the
going forth, the ordination in the worthy Gotama's presence?"
- 9.1 And the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Rude received the going forth,
the ordination in the Buddha's presence. Not long after his ordi-
nation, Venerable Bhāradvāja the Rude, living alone, withdrawn,
diligent, keen, and resolute, soon realized the supreme culmination
of the spiritual path in this very life. He lived having achieved with
his own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from
the lay life to homelessness.
- 9.3 He understood: "Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been
completed; what had to be done has been done; there is nothing
further for this place." And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the
perfected.⁵⁵²

551. Read *ubhinnaṃ tikicchantaṃ taṃ* per Thag 6.12:4.1.

552. He is no longer called "the Rude".

SN 7.3

With Bhāradvāja the Fiend

Asurindakasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. The brahmin Bhāradvāja the Fiend heard a rumor to the effect that⁵⁵³ a brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan had gone forth from the lay life to homelessness in the presence of the ascetic Gotama. Angry and displeased he went to the Buddha and abused and insulted him with rude, harsh words. 1.1

But when he said this, the Buddha kept silent. 1.4

Then Bhāradvāja the Fiend said to the Buddha, "You're beaten, ascetic, you're beaten!" 1.5

"‘Ha! I won!’ thinks the fool,
when speaking with harsh words.
The victory for one who understands
is that very endurance. 2.1

When you get angry at an angry person
you just make things worse for yourself. 3.1
When you don't get angry at an angry person
you win a battle hard to win.

When you know that the other is angry,
you act for the good of both 4.1
yourself and the other
if you're mindful and stay calm.

People inexpert in Dhamma
consider one who heals both 5.1
oneself and the other

553. His name or epithet *asurindaka* ("demon-lord") is sometimes used of Vṛtra, and hence is the exact opposite of what a brahmin should be.

to be a fool.”

- 6.1 When he had spoken, Bhāradvāja the Fiend said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! ...” ... And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.

SN 7.4

With Bhāradvāja the Bitter

Bilaṅgikasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels’ feeding ground. The brahmin Bhāradvāja the Bitter heard a rumor that⁵⁵⁴ a brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan had gone forth from the lay life to homelessness in the presence of the ascetic Gotama. Angry and displeased he went to the Buddha and stood silently to one side.⁵⁵⁵
- 1.4 Then the Buddha, knowing Bhāradvāja the Bitter’s train of thought, addressed him in verse:
- 2.1 “Whoever wrongs a man who has done no wrong,
a pure man who has not a blemish,
the evil backfires on the fool,
like fine dust thrown upwind.”
- 3.1 When he said this, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Bitter said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! ...” ... And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.

554. *Bilaṅga* (here, “bitter”) is allowed with other medicinal fruits at Kd 6:6.1.4. It is Sanskrit *viḍaṅga*, identified as *embelia ribes* or “false black pepper”. It is normally given as an example of poor food (SN 3.19:2.5).

555. The commentary says he was too angry to speak because his brothers, in the previous three discourses, had ordained.

SN 7.5

Harmless

Ahimsakasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Harmless went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. 1.2

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said, “I am Harmless, worthy Gotama, I am Harmless!”⁵⁵⁶ 1.3

“If you were really like your name,

2.1

then you’d be Harmless.

But a truly harmless person

does no harm by way of

body, speech, or mind;

they don’t harm anyone else.”

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Harmless said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! ...” ... And Venerable Bhāradvāja the Harmless became one of the perfected. 3.1

SN 7.6

With Bhāradvāja of the Matted Hair

Jaṭāsutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja of the Matted Hair went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. 1.2

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side, and addressed the Buddha in verse: 1.3

556. The name “harmless” (*ahimsaka*) was also given to Āṅgulimāla after his awakening (MN 86:18.35).

- 2.1 “Tangled within, tangled without:⁵⁵⁷
these people are tangled in tangles.
I ask you this, Gotama:
who can untangle this tangle?”
- 3.1 “A wise person grounded in ethics,
developing the mind and wisdom,
a keen and alert mendicant—
they can untangle this tangle.
- 4.1 Those in whom greed, hate, and ignorance
have faded away;
the perfected ones with defilements ended—
they have untangled the tangle.
- 5.1 Where name and form
cease with no residue left behind;
as well as impingement and perception of form:
it’s here this tangle is cut.”
- 6.1 When he had spoken, Bhāradvāja of the Matted Hair said to the Buddha,⁵⁵⁸ “Excellent, worthy Gotama! ...” ... And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.

SN 7.7

With Bhāradvāja the Pure

Suddhikasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattī.
- 1.2 Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Pure went up to the Buddha,
and exchanged greetings with him.

557. These verses also at SN 1.23:1.1.

558. Note “brahmin” is omitted here.

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat 1.3
down to one side, and spoke this verse in his presence:

“No brahmin in the world is ever purified 2.1
even though he’s ethical and mortifies himself.
But one accomplished in knowledge and conduct
is purified, not these other commoners.”⁵⁵⁹

“Even one who mutters many prayers 3.1
is no brahmin by birth
if they’re filthy and corrupt within,
supporting themselves by fawning.

Regardless of whether you’re an aristocrat, 4.1
a brahmin, peasant, menial,
or a corpse-worker or scavenger—
if you’re energetic and resolute,
always staunchly vigorous,
you’ll attain ultimate purity.
Know that for a fact, brahmin.”

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Pure said to 5.1
the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama ...” ... And Venerable Bhā-
radvāja became one of the perfected.

SN 7.8

With Bhāradvāja the Fire-Worshiper

Aggikasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo 1.1
Grove, the squirrels’ feeding ground.

559. He betrays his prejudice in the last line.

- 1.2 Now at that time ghee and milk-rice had been set out for the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Fire-Worshiper, who thought, “I will serve the sacred flame! I will perform the fire sacrifice!”
- 2.1 Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Rājagaha for alms. Wandering indiscriminately for almsfood in Rājagaha, he approached Bhāradvāja the Fire-Worshiper’s home and stood to one side.
- 2.3 Bhāradvāja the Fire-Worshiper saw him standing for alms and addressed him in verse:
- 3.1 “One who’s accomplished in the three knowledges,⁵⁶⁰
of good birth and ample learning,
accomplished in knowledge and conduct
may enjoy this milk-rice.”⁵⁶¹
- 4.1 “Even one who mutters many prayers
is no brahmin by birth
if they’re filthy and corrupt within,
with a following gained by fawning.
- 5.1 One who knows their past lives,⁵⁶²
sees heaven and places of loss,
and has attained the ending of rebirth,
is a sage of perfect insight.

560. For him, the “three knowledges” would have been the Vedas.

561. An oblation of milk-rice may be offered to various deities, and is commonly associated with fertility rites. It should be offered to brahmins (eg. Khādīra Gṛhyasūtra 4.3; Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra 3.9.8; Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra 3.8, 4.6.13; Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra 3.11.16, 4.16.5), but only those who study the Vedas (Gautama Dharmasūtra 1.5.30). It should not be cooked for one’s own consumption (Manu 5.7). It counteracts inauspicious dreams (Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka 11.4). Manu 3.271 says such an offering is efficacious for a year. Compare Snp 3.4, where rice cake is offered instead. | *Somaṃ* is *so imaṃ*, not a reference to *soma*.

562. This verse sets out the Buddha’s “three knowledges”: recollection of past lives, clairvoyance of rebirth, and ending of rebirth.

Because of these three knowledges 6.1
 a brahmin is a master of the three knowledges.
 Accomplished in knowledge and conduct,
 they may enjoy this milk-rice.”

“May the worthy Gotama eat! The worthy one is a brahmin.” 7.1

“Food enchanted by a verse isn’t fit for me to eat.⁵⁶³ 8.1
 That’s not the principle of those who see, brahmin.
 The Buddhas cast aside things enchanted with verses.
 Since there is such a principle, brahmin,
 that’s how they live.⁵⁶⁴

Serve with other food and drink 9.1
 the consummate one, the great seer,
 with defilements ended and remorse stilled.
 For he is the field for the seeker of merit.”

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Fire-Worshiper 10.1
 said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! ...” ... And Vener-
 able Bhāradvāja the Fire-Worshiper became one of the perfected.

563. See SN 2.9:7.3 and note. Also note that, while *gāthā* is sometimes said to exclude Vedic verse, this is not the case (see eg. Rig Veda 1.190.01, 8.71.14, 8.92.02; Atharva Veda 10.10.20, 15.6.4, 20.103.1; 3.2.4.16; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 3.5.3.11, 13.1.5.6; Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.17.9). It was, however, said to be a distinct form of verse within the broader Vedic corpus (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11.5.6.8, 11.5.7.10).

564. “Since there is such a principle” is *dhamme sati*, “there being the law of nature”.

SN 7.9

With Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā

Sundarikasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying in the Kosalan lands on the bank of the Sundarikā River.⁵⁶⁵
- 1.2 Now at that time the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā was serving the sacred flame and performing the fire sacrifice on the bank of the Sundarikā.⁵⁶⁶
- 1.3 Then he rose from his seat and surveyed the four quarters, wondering, “Now who might eat the leftovers of this oblation?”⁵⁶⁷
- 1.5 He saw the Buddha meditating at the root of a certain tree with his robe pulled over his head. Taking the leftovers of the oblation in his left hand and a pitcher in the right he approached the Buddha. When he heard Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā’s footsteps the Buddha uncovered his head.
- 1.8 Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā thought, “This man is shaven, he is shaven!” And he wanted to turn back.
- 1.9 But he thought, “Even some brahmins are shaven. Why don’t I go to him and ask about his birth?”
- 2.1 Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā went up to the Buddha, and said to him, “Sir, what are you by birth?”⁵⁶⁸

565. This Sutta, and its expanded parallel at Snp 3.4, contains a dense array of allusions and plays on Vedic concepts.

566. This is evidently the midday fire oblation described at Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.2.3. A brahmin householder, worshiping when the sun is at its most powerful and the forces of darkness weakest, renders offerings to Agni so that he will drive away evils. | The Sundarikā was a sacred river (MN 7:20.3). Bathing in the ford there was said to bring beauty (Mahābhārata 3.82.51).

567. The concept of “leftovers” (*sesa*) is supremely important in the ritual, for what is burned away is for the gods and humans live on what is left. Normally leavings would have been given to a brahmin and not lower castes (Manu 4.80, 3.249; Khādira Gṛhyasūtra 2.1.29). | At Snp 3.4:10.5 the offering is specified as a sacrificial cake (*pūraḷāsa*, Sanskrit *puroḍāśa*).

568. From here the Sutta omits a passage from Snp 3.4:3.1–13.1.

“Don’t ask about birth, ask about conduct;⁵⁶⁹ 3.1
 for the fire of Jātaveda is born from sticks.⁵⁷⁰
 A steadfast sage, even though from a low class family,
 is a thoroughbred checked by conscience.

Tamed by truth, fulfilled by taming, 4.1
 a complete knowledge master
 who has completed the spiritual journey—⁵⁷¹
 that’s who a sacrificer should woo,⁵⁷²
 and offer a timely oblation
 to one worthy of a religious donation.”

“My sacrificial offering 5.1
 must have been well performed,
 since I have met such a knowledge master!
 It’s because I’d never met anyone like you
 that others ate the leftover oblation.

May the worthy Gotama eat! The worthy one is a brahmin.”⁵⁷³ 6.1

“Food enchanted by a verse isn’t fit for me to eat.”⁵⁷⁴ 7.1

569. Here we rejoin Snp 3.4:14.1 for a time.

570. The line plays with *jāti* (“birth”), *jāyati* (“give birth”), and *jātaveda*. The latter is a Vedic word for fire. Its meaning is obscure, but I think the sense is *jāta* (“those who have been born”, i.e. “mortals”) plus *vedas* (“knowledge”), i.e. “one who brings knowledge to mortals”. This is the fire-god Agni, who comes down from the sun to the sacrificial fire, bringing light and awareness and Vedic knowledge to those who have been born, namely mortal humans. In this passage, it implies that anyone who “has been born” can “give birth” to “knowledge” regardless of their “birth”.

571. “Complete knowledge master” is *vedantagū*, which in the Vedic system would mean, “one who has completely mastered the Vedas”.

572. *Upavhayati* (“woo”) occurs only here and DN 20:11.15 in Pali. It is a Vedic term for invoking or calling up blessings in a whisper. | From here the text diverges again from Snp 3.4:15.3, which inserts a long series of verses.

573. Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.24.4 says that one performing the fire ritual with true wisdom may even offer to an outcaste.

574. See SN 2.9:7.3 and note.

That's not the principle of those who see, brahmin.
 The Buddhas cast aside things enchanted with verses.
 Since there is such a principle, brahmin,
 that's how they live.

8.1 Serve with other food and drink
 the consummate one, the great seer,
 with defilements ended and remorse stilled.
 For he is the field for the seeker of merit.”

9.1 “Then, Worthy Gotama, to whom should I give the leftovers of
 this oblation?”

9.2 “Brahmin, I don't see anyone in this world—with its gods, Māras,
 and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its
 gods and humans—who can properly digest these leftovers, except
 the Realized One or one of his disciples.⁵⁷⁵ Well then, brahmin,
 throw out those leftovers where there is little that grows, or drop
 them into water that has no living creatures.”⁵⁷⁶

10.1 So Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā dropped the leftover oblation in water
 that had no living creatures. And when those leftovers were placed
 in the water, they sizzled and hissed, steaming and fuming. Suppose
 there was an iron cauldron that had been heated all day. If you placed
 it in the water, it would sizzle and hiss, steaming and fuming. In the
 same way, when those leftovers were placed in the water, they sizzled
 and hissed, steaming and fuming.

575. At Snp 3.4:34.4 the Buddha recommends giving instead to arahants.

576. In a text on the *agnihotra*, Prajāpati is depicted as pouring the oblation on plants and water (Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā 6.2). The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra says that the student must “not leave any food uneaten. If he is unable to do so, he should bury the leftovers in the ground, (or) throw them in the water” (1.4.12). See too Śāthapatha Brāhmaṇa 3.8.5.9, where the stake for the heart of the sacrificial beast is disposed on the muddy ground between water and dry land, so as to disturb neither.

Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā, shocked and awestruck, went up to the Buddha, and stood to one side. The Buddha addressed him in verse:⁵⁷⁷ 11.1

“When you’re kindling the wood, brahmin,
don’t imagine this is purity, for it’s just external.
For those who are skilled say this is no way to purity,
when one seeks purity in externals. 12.1

I’ve given up kindling firewood, brahmin,
now I light only the inner flame.
Always blazing, always serene,⁵⁷⁸
I am a perfected one leading the spiritual life. 13.1

Conceit, brahmin, is the burden of your pack,⁵⁷⁹
anger your smoke, and lies your ashes.⁵⁸⁰
The tongue is the ladle, the heart the fireplace;⁵⁸¹ 14.1

577. In these verses, the Buddha systematically critiques and realigns the fire sacrifice.

578. This passage plays on the homonyms *samādahati* (“kindle”, root meaning “to burn”) and *samādahati* (“serene”, “stilled”, “immersed”, root meaning “to place”). He no longer “burns” the sacred flame, but “is serene” with the inner light of *samādhi*.

579. Such passages of equivalences or connections are characteristic of post-Vedic literature. For example, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11.5.6 says the *juhū* spoon is speech, the *upabhr̥t* cup the mind, the *dhruvā* vessel the eye, the *sruvā* ladle the mental power, the bath the truth, the conclusion heaven. | A “pack” (*khāri*) was originally “donkey-load”, but here it must be a heavy weight for a single person. The Buddha is saying that carrying around the conceit of “self” is a heavy burden.

580. Smoke conveys the sacrifice to heaven (eg. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 3.7.133, “May smoke rise to the sky, light to heaven, may ash fill the earth). For smoke in the sense of “fuming”, see AN 4.200:13.1, MN 23:2.1. | Sacred ash, the purifying divine residue from the fire, was smeared on the forehead or body as a sign of holiness. Here, however, the implication is that when the “fuming” anger is cold, all that is left are the lies spoken in the heat of rage. The line plays with the curse that those who hate us should be reduced to ashes (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.6.3.10, see MN 93:18.19).

581. The *sujā* (Sanskrit *sruvā*) is a small ladle of *udumbara* fig wood. It is dipped into the ghee or milk, lapping like a tongue, a metaphor often deployed in the

a well-tamed self is a person's light.⁵⁸²

- 15.1 The teaching is a lake, brahmin,
 into which ethics are the stairs,⁵⁸³
 unclouded, praised by the fine to the good.
 There the knowledge masters go to bathe,
 and cross to the far shore with dry limbs.⁵⁸⁴
- 16.1 Truth, principle, restraint, the spiritual life,⁵⁸⁵
 attaining divinity based on the middle, brahmin—⁵⁸⁶
 pay homage to the upright ones.⁵⁸⁷
 I declare that man one who follows the teaching.”⁵⁸⁸

Rig Veda (1.61.5, 3.31.3, 5.1.3, 10.109.5). The sacrifice of ghee, honey, and milk is driven by the craving to experience such delicious tastes. | The *jotiṭhāna* (“fireplace”) was a depression in the ground in which the fire was kindled. Here *joti* must be translated “fire”, but it is the same word as “light” in the next line. The Buddha is saying that the light/fire is kindled in the heart (*hadayaṃ jotiṭhānam*). This draws on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.7, where the Self is the “light within the heart” (*hrdyantarijyoti*).

582. *Attā ... purisassa joti* is a direct reference to Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.2. Janaka asks Yājñavalkya, “What is this person's light?” (*kimjyotirayaṃ puruṣa*). Yājñavalkya answers, “The self, indeed, is his light” (*ātmaivāsya jyotirbhavati*). The key difference is the term “well-tamed” (*sudanto*). For the Buddha, what is known as a “self” is conditioned and changing, so must be developed, and only then becomes a blessing. In such cases, “self” is practically equivalent to “mind”.
 583. The lake (*rahada*) was a pool of water into which the sacrificer descends seeking renewal or protection (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.1.5.12, 4.4.5.10). | The *tittha* was the sacred bathing place, originally the stairs or descent that provided passage to the waters. | This verse occurs independently at SN 7.21:3.1.

584. The use of deliberate paradox—bathe without getting wet—is characteristic of Vedic verse. The water rolls off them as it does a lotus.

585. See similar sets of virtues at DN 30:1.6.2 and SN 24.6:1.7. | This verse seems clumsy to me, and I retain that in the translation.

586. “Attainment of divinity” (*brahmapatti*) is found in Brahmanical sense at Katha Upaniṣad 6.18.

587. The commentary says the *t* in *sat* is a mere particle, and the pronoun should be read as second person. | The “upright ones” are the arahants.

588. *Dhammasārī* is a unique phrase. Normally, *sārī* means “one who follows”, making this an abbreviation of *dhammānusārī*, a “follower of teachings”. Else-

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā said 17.1
to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama ...” ... And Venerable
Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.

SN 7.10

Many Daughters

Bahudhītarasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a 1.1
certain forest grove.⁵⁸⁹

Now at that time one of the brahmins of the Bhāradvāja clan had 1.2
lost fourteen oxen. While looking for them he went to that forest
grove, where he saw the Buddha sitting down cross-legged, his body
set straight, and mindfulness brought to the present. He went up to
the Buddha, and recited these verses in the Buddha’s presence:

“This ascetic mustn’t have 2.1
fourteen oxen
missing for the past six days:
that’s why this ascetic is happy.

This ascetic mustn’t have 3.1

where, however, this refers only to a specific stage prior to stream-entry (SN 25.1:2.1). We do find *dharmasāra* elsewhere in the sense “heartwood of the teaching” (SN 55.43:5.3, Thag 16.3:18.2), and perhaps *sārī* here means “having the essence of”. This form is not attested in Pali, but it is found in Sanskrit. Such an option is not endorsed by the commentary, which supplies two possibilities. One relies on the causative form *sāretvā*, “one who makes unskillful qualities leave”. The second is curious: one is “covered by the *sārī* of Dhamma”. That this means the saree dress is confirmed by the subcommentary’s “dressed and decorated”. If correct, this may be the earliest occurrence of *sārī* in this sense; the standard Pali spelling is *sāṭṭi*. By this reading we might translate, “draped in the teaching”. | “That man” according to the commentary refers to one who practices in such a way.

589. Contrast this vivid description of the woes of the rural life with the satisfaction of the wealthy rancher at Snp 1.2.

a field of sesame ruined,
with just one or two leaves:
that's why this ascetic is happy.

4.1 This ascetic mustn't have
rats in a vacant barn
dancing merrily:
that's why this ascetic is happy.

5.1 This ascetic mustn't have
carpets that for seven months⁵⁹⁰
have been infested with fleas:
that's why this ascetic is happy.

6.1 This ascetic mustn't have
seven widowed daughters
with one or two children each:⁵⁹¹
that's why this ascetic is happy.

7.1 This ascetic mustn't have
a wife with sallow, blotchy skin
to wake him with a kick:
that's why this ascetic is happy.

8.1 This ascetic mustn't have
creditors knocking at dawn,
demanding, 'Pay up! Pay up!':
that's why this ascetic is happy."

9.1 "You're right, brahmin, I don't have⁵⁹²
fourteen oxen

590. For *santhāra* as "mat" or "carpet" (rather than "blanket") see SN 35.243:2.1, AN 6.16:2.5, AN 3.35:2.1, AN 3.126:3.7, etc.

591. All of whom would have been dependent on their father.

592. The Buddha appropriates and transforms the brahmin's accusations, an early example of reclaiming language to see the "glass half full".

missing for the past six days:
that's why I'm happy, brahmin.

You're right, brahmin, I don't have
a field of sesame ruined,
with just one or two leaves:
that's why I'm happy, brahmin. 10.1

You're right, brahmin, I don't have
rats in a vacant barn
dancing merrily:
that's why I'm happy, brahmin. 11.1

You're right, brahmin, I don't have
carpets that for seven months
have been infested with fleas:
that's why I'm happy, brahmin. 12.1

You're right, brahmin, I don't have
seven widowed daughters
with one or two children each:
that's why I'm happy, brahmin. 13.1

You're right, brahmin, I don't have
a wife with blotchy, pockmarked skin
to wake me up with a kick:
that's why I'm happy, brahmin. 14.1

You're right, brahmin, I don't have
creditors knocking at dawn,
warning, 'Pay up! Pay up!':
that's why I'm happy, brahmin." 15.1

When he had spoken, the brahmin said to the Buddha, "Excellent, 16.1
worthy Gotama! Excellent! ... As if he were righting the overturned,
or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or light-

ing a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what's there, worthy Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. May I receive the going forth, the ordination in the worthy Gotama's presence?"

17.1 And the brahmin received the going forth, the ordination in the Buddha's presence. Not long after his ordination, Venerable Bhāradvāja, living alone, withdrawn, diligent, keen, and resolute, soon realized the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life. He lived having achieved with his own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.

17.3 He understood: "Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been completed; what had to be done has been done; there is nothing further for this place." And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.

The Chapter on a Lay Follower

SN 7.11

With Bhāradvāja the Farmer

Kasibhāradvājasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.⁵⁹³ At one time the Buddha was staying in the 1.1
land of the Magadhans in the Southern Hills near the brahmin village
of Ekanāḷa.⁵⁹⁴

Now at that time the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Farmer had har- 1.3
nessed around five hundred plows, it being the season for sowing.
Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and
robe, went to where Bhāradvāja the Farmer was working.

Now at that time Bhāradvāja the Farmer was distributing food.⁵⁹⁵ 2.1
Then the Buddha went to where the distribution was taking place
and stood to one side.

593. This discourse recurs at Snp 1.4 with a longer narrative. Vedic hymns include invocations to the “Lord of the Field” to bless the plowing and the crops (Rig Veda 4.57.4), but it is unorthodox to see a brahmin farmer.

594. The Southern Hills (*dakkhiṇāgiri*, “Deccan”) is the Vindhya Range that lies on the southern border of Magadha, leading southwest to Avanti. The Buddha and his disciples visited there so rarely that people complained (Kd 1:53.1.3). | Ekanāḷa (“one-stalk”) appears only here.

595. Atharvaveda 6.142.3 says that the “givers” of the grain shall be inexhaustible, perhaps suggesting a food distribution practice.

- 2.3 Bhāradvāja the Farmer saw him standing for alms and said to him,
 “I plough and sow, ascetic, and then I eat. You too should plough and
 sow, then you may eat.”
- 2.7 “I too plough and sow, brahmin, and then I eat.”
- 2.8 “I don’t see the worthy Gotama with a yoke or plow or plowshare
 or goad or oxen, yet he says: ‘I too plough and sow, brahmin, and
 then I eat.’”
- 2.10 Then Bhāradvāja the Farmer addressed the Buddha in verse:
- 3.1 “You claim to be a farmer,
 but I don’t see you farming.
 Tell me how you’re a farmer when asked:
 how am I to recognize your farming?”
- 4.1 “Faith is my seed, fervor my rain,⁵⁹⁶
 and wisdom is my yoke and plough.
 Conscience is my draft-pole, mind my strap,
 mindfulness my plowshare and goad.
- 5.1 Guarded in body and speech,
 I restrict my intake of food.
 I use truth as my scythe,
 and gentleness is my release.
- 6.1 Energy is my harnessed beast,
 transporting me to sanctuary from the yoke.⁵⁹⁷
 Without turning back, it goes
 to where there is no sorrow.

596. Vedic texts are full of this sort of correspondence, but I cannot find a close match to these. Perhaps this is to be expected, as the farmer is learning something new.

597. *Yogakkhema* (“sanctuary from the yoke”) is a metaphor for Nibbāna that draws from the literal sense of *khema* as an oasis or sanctuary for men and beasts. After a hard day’s journey, a caravan would stop to rest, “unyoke” the draft animals, lay down the burden, and refresh themselves in the cool waters.

That's how to do the farming 7.1
 that has freedom from death as its fruit.
 When you finish this farming
 you're released from all suffering."

"May the worthy Gotama eat! The worthy one is a farmer. For 8.1
 the worthy Gotama does the farming that has freedom from death
 as its fruit."

"Food enchanted by a verse isn't fit for me to eat. 9.1
 That's not the principle of those who see, brahmin.
 The Buddhas cast aside things enchanted with verses.
 Since there is such a principle, brahmin,
 that's how they live.

Serve with other food and drink 10.1
 the consummate one, the great seer,
 with defilements ended and remorse stilled.
 For he is the field for the seeker of merit."

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Farmer said to 11.1
 the Buddha, "Excellent, worthy Gotama ... From this day forth, may
 the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for
 refuge for life."

SN 7.12

With Udaya

Udayasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl 1.2
 and robe, went to the home of the brahmin Udaya. Then Udaya filled
 the Buddha's bowl with rice. The next day ... Udaya again filled the
 Buddha's bowl with rice.

- 1.5 But when he had filled the Buddha's bowl on the third day, he said to the Buddha, "This ascetic Gotama is such a drag! He keeps coming back again and again!"⁵⁹⁸
- 2.1 "Again and again, they sow the seed;
again and again, the king of the heavens sends rain;⁵⁹⁹
again and again, farmers plough the field;
again and again, grain is produced for the nation.
- 3.1 Again and again, the beggars beg;
again and again, the donors give.
Again and again, when the donors have given,
again and again, they take their place in heaven.
- 4.1 Again and again, dairy farmers milk;
again and again, a calf cleaves to its mother;
again and again, oppressing and intimidating,⁶⁰⁰
that dullard returns to the womb again and again.
- 5.1 Again and again, you're reborn and die;
again and again, you get carried to a charnel ground.
But when they've gained the path
for no further rebirth,
one of vast wisdom is not reborn again and again."

598. *Pakaṭṭhaka* ("drag") is unique. Commentary glosses "greedy for tastes" (*rasagiddha*). The basic sense is one who farms by drawing a plough, and the intensive prefix *pa* conveying someone who does that repeatedly, becoming annoying by drawing out or extracting.

599. The "king of the heavens" (*devarājā*) is Indra, god of the rain and thunder. This clarifies the common Pali idiom *devo vassati*, literally "the god rains"; the god is in fact Indra. In Pali this use of *deva* straddles the naturalistic and the religious. Often it is just an idiom expressing rainfall, while in other cases, as here, it has a religious connotation. For this reason I use "the heavens" for *deva* in such cases. It is a Vedic idiom (eg. Rig Veda 5.84.3 *divo varṣanti*; 9.108.10 *vṛṣṭim divaḥ pavasva*; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.3.1.16 *divo varṣati*).

600. These verbs occur together in a list of crimes (SN 24.6:1.3).

When he had spoken, the brahmin Udaya said to the Buddha, 6.1
 “Excellent, worthy Gotama ... From this day forth, may the worthy
 Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for
 life.”

SN 7.13

With Devahita

Devahitasutta

At Sāvattthī. 1.1

Now at that time the Buddha was afflicted by winds.⁶⁰¹ Venerable 1.2
 Upavāṇa was his carer.⁶⁰²

Then the Buddha said to Upavāṇa, “Go on then, Upavāṇa, find 1.4
 some hot water for me.”⁶⁰³

“Yes, sir,” replied Upavāṇa. He robed up, and, taking his bowl and 1.6
 robe, went to the home of the brahmin Devahita, and stood silently
 to one side.⁶⁰⁴

Devahita saw him standing there and addressed him in verse: 1.7

“Silent stands the worthy one, 2.1
 shaven, wrapped in his outer robe.
 What do you want? What are you looking for?
 What have you come here to ask for?”

“The perfected one, the Holy One in the world, 3.1
 the sage is afflicted by winds.

601. *Vātehābādhika* is a syntactic compound, “afflicted by winds” (*vātehi*). It is one of the illnesses noted at AN 10.60:7.4. In Ayurveda, diseases of the winds may have many causes, chief among them faulty digestion.

602. In DN 16:5.4.5 Upavāṇa was said to have been the Buddha’s carer for a long time. At DN 29:41.1 he is fanning the Buddha. At AN 5.166, Ānanda goes to Upavāṇa for support when he feels he has disappointed the Buddha. The events of this discourse are recalled by him in his verses at Thag 2.33.

603. Typically ghee or other oil is recommended rather than hot water.

604. Devahita appears only here.

If there's hot water,
give it to the sage, brahmin.

4.1 I wish to bring it to the one
who is esteemed by the estimable,
honored by the honorable,
venerated by the venerable.”

5.1 Then Devahita had a man fetch a carrying-pole with hot water.
He also presented Upavāṇa with a jar of molasses.

5.2 Then Venerable Upavāṇa went up to the Buddha and bathed him
with the hot water. Then he stirred molasses into hot water and
presented it to the Buddha. Then the Buddha's illness died down.

6.1 Then the brahmin Devahita went up to the Buddha, and ex-
changed greetings with him. When the greetings and polite con-
versation were over, he sat down to one side, and addressed the
Buddha in verse:

7.1 “Where should you give an available gift?
Where is a gift very fruitful?
How does one who is donating
ensure the success of their religious donation?”

8.1 “One who knows their past lives,
sees heaven and places of loss,
and has attained the ending of rebirth,
is a sage of perfect insight.

9.1 Here you should give an available gift;
what's given here is very fruitful.
That's how a sponsor of sacrifices
ensures the success of their religious donation.”

10.1 When he had spoken, the brahmin Devahita said to the Buddha,
“Excellent, worthy Gotama ... From this day forth, may the worthy
Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for
life.”

SN 7.14

A well-to-do brahmin

Mahāsālasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Then a certain well-to-do brahmin, shabby, wearing a shabby
cloak, went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. 1.2

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat
down to one side. The Buddha said to him, “Brahmin, why are you
so shabby, wearing a shabby cloak?” 1.3

“Worthy Gotama, I have four sons. At their wives’ bidding they
expelled me from my house.” 1.5

“Well then, brahmin, memorize these verses and recite them to
your sons when you are all seated in the council hall with a large
crowd. 1.7

‘I was overjoyed when they were born,
and wished prosperity for them.⁶⁰⁵ 2.1
But at their wives’ bidding they chased me out,
like hounds after hogs.

It turns out they’re wicked, those nasty men,
though they called me their dear old Dad. 3.1
They’re monsters in the shape of sons,
throwing me out as I’ve grown old.

Like an old, useless horse 4.1
led away from its fodder,
the elderly father of those kids
begs for alms at others’ homes.

Even my staff is better 5.1
than those disobedient sons,

605. For *bhava* as “prosperity” see also Dhṛp 282:4.

for it wards off a wild bull,
and even a wild dog.

- 6.1 It goes before me in the dark;
in deep waters it finds a footing.
By the wonderful power of this staff,
when I stumble, I stand firm again.”

- 7.1 Having memorized those verses in the Buddha’s presence, the
brahmin recited them to his sons when they were all seated in the
council hall with a large crowd. ...

- 13.1 Then the brahmin’s sons led him back home, bathed him, and each
clothed him with a fine pair of garments. Then the brahmin, taking
one pair of garments, went to the Buddha and exchanged greetings
with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he
sat down to one side and said to the Buddha:

- 13.4 “Worthy Gotama, we brahmins seek a fee for our tutor. May the
worthy Gotama please accept my tutor’s fee!”⁶⁰⁶ So the Buddha
accepted it out of sympathy. Then the well-to-do brahmin said to the
Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama ... From this day forth, may
the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for
refuge for life.”

SN 7.15

Stuck-Up

Mānatthaddhasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattḥī.

- 1.2 Now at that time a brahmin named Stuck-Up was residing in
Sāvattḥī.⁶⁰⁷ He didn’t bow to his mother or father, his tutor, or his

606. Note the difference: the brahmins actively seek a payment for teaching, whereas the Buddha receives only what is freely offered.

607. *Mānatthaddha*, literally “stiff with pride”. So stiff, apparently, he could not bow. Also used of a brahmin at DN 4:8.17.

oldest brother. Now, at that time the Buddha was teaching Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly.

Then Stuck-Up thought, “The ascetic Gotama is teaching Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly. Why don’t I approach him? If he speaks to me, I’ll speak to him. But if he doesn’t speak, neither will I.” 1.5

Then the brahmin Stuck-Up went up to the Buddha, and stood silently to one side. But the Buddha didn’t speak to him. 1.10

Then Stuck-Up thought, “This ascetic Gotama knows nothing!” And he wanted to go back from there right away. 1.12

Then the Buddha, knowing Stuck-Up’s train of thought, addressed him in verse: 1.14

“It’s not good to foster conceit⁶⁰⁸ 2.1
if you want what’s good for you, brahmin.
You should foster the goal
which brought you here.”

Then Stuck-Up thought, “The ascetic Gotama knows my mind!” He bowed with his head to the Buddha’s feet, caressing them and covering them with kisses, and pronounced his name: “Worthy Gotama, I am Stuck-Up! I am Stuck-Up!” 3.1

Then that assembly was stunned: “Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! This brahmin Stuck-Up doesn’t bow to his mother or father, his tutor, or his oldest brother. Yet he shows such utmost deference to the ascetic Gotama!” 3.4

Then the Buddha said to the brahmin Stuck-Up, “Enough, brahmin. Get up, and take your own seat. For your mind has confidence in me.” 3.8

Then Stuck-Up took his seat and said to the Buddha: 3.11

“Regarding whom should you not be conceited? 4.1
Who should you respect?”

608. Read *mānabrūhaṇā*.

Who should you esteem?
Who is it good to venerate properly?”

- 5.1 “Your mother and father,
and also your oldest brother,
with tutor as fourth.
Regarding these you should not be conceited.
They are who you should respect.
They are who you should esteem.
And they’re who it’s good to venerate properly.
- 6.1 And when with bent knee, not stiff with conceit,
show supreme reverence for
the perfected ones—cooled,⁶⁰⁹
their task complete, free of defilements.”
- 7.1 When he had spoken, the brahmin Stuck-Up said to the Buddha,
“Excellent, worthy Gotama . . . From this day forth, may the worthy
Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for
life.”

SN 7.16

The Contraphile

Paccanīkasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Now at that time a brahmin named Contraphile, who loved contradiction, was residing in Sāvattthī.⁶¹⁰
- 1.3 Then Contraphile thought, “Why don’t I go to the ascetic Gotama and contradict everything he says?”

609. Given the context, I think *nihacca* here has the same sense as it does more explicitly at Thig 5.9:3.1, “bending the knee”.

610. *Paccanīkasāta*, “Pleased by contradiction”. Even though the construction “named” is used, it is clearly an epithet rather than a proper name.

At that time the Buddha was walking mindfully in the open air. 1.6
 Then the brahmin Contraphile went up to the Buddha, and said 1.7
 to him as he was walking, “Ascetic, preach the Dhamma.”

“Fine words aren’t easy to understand 2.1
 by a lover of contradiction,
 whose mind is tainted
 and full of aggression.

But when you’ve dispelled aggression, 3.1
 and your suspicious mind,
 and you’ve got rid of resentment,
 then you’ll understand fine words.”

When he had spoken, the brahmin Contraphile said to the Bud- 4.1
 dha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! ... From this day forth,
 may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has
 gone for refuge for life.”

SN 7.17

The Builder

Navakammikasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a 1.1
 certain forest grove.

Now at that time the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Builder was hav- 1.2
 ing some building work done in that jungle thicket.⁶¹¹ He saw the
 Buddha sitting down cross-legged at the root of a certain sal tree, his
 body set straight, and mindfulness brought to the present.

Seeing this, it occurred to him, “I enjoy having this building work 1.4
 done here in the jungle. I wonder what the ascetic Gotama enjoys
 having done?”

611. *Navakammika*, “builder”. The causative form is used, *kārāpeti*. He was not a manual laborer, but someone who supervised others to get the work done.

1.7 Then Bhāradvāja the Builder went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

2.1 “What kind of works are done by you,
a mendicant in the sal jungle?
How do you find enjoyment
alone in the wilderness, Gotama?”

3.1 “There’s nothing I need do in the jungle;
my jungle’s cut at the root, it’s withered away.⁶¹²
Free of snarls and thorns in the jungle,⁶¹³
I enjoy solitude, having given up discontent.”

4.1 When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja the Builder said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama . . . From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”

SN 7.18

Collecting Firewood

Katṭhahārasutta

1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove.

1.2 Then several students, pupils of one of the Bhāradvāja brahmins, approached a forest grove while collecting firewood. They saw the Buddha sitting down cross-legged at the root of a certain sal tree, his body set straight, and mindfulness brought to the present. Seeing this, they went up to Bhāradvāja and said to him, “Please sir, you should know this. In such-and-such forest grove the ascetic Gotama

612. Accept the reading *visukkha*, which is supported by SA2 96, 一切盡枯.

613. This verse plays on *vana* (“jungle”) and *vanatha*, explained by the commentary as “undergrowth”, and applied in the sense of the tangles and “snarls” of craving.

is sitting down cross-legged, his body set straight, and mindfulness brought to the present.”

Then Bhāradvāja together with those young students went to that forest grove where he saw the Buddha sitting down cross-legged, his body set straight, and mindfulness brought to the present. 1.5

He went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse: 1.7

“Deep in the jungle so full of terrors, 2.1
you’ve plunged into the empty, desolate wilderness.
Still, steady, and graceful:
how beautifully you meditate, mendicant!

Where there is no song or music, 3.1
a lonely sage resorts to the wilderness.
This strikes me as an amazing thing,
that you dwell so joyfully alone in the jungle.

I suppose you wish to be reborn in the company 4.1
of the supreme world-sovereign of the Third
Heaven.⁶¹⁴

Is that why you resort to the desolate wilderness,
to practice fervor for attaining divinity?”

“Any wishes and hopes that are always attached 5.1
to the many and various realms—⁶¹⁵
the prayers sprung from the root of unknowing—
I’ve eliminated them all down to the root.⁶¹⁶

So I’m wishless, unattached, uninvolved; 6.1
amongst all things, my vision is clear.

614. The brahmin takes *tīdīva* as the Brahmā realm rather than that of Indra (see note on SN 3.21:15.5).

615. Here *dhātu* means *loka* (“realm”), not “element”.

616. The Buddha rejects the brahmin’s supposition (see MN 26:15.35 and note).

I’ve attained the state of grace,
the supreme awakening;
I meditate alone, brahmin, and self-assured.”

- 7.1 When he had spoken, Bhāradvāja said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! ... From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”

SN 7.19

The Brahmin Who Provided for His Mother

Mātuposakasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 Then a brahmin who provided for his mother went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him.
- 1.3 When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to the Buddha, “Worthy Gotama, I seek alms by legitimate means, which I use to provide for my mother and father.⁶¹⁷ In doing so, am I doing my duty?”
- 1.6 “Indeed, brahmin, in so doing you are doing your duty. Whoever seeks alms by legitimate means, and uses them to provide for their mother and father brims with much merit.
- 2.1 A mortal provides for their mother
and father by legitimate means;
because they serve
their parents like this,
they’re praised in this life by the astute,
and they depart to rejoice in heaven.”
- 3.1 When he said this, the brahmin who provided for his mother said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! ... From this

617. “Alms” is *bhikkhā*, which is anything procured through begging.

day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”

SN 7.20

An Almsman

Bhikkhakasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Then a brahmin almsman went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. 1.2

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to the Buddha, “Worthy Gotama, both you and I are almsmen. What, then, is the difference between us?”⁶¹⁸ 1.3

“You don’t become an almsman

2.1

just by begging alms from others.

One who has undertaken domestic duties⁶¹⁹

has not yet become a mendicant.

But one living a spiritual life

3.1

who has banished both merit and evil,

and wanders having appraised the world,

is said to be a mendicant.”

When he had spoken, the brahmin almsman said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! ... From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.” 4.1

618. “Almsman” (*bhikkhaka*) is almost identical with the standard word for a Buddhist mendicant (*bhikkhu*), but typically it is used of almsgiving brahmins (eg. Manu 3.243).

619. The Sanskrit parallel at Uv 32:18 read *veśmāṃ dharmāṃ*, confirming that *vissa* here means “domestic”.

SN 7.21

With Saṅgārava

Saṅgāravasutta

1.1 At Sāvattḥī.

1.2 Now at that time there was a brahmin named Saṅgārava staying in Sāvattḥī. He practiced purification by water, believing in purification by water. He lived committed to the practice of immersing himself in water at daybreak and dusk.⁶²⁰ Then Venerable Ānanda robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Sāvattḥī for alms.

1.4 He wandered for alms in Sāvattḥī. After the meal, on his return from almsround, he went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, “Sir, there is a brahmin named Saṅgārava staying in Sāvattḥī. He practices purification by water, believing in purification by water. He lives devoted to ritual bathing at daybreak and dusk. Please visit him at his home out of sympathy.” The Buddha consented with silence.

2.1 Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, went to the home of the brahmin Saṅgārava, and sat down on the seat spread out. Then the brahmin Saṅgārava went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him.

2.3 When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him, “Is it really true, brahmin,

620. A Saṅgārava of Sāvattḥī appears in a number of discourses, and his spiritual progression can be traced. Here he practices purification in water, and (apparently later) asked the Buddha about sacrifice (AN 3.60). He further asked how hymns are remembered (SN 46.55, AN 5.193). In all these discourses he was said to have gone for refuge at the end. Finally he asks the more meaningful spiritual question about the near shore and far shore (AN 10.117, AN 10.169). It is possible that the teenage “student” (*māṇava*) Saṅgārava living at Caṇḍalakappa (MN 100) graduated and moved to nearby Sāvattḥī where he became known as the “brahmin” Saṅgārava. This would only make sense, however, if we disregard the statements on going for refuge, as he clearly followed the Brahmanical path for quite some time. See too note on SN 46.55:2.2.

that you practice purification by water, believing in purification by water; that you live committed to the practice of immersing yourself in water at daybreak and dusk?”

“Yes, worthy Gotama.” 2.5

“But brahmin, for what reason do you practice purification by water?” 2.6

“It’s because, Worthy Gotama, whatever bad deeds I’ve done during the day I rinse off by bathing at dusk; and whatever bad deeds I’ve done during the night, I rinse off by bathing at dawn.⁶²¹ That’s the reason why I practice purification by water.” 2.7

“The teaching is a lake, brahmin, 3.1
 into which ethics are the stairs,
 unclouded, praised by the fine to the good.
 There the knowledge masters go to bathe,
 and cross to the far shore with dry limbs.”

When he had spoken, Saṅgārava said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! ... From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.” 4.1

SN 7.22

At Khomadussa

Khomadussasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans, where they have a town named Khomadussa.⁶²² 1.1

621. This quasi-physical understanding of good and evil predates the Buddha, and is found among Jains as well. The practice of ritual bathing is also listed among the self-mortifications, but it seems to fit better here, as bathing in India is not unpleasant (MN 12:45.12).

622. *Khomadussa* (“linen-cloth”) was probably named for the main product of the town. Flax for linen prefers temperate climes and is grown in northern India.

- 1.3 Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Khomadussa for alms. Now at that time the brahmins and householders of Khomadussa were gathered in the council hall for some business, while a gentle rain drizzled down.⁶²³
- 1.5 Then the Buddha approached that council. The brahmins and householders saw the Buddha coming off in the distance, and said, “Who are these shavelings, these fake ascetics? Don’t they understand the council rules?”⁶²⁴
- 1.9 Then the Buddha addressed the brahmins and householders of Khomadussa in verse:
- 2.1 “If good people are not present it is no true council;⁶²⁵
and those whose speak against principle
are not good people.
Having given up greed, hate, and delusion,
speakers of principle are good people.”
- 3.1 When he had spoken, the brahmins and householders of Khomadussa said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what’s there, worthy Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways. We go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha.

623. *Brāhmaṇagahapatikā* means “brahmins and householders” rather than “brahmin householders”. It is a term for the “landed gentry”. A householder is a landowner, not just a lay person. Council discussions were for the upper class, not the general populace (*negamajānapadā*).

624. “Council rules” (*sabhādhamma*) appears only here. The Buddha plays with it, punning *sabhā* (“council”) with *sabbhi* (“the virtuous”), and *dhamma* (“rule”) with “principle, morality”. The text does not make clear what their problem was with the Buddha’s approach. If, as is usually understood, the rules of such councils were similar to the rules of the monastic code, the Council would be constituted of residents within the area, and once business was underway, it should not be interrupted.

625. For this sentiment, see Manu 8.12.

From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge for life.”

The Linked Discourses with Brahmins are complete.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH VAṄGĪSA

The Chapter with the Poet Vaṅgīsa

SN 8.1

Renounced

Nikkhantasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time Venerable Vaṅgīsa was staying near 1.1
Ālavī, at Ālavī’s premier shrine, together with his mentor, Venerable
Nigrodhakappa.⁶²⁶

Now at that time Vaṅgīsa was junior, recently gone forth. He had 1.3
been left behind to look after the dwelling.

Then several women dressed in all their finery went to the 1.4
monastery at Ālavī’s premier shrine in order to inspect the
dwelling.⁶²⁷ When Vaṅgīsa saw them he became dissatisfied,
with lust infecting his mind.⁶²⁸

Then he thought, “It’s my loss, my misfortune, that I’ve become 1.6
dissatisfied, with lust infecting my mind. How is it possible for some-

626. This chapter features the poetry of Vaṅgīsa, the finest poet of the Saṅgha, providing a prose setting for his Theragāthā verses at Thag 21.1. There are notable differences between the two versions. In several passages, including this one, he reflects on the struggles he faced in his path, showing a high degree of self-awareness and persistence.

627. Period art depicts women as bare-breasted and draped in elaborate jewelry.

628. “Dissatisfaction” (*anabhirati*) with his life of seclusion and celibacy.

one else to dispel my discontent and give rise to satisfaction? Why don't I do it myself?"

1.10 Then, on the occasion of dispelling his own discontent and giving rise to satisfaction, he recited these verses:

2.1 "Now that I've renounced
the lay life for homelessness,
I'm overrun
by the rude thoughts of the Dark One.

3.1 Even if a thousand warrior chiefs and great archers,⁶²⁹
well trained, with strong bows,
were to completely surround me;
I would never flee.

4.1 And even if women come,
many more than that,
they won't bother me,
for I stand firm in the teaching.

5.1 I heard with my own ears
from the Buddha, Kinsman of the Sun,
about the path going to extinguishment;
that's what delights my mind.

6.1 Wicked One, if you come near me
as I meditate like this,
I'll make sure that you, Death,

629. There is some confusion regarding the Pali *ugga* ("warrior chief"). Pali commentaries and Sanskrit sources (Manu 10.9) speak of a caste called *ugga* (Sanskrit *ugra*), born of a *khattiya* father and a *sudda* mother. They were reviled as cruel, and their duty was to catch snakes and other underground vermin (Manu 10.49). This is not the aristocratic warriors referred to here. The distinction is noted in Medhātithi's commentary to Manu 4.212, who says the Vedic *ugra* was a key figure in the king's alliance, which is supported by the use at DN 3:2.7.2.

won't even see the path I take.”

SN 8.2

Dissatisfaction

Aratīsutta

At one time Venerable Vaṅḡsa was staying near Ālavī, at Ālavī's pre- 1.1
mier shrine, together with his mentor, Venerable Nigrodhakappa.⁶³⁰

Now at that time after Venerable Nigrodhakappa had finished his 1.2
meal, on his return from almsround, he would enter his dwelling and
not emerge for the rest of that day, or the next.

And at that time Venerable Vaṅḡsa became dissatisfied, as lust 1.3
infected his mind.

Then he thought, “It's my loss, my misfortune, that I've become 1.4
dissatisfied, with lust infecting my mind. How is it possible for some-
one else to dispel my discontent and give rise to satisfaction? Why
don't I do it myself?”

Then, on the occasion of dispelling his own discontent and giving 1.8
rise to satisfaction, he recited these verses:

“Giving up desire and discontent, 2.1
along with all thoughts of domestic life,⁶³¹
they wouldn't get snarled in anything;
unsnarled, undesiring: that's a real mendicant.

Whatever here is included in form— 3.1
on earth, in the sky, or in planet's deep—⁶³²
wears out, it is all impermanent:

630. MS edition inserts a ... *pe* ... here indicating an abbreviation, apparently by mistake. This is the only occurrence of this pattern in the Suttas.

631. For “domestic” (*gehasita*) see MN 119:4.7, MN 137:9.3, and SN 54.8:5.2.

632. “Planet” is *jagatī*; both words stem from the celestial bodies who “wander” about the sky. “Planet's deep” (*jagatogadha*) is a poetic term for things underground, a favorite place for hiding treasure (MN 128:20.5, Kp 8).

the self-examined live having comprehended this.⁶³³

- 4.1 People are bound to their attachments,
to impingement of the seen and heard,
and to what is thought.⁶³⁴
Unstirred, dispel desire for these things;
for one called ‘a sage’ does not cling to them.

- 5.1 Trapped in the sixty wrong views,
full of their own opinions,⁶³⁵
ordinary people are fixed in wrong principles.
But that mendicant wouldn’t join a sect,⁶³⁶
still less would they utter lewd speech.

- 6.1 Proficient, long serene,
free of deceit, alert, without envy,
the sage has reached the state of peace;
quenched, he awaits his time.”

633. *Muta* is the past participle of *maññati*, “to think, to examine”; it recurs in the next verse. The unique term *mutattā* (“the self-examined”) recalls Yājñavalkya, “when the Self is seen, heard, thought (or examined), cognized” (*ātmani khalv are dṛṣṭe śrute mate vijñāta*, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.5.6).

634. Here *paṭigha* is added to the regular set *diṭṭha*, *suta*, and *muta*. I take the line as divided by *ca*, so that the noun *paṭigha* is qualified by the two past participles in the first clause. *Paṭigha* has its regular meaning of any kind of “impingement” through the physical senses (DN 15:20.4, MN 77:22.8, SN 1.23:4.3). *Muta* is distinct, as “thought” is experienced via “labeling” (DN 15:20.2), not by “impingement”.

635. Presumably an abbreviated reference to the sixty-two views of the Brahmajālasutta in which the unwary may be trapped (DN 1:3.72.2; referenced as “sixty-three” at Snp 3.6:42.1).

636. Read *vaggagato assa* (cp. Snp 2.13:13.2).

SN 8.3

Good-Hearted

Pesalasutta

At one time Venerable Vaṅḡsa was staying near Āḷavī, at Āḷavī's 1.1
premier shrine, together with his mentor, Venerable Nigrodhakappa.

Now at that time Venerable Vaṅḡsa looked down upon other 1.2
good-hearted mendicants because of his own eloquence.

Then he thought, "It's my loss, my misfortune, that I look down 1.3
on other good-hearted mendicants because of my own eloquence."

Then, on the occasion of arousing remorse in himself, he recited 1.6
these verses:

"Give up conceit, Gotama!⁶³⁷ 2.1

Completely abandon the different kinds of conceit!

Besotted with the different kinds of conceit,
you've had regrets for a long time.

Smearred by smears and slain by conceit, 3.1
people fall into hell.

When people slain by conceit are reborn in hell,
they grieve for a long time.

But a mendicant who practices rightly, 4.1
a path-victor, never grieves.⁶³⁸

They enjoy happiness and a good reputation,
and they rightly call him a 'Seer of Truth'.

So being not hard-hearted, but energetic, 5.1
with hindrances given up, pure;
and having completely given up conceit,

637. Vaṅḡsa refers to himself by his Vedic clan name of Gotama. The commen-
tary says he was a brahmin, which would explain his training in poetry.

638. The "path-victor" is discussed at Snp 1.5.

the one who makes an end with knowledge is assuaged.”⁶³⁹

SN 8.4

With Ānanda

Ānandasutta

- 1.1 At one time Venerable Ānanda was staying near Sāvattḥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.2 Then Venerable Ānanda robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Sāvattḥī for alms with Venerable Vaṅgīsa as his second monk.
- 1.3 And at that time Venerable Vaṅgīsa became dissatisfied, as lust infected his mind. Then he addressed Ānanda in verse:
 - 2.1 “I’ve got a burning desire for pleasure;
My mind is on fire!
Please, out of compassion, Gotama,⁶⁴⁰
tell me how to quench the flames.”
 - 3.1 “Your mind is on fire
because of a perversion of perception.⁶⁴¹
Turn away from the feature of things
that’s attractive, provoking lust.
 - 4.1 See all conditioned phenomena as alien,
as suffering and not-self.
Extinguish the great fire of lust,
don’t burn up again and again.
 - 5.1 With mind unified and serene,

639. The final verse describes the whole Buddhist path in miniature.

640. Both Vaṅgīsa and Ānanda were Gotamas.

641. See AN 4.49.

meditate on the ugly aspects of the body.
 With mindfulness immersed in the body,
 be full of disillusionment.

Meditate on the signless, 6.1
 give up the underlying tendency to conceit;
 and when you comprehend conceit,
 you will live at peace.”

SN 8.5

Well-Spoken Words

Subhāsitasutta

At Sāvattḥi. 1.1

There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!” 1.2

“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this: 1.4

“Mendicants, speech that has four factors is well spoken, not 2.1
 poorly spoken. It’s blameless and is not criticized by sensible people.⁶⁴² What four? It’s when a mendicant speaks well, not poorly;
 their speech is principled, not unprincipled; they speak pleasantly,
 not unpleasantly; and they speak truthfully, not falsely. Speech with
 these four factors is well spoken, not poorly spoken. It’s blameless
 and is not criticized by sensible people.”

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, 2.5
 went on to say:

“Good people say well-spoken words are foremost; 3.1
 second, speech ought be principled, not unprincipled;
 third, speak pleasantly, not unpleasantly;
 and fourth, speak truthfully, not falsely.”

642. While this sounds like a standard teaching, it is only found in this context. A different set of five factors is at AN 5.198.

- 4.1 Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, “I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!”
- 4.3 “Then speak as you feel inspired,” said the Buddha.
- 4.4 Then Vaṅḡsa extolled the Buddha in his presence with fitting verses:
- 5.1 “Speak only those words
that do not hurt yourself
nor harm others;
such speech is truly well spoken.
- 6.1 Speak only pleasing words,
words gladly welcomed.
Pleasing words are those
that bring nothing bad to others.
- 7.1 Truth itself is undying speech:⁶⁴³
this is an ancient teaching.⁶⁴⁴
Good people say the teaching and meaning
are grounded in truth.⁶⁴⁵
- 8.1 The words spoken by the Buddha
for finding the sanctuary, extinguishment,
for making an end of suffering:
this really is the best kind of speech.”

643. The truth is undying because the principles of the Dhamma are always true (SN 12.20:2.3). To put it another way, it is never false to say that conditioned things are impermanent.

644. “Undying speech” (*amṛtā vāco*) is found in Vedic context (eg. Jaimini Gṛhyasūtra 2.1, Brahma Purāṇa 219.58), where it means speech that is immortal since it is of the Divine.

645. The Sanskrit version of this verse translates as, “Truth may be the undying speech, for true speech is unexcelled. Truth and speech are grounded in the meaning and teaching.” (Uv 8.14). See too Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1.2.1.25.4, *amṛte satye pratiṣṭhitām*.

With Sāriputta

Sāriputtasutta

At one time Venerable Sāriputta was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's 1.1
Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Now at that time Venerable Sāriputta was educating, encouraging, 1.2
firing up, and inspiring the mendicants in the assembly hall with a
Dhamma talk. His words were polished, clear, articulate, and ex-
pressed the meaning. And those mendicants were paying attention,
applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively lis-
tening.

Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa thought, "This Venerable Sāriputta is 1.4
educating the mendicants. ... And those mendicants are paying
attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and
actively listening. Why don't I extoll him in his presence with fitting
verses?"

Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over 2.1
one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward Sāriputta, and said, "I
feel inspired to speak, Reverend Sāriputta! I feel inspired to speak,
Reverend Sāriputta!"

"Then speak as you feel inspired," said Sāriputta. 2.3

Then Vaṅgīsa extolled Sāriputta in his presence with fitting verses: 2.4

"Deep in wisdom, intelligent, 3.1
expert in the path and what is not the path;
Sāriputta, so greatly wise,
teaches Dhamma to the mendicants.

He teaches in brief, 4.1
or he speaks at length.
His call, like a myna bird,⁶⁴⁶
overflows with eloquence.

646. Vaṅgīsa emphasizes the aesthetic and emotional qualities of speech.

- 5.1 While he teaches
the mendicants listen to his sweet voice,
sounding attractive,
clear and graceful.
They listen joyfully,
their hearts elated.”

SN 8.7

The Invitation to Admonish

Pavāraṇāsutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattḥi in the stilt long-house of Migāra’s mother in the Eastern Monastery, together with a large Saṅgha of around five hundred monks, all of whom were perfected ones.⁶⁴⁷ Now, at that time it was the sabbath—the full moon on the fifteenth day—and the Buddha was sitting in the open surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks for the invitation to admonish.⁶⁴⁸
- 1.3 Then the Buddha looked around the Saṅgha of monks, who were silent. He addressed them: “Come now, monks, I invite you all: Is there anything I’ve done by way of body or speech that you would criticize?”⁶⁴⁹
- 2.1 When he had spoken, Venerable Sāriputta rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward

647. Normally I use the gender-neutral and literal “mendicant” for *bhikkhu*, but at this formal act of the Saṅgha only men would be present, so I use “monk”. Nuns hold their own ceremony.

648. This was the end of the rains retreat, during which mendicants stayed in one place. To conclude the retreat, the mendicants gather to invite admonition from each other, clearing the air of any conflicts or tensions that might have arisen during the retreat. This is done instead of the regular recitation of the Pātimokkha rules. Discussed in detail at Kd 4.

649. The Buddha does not hold himself above accountability. Rather, a good spiritual leader shows by example that everyone must be open to criticism.

the Buddha, and said: “There is nothing, sir, that you’ve done by way of body or speech that we would criticize. For the Blessed One gave rise to the unarisen path, gave birth to the unborn path, and explained the unexplained path. He is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, the expert on the path. And now the disciples live following the path; they acquire it later. And sir, I invite the Blessed One. Is there anything I’ve done by way of body or speech that you would criticize?”

“There is nothing, Sāriputta, that you’ve done by way of body or speech that I would criticize. Sāriputta, you are astute. You have great wisdom, widespread wisdom, laughing wisdom, swift wisdom, sharp wisdom, penetrating wisdom.⁶⁵⁰ A wheel-turning monarch’s oldest son rightly keeps wielding the power set in motion by his father. In the same way, Sāriputta rightly keeps rolling the supreme Wheel of Dhamma that was rolled forth by me.” 3.1

“Since it seems I have done nothing worthy of the Blessed One’s criticism, is there anything these five hundred monks have done by way of body or speech that you would criticize?” 4.1

“There is nothing, Sāriputta, that these five hundred monks have done by way of body or speech that I would criticize. For of these five hundred monks, sixty have the three knowledges, sixty have the six direct knowledges, sixty are freed both ways, and the rest are freed by wisdom.” 4.3

Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, “I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!” 5.1

“Then speak as you feel inspired,” said the Buddha. 5.3

Then Vaṅḡsa extolled the Buddha in his presence with fitting verses: 5.4

“Today, on the fifteenth day sabbath, 6.1

650. This eulogy is also at SN 2.29.

five hundred monks have gathered together
 to purify their precepts.
 These untroubled sages
 have cut off their fetters and bonds,
 they will not be reborn again.

- 7.1 Just as a wheel-turning monarch
 surrounded by ministers
 travels all around this
 land girt by sea.
- 8.1 So disciples with the three knowledges,
 conquerors of death,
 revere the winner of the battle,
 the unsurpassed caravan leader.
- 9.1 All are sons of the Blessed One—
 there is no rubbish here.
 I bow to the Kinsman of the Sun,
 destroyer of the dart of craving.”

SN 8.8

Over a Thousand

Parosahassasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattḥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery, together with a large Saṅgha of 1,250 mendicants.
- 1.2 Now at that time the Buddha was educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk about extinguishment. And those mendicants were paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening.
- 1.4 Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa thought, “The Buddha is educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma

talk about extinguishment. And those mendicants are paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening. Why don't I extoll him in his presence with fitting verses?"

Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, "I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!" 2.1

"Then speak as you feel inspired," said the Buddha. 2.3

Then Vaṅḡsa extolled the Buddha in his presence with fitting verses: 2.4

"Over a thousand mendicants
revere the Holy One
as he teaches the immaculate Dhamma,
extinguishment, fearing nothing from any quarter. 3.1

They listen to the immaculate Dhamma
taught by the fully awakened Buddha;
the Buddha shines
at the fore of the mendicant Saṅgha. 4.1

Blessed One, your name is 'Giant',
seventh of the seers.⁶⁵¹ 5.1
You are like a great cloud
that rains on your disciples.⁶⁵²

I left my day's meditation
out of desire to see the Teacher. 6.1
Great hero, your disciple Vaṅḡsa

651. The idea of the seven seers, long proverbial in Vedic culture, was adapted for Gotama in DN 14, where he is the seventh recorded Buddha in the lineage starting with Vipassī. Various texts and commentaries also allow the sense, "best of seers".

652. In a cold northern climate this sounds unappealing, but in the heat the generous rain is a cool blessing.

bows at your feet.”

- 7.1 “Vaṅḡsa, had you previously composed these verses, or did they spring to mind in the moment?”
- 7.2 “They sprang to mind in the moment, sir.”
- 7.3 “Well then, Vaṅḡsa, speak some more spontaneously inspired verses.”
- 7.4 “Yes, sir,” replied Vaṅḡsa. Then he extolled the Buddha with some more spontaneously inspired verses, not previously composed:
- 8.1 “Having overcome Māra’s wrong path,⁶⁵³
you wander with hard-heartedness dissolved.
See him, the liberator from bonds,⁶⁵⁴
dissecting the unattached section by section.⁶⁵⁵
- 9.1 You have explained in many ways
the path to cross the flood.
The Seers of Truth stand unfaltering⁶⁵⁶
in the freedom from death explained by you.
- 10.1 As the bringer of light who has pierced the truth,
you’ve seen what lies beyond all planes.⁶⁵⁷

653. The “wrong path” (*ummagga*) is one that takes you to the wrong destination (MN 107:14.26).

654. Here Vaṅḡsa turns to address the monks directly.

655. For *asitaṃ bhāgasō pavibhajaṃ*, compare the similar phrase *vibhatto bhāgasō mito*, which refers to the neatly ordered sections of hell (MN 130:16.4) or the suburbs (Sn 2.7:23.2). Vaṅḡsa is referring to the Buddha’s skill in breaking down complex or obscure matters and presenting them systematically.

656. For this couplet I follow Bodhi’s note in *Connected Discourses*.

657. *Thiti* is *viññāṇaṭṭhiti* (“planes of consciousness”), i.e. seven realms in which consciousness can be reborn (AN 7.44, DN 15:33.1, DN 33:1.8.11). This is a subtle allusion to the Buddha’s practice under his former teacher Āḷāra Kālāma, where he learned up to the highest “plane of consciousness”, namely the dimension of nothingness. In Sn 5.15:3.1 he speaks of how he understood that attainment and went beyond it. | Not to be confused with the four “grounds for consciousness”, i.e. the first four aggregates, as insight does *not* consist in going beyond these to consciousness (DN 33:1.11.122, SN 22.54:1.11).

When you saw and realized this for yourself,
you taught it first to the group of five.⁶⁵⁸

When the Dhamma has been so well taught, 11.1
how could those who know it be negligent?
That's why, being diligent, we should always train
respectfully in the Buddha's teaching."

SN 8.9

With Koṇḍañña

Koṇḍaññasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo 1.1
Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.

Then Venerable Koṇḍañña Who Understood approached the 1.2
Buddha after a very long absence. He bowed with his head to the
Buddha's feet, caressing them and covering them with kisses, and
pronounced his name:⁶⁵⁹ "I am Koṇḍañña, Blessed One! I am Ko-
ṇḍañña, Holy One!"

Then Venerable Vaṅḡisa thought, "This Venerable Koṇḍañña 1.4
Who Understood has approached the Buddha after a very long ab-
sence. He bowed with his head to the Buddha's feet, caressing them
and covering them with kisses, and pronounced his name: 'I am
Koṇḍañña, Blessed One! I am Koṇḍañña, Holy One!' Why don't I
extoll him in the Buddha's presence with fitting verses?"

658. Vaṅḡisa continues to invoke the Buddha's life story by alluding to the first teaching, Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma (SN 56.11). After leaving behind those who taught rebirth in the "planes of consciousness", the Buddha realized Awakening and proceeded to Varanasi to teach the group of five. This anticipates the next discourse, which features one of the five.

659. Koṇḍañña gained his nickname as he was the first person to realize the Dhamma after the Buddha (SN 56.11:14.3). His absence was due to his love of solitude, as expressed in his verses (Thag 15.1:0.4). Due to this, he features rarely in the early texts, but the Buddha once saw him meditating (Ud 7.6), and praised him as the senior mendicant (AN 1.188:1.1).

- 2.1 Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, “I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!”
- 2.3 “Then speak as you feel inspired,” said the Buddha.
- 2.4 Then Vaṅḡsa extolled Koṇḍañña in the Buddha’s presence with fitting verses:
- 3.1 “The senior monk awakened after the Buddha,⁶⁶⁰
Koṇḍañña, is keenly energetic.
He regularly gains
the blissful meditations of seclusion.⁶⁶¹
- 4.1 Whatever can be attained by a disciple
who does the Teacher’s bidding,
he has attained it all,
through diligently training himself.
- 5.1 With great power and the three knowledges,
expert in encompassing the minds of others,
Koṇḍañña, the heir to the Buddha,
bows at the Teacher’s feet.”

SN 8.10

With Moggallāna

Moggallānasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying on the slopes of Isigili at the Black Rock, together with a large Saṅgha of five hundred mendi-

660. Used more generally of early disciples at SN 16.5:5.3.

661. Not the three consisting of body, mind, and attachments, for this is only found in later texts (Mnd 2:11.2). Perhaps the three consisting of ethics, view, and ending of defilements (AN 3.93:5.1). But since the absorptions are often called “blissful meditations” (SN 21.4:3.3) and “seclusion” (MN 64:9.2), it’s more satisfying to read the two phrases together.

cants, all of whom were perfected ones. Thereupon, with his mind, Venerable Mahāmoggallāna scrutinized whose mind was liberated and free of attachments.

Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa thought, “The Buddha is staying on the slopes of Isigili . . . with five hundred perfected ones. Mahāmoggallāna is scrutinizing whose mind is liberated and free of attachments. Why don’t I extoll him in the Buddha’s presence with fitting verses?” 1.3

Then Venerable Vaṅḡsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, “I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!” 2.1

“Then speak as you feel inspired,” said the Buddha. 2.3

Then Vaṅḡsa extolled Mahāmoggallāna in his presence with fitting verses: 2.4

“As the sage, who has gone beyond suffering,
sits upon the mountain slope,
he is revered by disciples with the three knowledges,
conquerors of death. 3.1

Moggallāna, of great psychic power,
encompasses with his mind,
scrutinizing their minds,
liberated, free of attachments. 4.1

That is how those endowed
with many fine qualities⁶⁶²
revere Gotama,
the sage gone beyond suffering,
perfect in every respect.”⁶⁶³ 5.1

662. Emend *anekākārasampannaṃ* to *anekākārasampannā* per Bodhi’s *Connected Discourses*, note 527.

663. I take *aṅga* (“factor”) as implying “path factor”, and *ākāra* (“attribute”) as indicating the Buddha’s qualities.

At Gaggarā

Gaggarāsutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Campā on the banks of the Gaggarā Lotus Pond, together with a large Saṅgha of five hundred mendicants, seven hundred male and seven hundred female lay followers, and many thousands of deities.⁶⁶⁴ But the Buddha outshone them all in beauty and glory.
- 1.3 Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa thought, “The Buddha is staying near Campā on the banks of the Gaggarā Lotus Pond, together with a large Saṅgha of five hundred mendicants, seven hundred male and seven hundred female lay followers, and many thousands of deities. And he outshines them all in beauty and glory. Why don’t I extoll him in his presence with fitting verses?”
- 2.1 Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, “I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!”
- 2.3 “Then speak as you feel inspired,” said the Buddha.
- 2.4 Then Vaṅgīsa extolled the Buddha in his presence with fitting verses:
- 3.1 “Like the moon on a cloudless night,
like the shining immaculate sun,
so too Aṅgīrasa, O great sage,
your glory outshines the entire world.”

664. Campā is modern Champapur near Bhagalpur in Bihar state, not far from West Bengal. It is near the eastern-most reach of the Buddha’s journeys. Campā was the capital of Aṅga, one of the sixteen “great nations” (*mahājanapadā*). It was a flourishing trade center, and became a sacred city for the Jains. | *Gaggarā*, an onomatopoeic reduplication (“gargle”), is the name of a number of rivers and whirlpools in Sanskrit (cp. the modern Ghaggar River in north-west India). | This is the only time an assembly of this size is reported.

With Vaṅgīsa

Vaṅgīsasutta

At one time Venerable Vaṅgīsa was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s 1.1
Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Now at that time Vaṅgīsa had recently attained perfection. While 1.2
experiencing the bliss of freedom, on that occasion he recited these
verses:⁶⁶⁵

“We used to wander, drunk on poetry,⁶⁶⁶ 2.1
village to village, town to town.
Then we saw the Buddha,
and faith arose in us.

He taught me Dhamma: 3.1
the aggregates, sense fields, and elements.
When I heard his teaching
I went forth to homelessness.

It was truly for the benefit of many 4.1
that the sage achieved awakening—
for the monks and for the nuns
who see that they’ve reached certainty.

It was so welcome for me 5.1
to be in the presence of the Buddha.
I’ve attained the three knowledges,
and fulfilled the Buddha’s instructions.

I know my past lives, 6.1

665. The chapter culminates with Vaṅgīsa revealing his own spiritual journey.
The version at Thag 21:45.1 is more detailed.

666. This verse is plural, presumably referring to a troupe of wandering bards. |
For “drunk on poetry” see SN 4.13:2.1 and note.

my clairvoyance is purified,
I am master of three knowledges,
 attained in psychic power,
expert in encompassing the minds of others.”

The Linked Discourses with Vaṅḡsa are complete.

LINKED DISCOURSES IN
THE WOODS

The Chapter on In the Woods

SN 9.1

Seclusion

Vivekasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove.
- 1.3 Now at that time that mendicant, during their day’s meditation, was thinking bad, unskillful thoughts to do with the domestic life. The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for that mendicant, and wanted what’s best for them. So they approached that mendicant wanting to stir them up, and addressed them in verse:
- 2.1 “You entered the woods desiring seclusion,
yet your mind strays to outward things.
As a person, dispel the desire for people;⁶⁶⁷
then you’ll be happy, free of greed.
- 3.1 Give up discontent; be mindful;⁶⁶⁸

667. This is similar to Thag 2.15.

668. This verse is particularly tricky; see Bodhi’s note in *Connected Discourses* for discussion and other interpretations. | *Pajahāsi* and *bhavāsi* are reflexive second person singular imperative (= *pajaha*, *bhava*).

let us remind you to be mindful.⁶⁶⁹
 The dusty abyss is so hard to cross;
 don't let sensual dust drag you down.

Just as a bird strewn with dirt 4.1
 sheds that clingy dust with a shake;
 so too, an energetic, mindful mendicant
 sheds that clingy dust with a shake.”

Impelled by that deity, that mendicant was struck with a sense of 5.1
 urgency.

SN 9.2

Application

Upaṭṭhānasutta

At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the 1.1
 Kosalans in a certain forest grove.

Now at that time that mendicant went for the day's meditation, but 1.2
 fell asleep.⁶⁷⁰ The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for that
 mendicant, and wanted what's best for them. So they approached
 that mendicant wanting to stir them up, and addressed them in verse:

“Get up, mendicant! Why lie down? 2.1
 What's the point in sleeping?
 How can the afflicted slumber,
 inflicted by an arrow strike?

You should amplify the faith 3.1

669. *Sārayāmase* is reflexive first person plural imperative causative (= *sā-rayāma*). The deity is using the “royal we”. | I take *taṃ* as accusative (“you”) and *sataṃ* as accusative of purpose (“for the purpose of being mindful”).

670. A midday nap in the heat was common (DN 23:15.2), but was considered a vice in excess (DN 31:14.14). The Buddha defended the practice, saying that he took a nap on occasion (MN 36:45.8).

that led you to go forth
 from the lay life to homelessness.
 Don't fall under the sway of slumber."

- 4.1 "Sensual pleasures are impermanent and unstable,
 but dullards still fall for them.
 Among those who are bound,
 they're free and unattached:
 why bother a renunciate?
- 5.1 By removing desire and greed,
 by going beyond ignorance,
 that knowledge has been perfectly cleansed:
 why bother a renunciate?
- 6.1 By breaking ignorance with knowledge,
 by the ending of defilements,
 they're sorrowless, unstressed:
 why bother a renunciate?
- 7.1 Energetic, resolute,
 always staunchly vigorous,
 aspiring to extinguishment:
 why bother a renunciate?"

SN 9.3

With Kassapagotta

Kassapagottasutta

- 1.1 At one time Venerable Kassapagotta was staying in the land of the
 Kosalans in a certain forest grove.⁶⁷¹

671. Kassapagotta appears also in AN 3.91, where he initially resents the training before repenting.

Now at that time Venerable Kassapagotta, having withdrawn for 1.2
his day's meditation, tried to advise a nimrod.⁶⁷² Then the deity
haunting that forest approached Kassapagotta wanting to stir him
up, and recited these verses:

"A nimrod wandering the rugged hills 2.1
is unintelligent, unthinking.
It's a waste of time to advise him, mendicant;⁶⁷³
he strikes me as a dullard.

He listens without understanding, 3.1
looks without seeing.
Though the teaching is spoken,
the fool doesn't get it.

Even if you lit ten lamps 4.1
and brought them to him, Kassapa,
he wouldn't see anything,
for he has no eyes to see."

Impelled by that deity, Venerable Kassapagotta was struck with a 5.1
sense of urgency.

SN 9.4

Several Mendicants Set Out Wandering

Sambahulasutta

At one time several mendicants were staying in the land of the Kos- 1.1
alans in a certain forest grove.

Then after completing the three months of the rainy season resi- 1.2
dence, those mendicants set out wandering. Not seeing those men-

672. *Cheta* (variants *ceṭa*, *ceta*) is unsatisfactory. Commentary explains as "deer hunter", apparently from the root *chid* ("cut, destroy"; cf. Sanskrit *chettr*). A "nimrod" is both a "hunter" and an "idiot".

673. Read *bhikkhu* here as vocative.

dicants, the deity haunting that forest cried. And on that occasion they spoke this verse:

- 2.1 “Dissatisfaction,
it seems to me today,⁶⁷⁴
seeing so many vacated seats.
They were so learned, such brilliant speakers!
Where have these disciples of Gotama gone?”

- 3.1 When they had spoken, another deity replied with this verse:

- 4.1 “They’ve gone to Magadha, they’ve gone to Kosala,
and some are in the Vajjian lands.
Like deer that wander free of ties,
the mendicants live with no abode.”⁶⁷⁵

SN 9.5

With Ānanda

Ānandasutta

- 1.1 At one time Venerable Ānanda was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove.
1.2 Now at that time Ānanda was spending too much time persuading lay people.⁶⁷⁶ Then the deity haunting that forest had sympathy for Ānanda, wanting what’s best for him. So they approached him wanting to stir him up, and recited these verses:⁶⁷⁷

674. The idiom *viya me khāyati* (“seems to me”) is used for suppositions, so it must refer to the presumed dissatisfaction of the mendicants, rather than the disappointment of the deity.

675. A Brahmanical renunciate is said to wander “without fire or abode” (*anag-niraniketa*, Manusmṛti 6.25, 6.43).

676. The word “persuasion” (*saññatti*) is used in the context of discussions with skeptical non-Buddhists (eg. MN 60:8.5).

677. The same verse is spoken by a certain Vajjiputta (“Vajjian”) at Thag 1.119. The Pali commentary says this occurred shortly after the Buddha’s passing.

“You’ve left for the jungle, the root of a tree,
 having laid extinguishment in your heart.⁶⁷⁸
 Meditate, Gotama, don’t be negligent!
 What use is this hullabaloo to you?” 2.1

Impelled by that deity, Venerable Ānanda was struck with a sense
 of urgency. 3.1

SN 9.6

With Anuruddha

Anuruddhasutta

At one time Venerable Anuruddha was staying in the land of the
 Kosalans in a certain forest grove. 1.1

Then a certain deity of the company of the thirty-three named
 Penelope had been Anuruddha’s partner in a former life. She went
 up to Anuruddha, and recited these verses:⁶⁷⁹ 1.2

“Set your heart there,
 where you used to live:
 among the gods of the thirty-three,
 whose every desire is granted!
 At the fore of a retinue 2.1

Ānanda, still only a stream-enterer, was striving for arahantship before the First Council, but got caught up in consoling the distraught layfolk. The Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya agrees, adding that Vajjiputta was Ānanda’s attendant at the time. Following the exhortation, Ānanda meditated till late at night, then mindfully lay down to rest. When his feet were lifted off the floor, but his head not yet on his pillow, he became awakened (Rockhill, *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 155). The Pali Vinaya recounts the same events, but does not mention this verse (Kd 21:1.6.1).

678. Both Bodhi here and Norman in the parallel in *Elders Verses* (Thag 1.119:1.2) read *osiya* (“having laid”), which agrees with the commentarial gloss.

679. Penelope (*jālīnī*) means “weaver”, and is used as a term for the craving that binds beings in transmigration (eg. AN 4.199). Compare *tantrāyī* at Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 14.2.2.22.

of divine maidens, you'll shine!"

- 3.1 "Divine maidens are in a sorry state,
stuck in substantial reality.
And those beings too are in a sorry state,
who are attached to divine maidens."⁶⁸⁰
- 4.1 "They don't know pleasure
who don't see the Garden of Delight!
It's the abode of lordly gods,
the glorious host of Thirty!"
- 5.1 "Fool, don't you understand
the saying of the perfected ones:
All conditions are impermanent,
their nature is to rise and fall;
having arisen, they cease;
their settling is such bliss.
- 6.1 O Penelope, weaver of the web—
there are no more abodes for me in the heavenly host.
Transmigration through births is finished,
now there'll be no more future lives."

680. Per Bodhi's *Connected Discourses*, adopt reading *devakaññābhisattikā* found in a Sinhala-script manuscript cited in the PTS edition.

SN 9.7

With Nāgadatta

Nāgadattasutta

At one time Venerable Nāgadatta was staying in the land of the Kos- 1.1
alans in a certain forest grove.⁶⁸¹

Now at that time Venerable Nāgadatta had been entering the vil- 1.2
lage too early and returning late in the day. Then the deity haunting
that forest had sympathy for Nāgadatta, wanting what's best for him.
So they approached him wanting to stir him up, and recited these
verses:

“Entering the village too early,⁶⁸² 2.1
and returning too late in the day,
Nāgadatta mixes with lay people,
sharing their joys and sorrows.

I'm afraid for Nāgadatta; he's reckless, 3.1
shackled to families.
May he not come under the King of Death's power,
under the sway of the terminator!”

Impelled by that deity, Venerable Nāgadatta was struck with a 4.1
sense of urgency.

681. This Nāgadatta is not mentioned elsewhere. His names suggests his parents had made an offering to dragon-spirits for a child, thus he is “Nāga-given”; cf. Devadatta, Brahmadata, etc.

682. For this verse, follow readings in Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*.

SN 9.8

The Mistress of the House

Kulagharaṇīsutta

1.1 At one time one of the monks was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove.

1.2 Now at that time that monk had become too closely involved in the affairs of a certain family. The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for that monk, wanting what's best for him. So, wanting to stir him up, they manifested in the appearance of the mistress of that family, approached the monk, and addressed him in verse:

2.1 “At river banks and guest houses,
hotels and highways,⁶⁸³
people gather to gossip about
what's going on between you and me.”

3.1 “There are many sounds echoing⁶⁸⁴
that a fervent ascetic must endure.
They ought not be dismayed by that,
for that's not what defiles you.

4.1 If you're startled by every little sound,
like a wind-deer in the wood,⁶⁸⁵
they'll call you 'flighty minded';
and your practice won't succeed.”

683. For *sabhā* as a gathering-place for (disreputable) travellers, see Manu 9.264.

684. For the unique *paccūhā* see Sanskrit *prativyūha*, “an army arrayed against an enemy” or else “echo, reverberation”. It calls back to the previous line, “between you and me”.

685. According to Hamsadeva's 13th century *Mṛgapakṣīśāstra*, the “wind-deer” (*vātamiga*, Sanskrit *vātamṛga*) is fast, skilled at escaping weapons and vanishing from sight. Dwelling in deep forests, it is lean with long legs and branched antlers. It makes an appearance also in Ja 14 and Tha Ap 482.

A Vajji

Vajjiputtasutta

At one time a certain Vajjian mendicant was staying near Vesālī in a 1.1
certain forest grove.

Now at that time the Vajjis were holding an all-night event in 1.2
Vesālī. Then that mendicant, complaining at the noise of musical
instruments being beaten and played, on that occasion spoke this
verse:

“We dwell alone in the wilderness, 2.1
like a log dumped in the forest.
On a night like this,
who’s worse off than me?”

The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for that mendicant, 3.1
and wanted what’s best for them. So they approached that mendicant
wanting to stir them up, and addressed them in verse:

“You dwell alone in the wilderness, 4.1
like a log dumped in the forest.
Lots of people are jealous of you,
like beings in hell of those going to heaven.”

Impelled by that deity, that mendicant was struck with a sense of 5.1
urgency.

Recitation

Sajjhāyasutta

At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the 1.1
Kosalans in a certain forest grove.

1.2 Now at that time that mendicant had previously been spending too much time rehearsing. But some time later they adhered to passivity and silence.⁶⁸⁶ Not hearing the teaching, the deity haunting that forest approached that mendicant, and addressed them in verse:

2.1 “Mendicant, why don’t you recite
passages of the teaching,⁶⁸⁷
living together with other mendicants?
Hearing the teaching, one garners confidence;
and in this very life, one garners praise.”

3.1 “I used to be zealous for
passages of the teaching,⁶⁸⁸
until I encountered dispassion.
When I encountered dispassion,
whatever was seen, heard, and thought,
this, good people say,
is the laying down by complete understand-
ing.”

SN 9.11

Unskillful Thoughts

Akusalavitakkasutta

1.1 At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove.⁶⁸⁹

686. The verb *saṅkasāyati* is a synonym of *allīyati*, to stick or adhere to (Kd 3:1.2.3).

687. At AN 4.191:1.7, *dharmapada* refers to all nine categories of the teaching, and I think it has the same sense here.

688. The sense of this unusual five-line verse is not entirely clear to me, and I suspect it is corrupt.

689. This short discourse offers a concise version of meditation advice given in more detail at MN 19.

Now at that time that mendicant, during their day's meditation, 1.2
 was thinking bad, unskillful thoughts, that is,⁶⁹⁰ sensual, malicious,
 and cruel thoughts. The deity haunting that forest had sympathy
 for that mendicant, and wanted what's best for them. So they ap-
 proached that mendicant wanting to stir them up, and addressed
 them in verse:⁶⁹¹

“Because of irrational application of mind,⁶⁹² 2.1
 you're consumed by your thoughts.
 When you've given up irrationality,
 make sure your thoughts are rational.

Thinking about the Teacher, the teaching,⁶⁹³ 3.1
 the Saṅgha, and your own ethics,
 you'll find gladness,
 and rapture and bliss as well, no doubt.
 And when you're full of joy,⁶⁹⁴
 you'll make an end to suffering.”

Impelled by that deity, that mendicant was struck with a sense of 4.1
 urgency.

690. Even ascetics in the forest can be consumed by bad thoughts.

691. Trapped in a spiral of unwholesome thoughts, a meditator may feel guilty or worthless. But the deity has only compassion.

692. This term has already appeared at SN 4.4:2.1, and plays a key role in dependent origination (SN 12.4:2.3). Their thoughts are irrational because they lead to the opposite of their goal, freedom.

693. Unwholesome thoughts are replaced by wholesome ones (cf. MN 20:3.1). The meditator is *not* urged to stop thinking; quietness is a process.

694. Suffering spurs on the practice, but the path itself is characterized by joy.

SN 9.12

Midday

Majjhanhikasutta

1.1 At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove. The deity haunting that forest approached that mendicant and spoke this verse in their presence:

2.1 “In the still of high noon,⁶⁹⁵
when the birds have settled down,
the mighty forest itself resounds—
that strikes me as so scary!”

3.1 “In the still of high noon,
when the birds have settled down,
the mighty forest itself resounds—
that strikes me as so delightful!”

SN 9.13

Undisciplined Faculties

Pākatindriyasutta

1.1 At one time several mendicants were staying in the Kosalan lands in a certain forest grove. They were haughty, insolent, fickle, scurrilous, loose-tongued, unmindful, lacking situational awareness and immersion, with straying minds and undisciplined faculties.

1.2 The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for those mendicants, and wanted what’s best for them. So they approached those mendicants wanting to stir them up, and addressed them in verse:⁶⁹⁶

2.1 “The mendicants used to live happily,

695. The verses are also in SN 1.15.

696. Ja 392 gives another version of this story.

as disciples of Gotama.
 Desireless they sought alms;
 desireless they used their lodgings.
 Knowing that the world was impermanent
 they made an end of suffering.

But now they've made themselves hard to look after, 3.1
 like chiefs in a village.
 They eat and eat and then lie down,
 unconscious in the homes of others.

Having raised my cupped palms to the Saṅgha, 4.1
 I speak here only about certain people.
 They're dregs, with no protector,
 just like those who have passed away.

I'm speaking about 5.1
 those who live negligently.
 To those who live diligently
 I pay homage."

Impelled by that deity, those mendicants were struck with a sense 6.1
 of urgency.

SN 9.14

The Thief of Scent

Gandhatthenasutta

At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the 1.1
 Kosalans in a certain forest grove.

Now at that time, after the meal, on their return from almsround, 1.2
 that mendicant plunged into a lotus pond and sniffed a pink lotus.
 The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for that mendicant, and
 wanted what's best for them. So they approached that mendicant
 wanting to stir them up, and addressed them in verse:

- 2.1 “This water flower has not been given.
When you sniff it,
this is one factor of theft.⁶⁹⁷
Good fellow, you are a thief of scent!”
- 3.1 “I do not take, nor do I break;
I sniff the water flower from afar.
So how do you explain why⁶⁹⁸
you call me a thief of scent?”
- 4.1 Why don’t you accuse someone
who does such vandalizing
as digging up the roots,
or breaking off the flowers?”
- 5.1 “I have nothing to say
to a person who is a crude vandal,
soiled like a used nappy.
You’re the one who deserves to be spoken to.
- 6.1 To the man who has not a blemish,
who is always seeking purity,
even a hair-tip of evil
seems as big as a stormcloud.”
- 7.1 “Indeed, O spirit, you understand me,
and you empathize with me.
Please speak to me again,
whenever you see something like this.”

697. This is, of course, poetry. In the Vinaya, to be theft it must be something someone owns, and they must perceive it as taken and lost to them.

698. *Kena vaṇṇena* is used occasionally in this idiom (SN 10.2:3.1, Thig 13.4:2.3), which is apparently not attested in Sanskrit. The commentary explains *vaṇṇa* here as “reason” (*kāraṇa*). In each context, there is an apparently hidden circumstance that needs to be brought to light. I think it anticipates *vaṇṇanā* in the sense of “commentary”, “explanation”; cf. English “gloss”.

“We are no dependent of yours,⁶⁹⁹

8.1

nor are we your servant.

You yourself should know, mendicant,

the way that leads to a good place.”

Impelled by that deity, that mendicant was struck with a sense of urgency. 9.1

The Linked Discourses in the Forest are complete.

699. The deity disavows dependence on humans and any mutual obligation that may entail. They gave advice freely.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH SPIRITS

The Chapter with Indaka

SN 10.1

With Indaka

Indakasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD.⁷⁰⁰ At one time the Buddha was staying near 1.1
Rājagaha on Mount Indra’s Peak, the haunt of the native spirit In-
daka.⁷⁰¹

Then the native spirit Indaka went up to the Buddha, and ad- 1.3
dressed him in verse:

700. The *yakkha* Indaka asks how the body can grow in the womb, apparently because he believes in an immortal, immaterial soul. | Compare Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.8: “When at birth this person takes on a body, he becomes united with bad things, and when at death he leaves it behind, he gets rid of those bad things” (Olivelle’s translation). This shares many terms with Indaka’s verse: use of *ayaṃ* for the subject; *sarīra* for the body; *sajjati* for *saṃsṛjyate*. Furthermore, the “bad things” are explained in the commentary as the body and organs with which the soul becomes burdened at birth. This passage is part of the dialogue on the “light of a person” between Yājñavalkya and Janaka, which is alluded to several times in the Pali Suttas.

701. Indaka is named after the mountain he inhabits. The mountain itself might be Mount VEDIYAKA, where Sakka/Indra appeared to the Buddha at Indra’s hill cave (DN 21:1.1.2). Indaka’s interest in human fertility is professional: such *yakkhas* were fertility deities, called upon with sacrifice in times of birth and death of children. | The first two suttas of this chapter feature otherwise unknown *yakkhas* named Indaka and Sakka, while *the* Sakka/Indra is sometimes referred to as *yakkha* (MN 37:5.3).

- 2.1 “The Buddhas say that form is not the soul.⁷⁰²
 Then how does this one obtain this body?⁷⁰³
 From where do his bones and organs come?⁷⁰⁴
 How does this one coalesce in the womb?”⁷⁰⁵
- 3.1 “First there’s the zygote;⁷⁰⁶
 then there’s the blastocyst;⁷⁰⁷

702. While this exact wording (*rūpaṃ na jīvan*) doesn’t seem to be a direct quote of the Buddha, it is similar to *taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ*, which the Buddha did indeed deny. Taken by itself, this does not deny that there is a soul, only that it is not physical. The use of *jīva* for soul, rather than *attā*, is characteristic of the Jains, but is used by Vedists as well. | As a further connection with Jainism, I have come across a footnote in Muni Mahendra Kumar’s translation of the Ācārāṅgasūtra (6.25, pg. 278) that says, in agreement with the Pali tradition, that the *kalala* forms in the first week of pregnancy, the *arbuda* in the second. The author does not cite a source for this, so it is not clear that it is a Jain idea. He was an erudite polymath fluent in Pali, so he may have learned it from the Pali tradition.

703. Indaka uses the Upaniṣadic style, indicating a subject with *ayaṃ* (“this one”) which is assumed to be the immortal Self or Person. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.8 has *sa vā ayaṃ puruṣo*, referring back the previous sentence, “this person made of consciousness amid the organs, the light in the heart” (*ayaṃ vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hr̥dyantarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ*).

704. *Yaka* is normally “liver”, but the commentary explains *yakapiṇḍa* here as the “900 lumps of flesh”, i.e. “organs”.

705. Bodhi (*Connected Discourses*, note 559) proposes deriving *sajjati* from *srj*, which he renders “begotten”. This is born out by the Upaniṣad’s *samsrjyate*, which has the senses of being “created” and being “joined”.

706. “Zygote” is *kalala*, a newly fertilized ovum. Commentary: “no more than a drop of cream of ghee on a single fibre of lamb’s wool”. | The identification of the stages with modern medical terms is based on the words themselves, the commentarial description of them, and the commentary’s assumption that each stage represents a week’s development.

707. *Abbuda* is otherwise used of a tumor or cancer. This fits the “blastocyst”, which is implanted in the uterine wall about a week after conception. At this time, the commentary says the embryo is the color of meat-washing water. For other meanings, see notes on SN 1.77:1.4 and Snp 3.10:8.2.

from there arises the gastrula;⁷⁰⁸
 which produces the embryonic mass.⁷⁰⁹
 From that the limb buds appear,⁷¹⁰
 the head hair, body hair, and nails.⁷¹¹

And whatever the mother eats—
 the food and drink that she consumes—
 nourishes them there,
 the person in the mother’s womb.”⁷¹²

4.1

SN 10.2

Sakka In Name Only

Sakkanāmasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, on the Vulture’s Peak Mountain. 1.1

708. “Gastrula” renders *pesi*, literally “scrap of flesh”, described as looking like melted lead. The embryo in the third week, only a few millimeters long, is forming distinct layers and emerging from the uterine wall.

709. The “embryonic mass” (*ghana*, literally “clump”) sees the formation of internal organs starting around the fourth week. As the limbs have not yet appeared, the commentary says it is shaped like a chicken egg.

710. The commentary locates this in the fifth week, with limbs (*pasākhā*) appearing first like five “pimples”. The medical term is “limb buds”, which become prominent at this time.

711. The commentary says the explanation is abridged after the first six or seven weeks. The head hair etc. appear at the time the fetus is mature, namely after 42 weeks (or ten months). Medically, nails and hair are mostly developed by about week 36, which is also the earliest time when a baby is mature, as it may be born with a reasonable chance of survival.

712. Whereas Indaka spoke of the subject who obtains a body, the Buddha’s reply avoids any mention of a subject until this last line. The “person” (*nara*) only appears when the fetus is mature enough to have limbs, hair, and nails.

- 1.2 Then a spirit who was Sakka in name only went up to the Buddha,
and addressed him in verse:⁷¹³
- 2.1 “You’ve given up all ties,
and are fully freed.
It’s not a good idea for you, ascetic,
to be instructing others.”
- 3.1 “No matter how you explain why
people gather together, Sakka,⁷¹⁴
it’s unworthy for a wise person
not to think of the other with sympathy.⁷¹⁵
- 4.1 If you instruct others
with a mind clear and confident,
your compassion and empathy
don’t create attachments.”

SN 10.3

With Spiky

Sūcilomasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Gayā on the cut-stone
ledge in the haunt of Spiky the native spirit.⁷¹⁶
- 1.2 Now at that time the native spirits Shaggy and Spiky were passing
by not far from the Buddha.⁷¹⁷

713. The suffix *-nāmaka* is a slight. Compare “Senior in name only” (SN 21.10:1.2) and *nāmaka* in the sense “mere words” (MN 80:15.5, MN 99:10.5). His verse is similar to that of Māra in SN 4.14.

714. The Buddha avoids *nāmaka* and politely calls him “Sakka”.

715. Accepting the variant *ananukampitum* at Ne 37:194.4, which is endorsed by that text’s commentaries. The text as stands enjoins lack of compassion, which cannot be right.

716. This discourse is also at Snp 2.5.

717. “Shaggy” is *khara* and “Spiky” is *sūciloma*, literally “needle-hair”. Some *yakkhas* are magnificent kings or warriors, but this pair are more like grotesque

So Shaggy said to Spiky, “That’s an ascetic.” 1.3

“That’s no ascetic, he’s a faker! I’ll soon find out whether he’s an ascetic or a faker.” 1.5

Then Spiky went up to the Buddha and leaned up against his body, but the Buddha pulled away. 2.1

Then Spiky said to the Buddha, “Are you afraid, ascetic?” 2.3

“No, respectable sir, I’m not afraid. But your touch is nasty.” 2.5

“I will ask you a question, ascetic. If you don’t answer me, I’ll drive you insane, or explode your heart, or grab you by the feet and throw you to the far shore of the Ganges!”⁷¹⁸ 2.7

“I don’t see anyone in this world with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans who could do that to me. But anyway, ask what you wish.” 2.9

“Where do greed and hate come from?”⁷¹⁹ 3.1

From where spring discontent, desire, and terror?

Where do the mind’s thoughts originate,
like a crow let loose by boys.”

“Greed and hate come from here; 4.1

from here spring discontent, desire, and terror;
here’s where the mind’s thoughts originate,
like a crow let loose by boys.

Born of affection, originating in oneself, 5.1
like prop roots sprouting from a banyan;⁷²⁰

demons (*rakkhasas*), a stereotype that bedeviled *yakṣas* of later times. *Khara* is found for a number of demons in Sanskrit. We don’t find *suciloma*, but compare the demons Khara and his twin sister, the ugly and mutilated Śūrpaṇakhā (“wicker-nails”).

718. Considering the Ganges is 100 km away, this is even more impressive.

719. Despite their savage demeanor, they pivot right away to deep Dhamma questions. This kind of rapid pivot is characteristic of such conversion narratives.

720. The banyan is “trunk-born” (*khandhaja*) in two ways. As an epiphyte, it is sometimes called the “strangler fig”, since it grows around the trunk of a previous tree, strangling it (much like the *māluva* below). Then the banyan sends

the many kinds of attachment to sensual pleasures
are like camel's foot creeper
creeping through the woods.⁷²¹

- 6.1 Those who understand where they come from
dispel them—listen up, spirit!
They cross this flood so hard to cross,
not crossed before, so as to not be reborn.”

SN 10.4

With Mañibhadda

Mañibhaddasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Magadhans at the Mañimālīka Shrine, the haunt of the native spirit Mañibhadda.⁷²²
1.2 Then the native spirit Mañibhadda went up to the Buddha, and spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:⁷²³
2.1 “It's always auspicious for the mindful;⁷²⁴
the mindful prosper in happiness.

out aerial roots from the branches; when they reach the ground they establish themselves as supportive trunks known as “prop roots”, so that even if original trunk dies, the tree survives. Thus the tree itself is “trunk-born” and its multiple prop roots are also “trunk-born”. Grammar and commentary indicate the second sense is meant here. The metaphor is even more apt, since the word *nigrodha* (“banyan”) means “down-grower”, as the tree grows not to the sky but back into the earth.

721. The “camel's foot creeper” (*māluva*) takes root and grows over the tree, ultimately engulfing and destroying it (MN 45:4.1).

722. Mañimālīka means “garland of jewels”.

723. Mañibhadda means “auspicious jewel”. *Yakkhas* of this name are found in both Brahmanism and Jainism as bestowers of wealth. Hindu texts identify him as brother of Kuvera, king of *yakkhas*, and tutelary deity of merchants and travellers. Mahāvīra was once said to have stayed at a Mañibhadra shrine, but that was in Mithila, north of the Ganges.

724. Mañibhadda plays on his own name, taking mindfulness to be auspicious, rather than jewels.

Each new day is better for the mindful,
and they are freed from enmity.”

“It’s always auspicious for the mindful;
the mindful prosper in happiness.
Each new day is better for the mindful,
but they’re not freed from enmity. 3.1

But someone whose mind delights in harmlessness,⁷²⁵ 4.1
all day and all night,
with love for all living creatures—
they have no enmity for anyone.”

SN 10.5

With Sānu

Sānusutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, 1.1
Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.⁷²⁶

725. The Buddha does not advocate mindfulness as the sole solution for all difficulties. Rather, specific problems require relevant antidotes, though of course mindfulness is always present.

726. The commentary explains that Sānu was a disillusioned novice who had returned home planning to disrobe. | Sānu was perhaps named after the planet Saturn (Sanskrit *śani*; cf. SN 10.7). The Sanskrit word for planet (*graha*, cf. Pali *gayha* at DN 20:17.3) shows their role as “seizers”. The later *Suśrutasaṃhitā-uttaratantra* details the entities that cause such seizures in children (60), corresponding to the nine planets (27). Seizures or fits were treated as medical, spiritual, and astrological in cause and remedy.

1.2 Now at that time a certain lay woman had a son named Sānu who had been seized by a native spirit.⁷²⁷ And as that lay woman wept, on that occasion she recited these verses:⁷²⁸

2.1 “I have heard this from the perfected ones.⁷²⁹
The native spirits will not mess with anyone
who leads the spiritual life
by observing the sabbath

3.1 complete in all eight factors
on the fourteenth and the fifteenth days,
and the eighth day of the fortnight,
as well as on the fortnight of special displays.
But now today I see
native spirits messing with Sānu.”

4.1 “What you heard from the perfected ones is right.
The native spirits will not mess with anyone
who leads the spiritual life
by observing the sabbath

5.1 complete in all eight factors
on the fourteenth and the fifteenth days,
and the eighth day of the fortnight,
as well as on the fortnight of special displays.

6.1 When Sānu regains consciousness tell him

727. Elsewhere we find possession by Māra expressed as *anvāviṭṭha*, literally “inhabited”, where the victims are made to behave badly but are otherwise normal (SN 4.18:1.4, MN 50:14.2; cf. Sanskrit *āviṣṭa*). *Gahita* here is also used for Rāhu “seizing” the Sun and Moon (SN 2.10:1.2). The commentary says he was shaking on the ground, eyes rolling and mouth foaming, i.e. having a “seizure”. This was not ill-motivated, for the *yakkha* was trying to prevent him from disrobing. Compare those who, though “seized by a gandharva” (*gandharvagrhitā*), remain perfectly cogent (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.3.1, 3.7.1).

728. PTS editions insert an extra verse below, but it seems to be a scribal error.

729. See AN 3.70 for a detailed description of the eight-factored sabbath.

this saying of the native spirits:⁷³⁰
 Don't do bad deeds
 either openly or in secret.

If you should do a bad deed, 7.1
 or you're doing one now,
 you won't be freed from suffering,
 though you fly away and flee."

"Mum, they cry for the dead,⁷³¹ 8.1
 or for one who's alive but missing.
 I'm alive and you can see me,
 so mum, why do you weep for me?"

"Son, they cry for the dead,⁷³² 9.1
 or for one who's alive but missing.
 But someone who has given up sensual pleasures
 only to come back here again:
 they cry for them as well,
 for though still alive they're really dead.

My dear, you've been rescued from hot coals, 10.1
 and you want to plunge right back in them!
 My dear, you've been rescued from the abyss,⁷³³
 and you want to plunge right back there!

730. It's interesting that the Buddha cites a *yakkha* saying to someone recovering from a *yakkha*-induced seizure. At Thig 12.1:12.1 these lines are attributed to the nun Puṇṇikā.

731. Sānu has recovered from his seizure to see his weeping mother. This verse appears without any context at Thag 1.44.

732. Here's the plot twist: the mother's real worry is not the seizure, but that her son will fall prey to desire and suffering. See SN 20.10:3.5, "For it is death in the training of the Noble One to reject the training and return to a lesser life."

733. This is, I think, the only case in the EBTs where "inferno" might be suggested for *naraka*. Elsewhere in early Pali, however, it means "cliff, abyss" (MN 49:5.9, MN 86:6.15, Snp 3.11:28.4, Thag 16.8:4.2).

- 11.1 Hurry up, good luck to you!⁷³⁴
 To whom should we complain?
 A valuable saved from a fire,
 you want to burn again!”

SN 10.6

With Piyañkara

Piyañkarasutta

- 1.1 At one time Venerable Sāriputta was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.
- 1.2 Now at that time Venerable Anuruddha rose at the crack of dawn and recited passages of the teaching.⁷³⁵ Then the native spirit Piyañkara’s Mother soothed her little child, saying:⁷³⁶
- 2.1 “Don’t make a sound, Piyañkara!
 A mendicant recites passages of the teaching.
 When we understand a passage,
 we can practice for our welfare.
- 3.1 Let us restrain ourselves from harming living creatures,
 and speak no lying words.
 We should train ourselves well in ethics,
 and hopefully we’ll be freed from the goblin realm.”⁷³⁷

734. Here we see the origin of the term of address *bhante*, i.e. “good luck to thee”.

735. “Passages of the teaching” is *dhammapadāni*.

736. *Piyañkara* means “endearing”. Here we see clearly the role of the *yakkha* as deity of childhood.

737. “Goblin” is *pisāca*.

SN 10.7

With Punabbasu

Punabbasusutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, 1.1
Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Now at that time the Buddha was educating, encouraging, firing 1.2
up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk about extin-
guishment. And those mendicants were paying attention, applying
the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening.

Then the native spirit Punabbasu's Mother soothed her little chil- 1.4
dren, saying:⁷³⁸

“Hush, little Uttarā! 2.1

Hush, Punabbasu!⁷³⁹

For I want to listen to the teaching
of the Teacher, the supreme Buddha.

Extinguishment, the Blessed One said,⁷⁴⁰ 3.1
is the release from all ties.

I have a lasting love
for this teaching.

In this world, your own child is dear; 4.1
in this world, your own husband is dear;
but even greater than that is my love
for this teaching's quest.

For neither son nor husband, 5.1
dear as they are, can free you from suffering;

738. This is another ode to the maternal love of the female *yakkha*.

739. Punabbasu is a lunar mansion or asterism, roughly equivalent to Gemini. The child is probably named after the asterism, which suggests Uttarā was too; there are three asterisms with Uttara in their names (cf. DN 14:1.12.15).

740. She is referring to Iti 102:5.3.

as listening to the true teaching
frees living creatures from suffering.

- 6.1 In this world mired in suffering,
fettered by old age and death,
I want to listen to the teaching
through which the Buddha awakened,
which frees you from old age and death.
So hush, Punabbasu!”
- 7.1 “Mom, I’m not speaking,
and Uttarā is silent, too.
Focus just on the teaching,
for it’s nice to listen to the true teaching.
And it’s because we haven’t understood the teaching
that we live in suffering, Mom.
- 8.1 He is a beacon for those who are lost
among gods and humans.
The Buddha, bearing his final body,
the Clear-eyed One teaches Dhamma.”
- 9.1 “It’s good that my child’s so astute,
this child I bore and suckled!
My child loves the pure teaching
of the supreme Buddha.
- 10.1 Punabbasu, may you be happy!
Today, I rise.
Hear me too, Uttarā:
I have seen the noble truths!”

SN 10.8

With Sudatta

Sudattasutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Cool Grove.⁷⁴¹ 1.1

Now at that time the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had arrived at Rājagaha on some business.⁷⁴² He heard a rumor that a Buddha had arisen in the world. 1.2

Right away he wanted to go and see the Buddha, but he thought, “It’s too late to go and see the Buddha today. I’ll go and see him tomorrow.” He went to bed thinking of the Buddha. 1.5

During the night he got up three times thinking it was morning. Then he approached the Sivaka Gate, and non-human beings opened it for him. 1.8

But as he was leaving the city, light vanished and darkness appeared to him. He felt fear, terror, and goosebumps, and wanted to turn back. 1.11

Then the invisible spirit Sivaka called out:⁷⁴³ 1.12

“A hundred elephants, a hundred horses,⁷⁴⁴ 2.1
a hundred mule-drawn chariots,
a hundred thousand maidens

741. This story, which tells of the conversion of the Buddha’s chief layman follower, is detailed further in the Vinaya at Kd 16:4.1.1. | The Cool Grove was a pleasant place to meditate, notable as the place where the Buddha moderated the monk Soṇa’s excessive striving (AN 6.55).

742. His given name was Sudatta, but he is usually known by the sobriquet Anāthapiṇḍika, “feeder of the poor”. He features in countless discourses as the ideal of the generous lay follower.

743. Sivaka appears alongside Mucalinda at DN 32:10.12. Mucalinda supported the Buddha after his awakening, as Sivaka supports Anāthapiṇḍika here. Sivaka might be identified with Shiva (see SN 2.21).

744. The commentary says that the “hundred” in the first two lines should be multiplied by the “thousand” of line three, but the Chinese parallels at SA 592 and SA2 186 prefer the more modest figure.

bedecked with jeweled earrings:
these are not worth a sixteenth part
of a single forward stride!

- 3.1 Forward, householder!
Forward, householder!
Going forward is better for you,
not turning back!”

4.1 Then darkness vanished and light appeared to Anāthapiṇḍika.
His fear, terror, and goosebumps settled down.

4.2 But for a second time, light vanished and darkness appeared to
him. ...

4.3 For a second time the invisible spirit Sivaka called out ...

- 6.1 “... Going forward is better for you,
not turning back!”

7.1 Then darkness vanished and light appeared to Anāthapiṇḍika.
His fear, terror, and goosebumps settled down.

7.2 But for a third time, light vanished and darkness appeared to him.
...

7.3 For a third time the invisible spirit Sivaka called out ...

- 9.1 “... Going forward is better for you,
not turning back!”

10.1 Then darkness vanished and light appeared to Anāthapiṇḍika. His
fear, terror, and goosebumps settled down. Then the householder
Anāthapiṇḍika went to the Cool Grove and approached the Buddha.

11.1 Now at that time the Buddha had risen at the crack of dawn and
was walking mindfully in the open. He saw Anāthapiṇḍika coming
off in the distance. So he stepped down from the walking path, sat
down on the seat spread out, and said to Anāthapiṇḍika, “Come,
Sudatta.”

Then Anāthapiṇḍika thought, “The Buddha calls me by name!” 11.6
Smiling and elated, he bowed with his head to the Buddha’s feet and
said to him, “Sir, I trust the Buddha slept well?”⁷⁴⁵

“A brahmin who is fully quenched⁷⁴⁶ 12.1
always sleeps at ease.
Sensual pleasures slip off them,
they’re cooled, free of attachments.

Since they’ve cut off all clinging, 13.1
and removed the stress from the heart,
the peaceful sleep at ease,
having found peace of mind.”

SN 10.9

With the Nun Sukkā (1st)

Paṭhamasukkāśutta

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo 1.1
Grove, the squirrels’ feeding ground.

Now, at that time the nun Sukkā was teaching Dhamma, sur- 1.2
rounded by a large assembly. Then a native spirit was so devoted to
Sukkā that he went from street to street and from square to square,
and on that occasion recited these verses:

“What’s up with these people in Rājagaha? 2.1
They sleep like they’ve been drinking mead!
They don’t attend on Sukkā
as she’s teaching the state free of death.”⁷⁴⁷

745. After all that drama, he asks a simple question, as one does when nervous.
But the Buddha’s reply is more than satisfying.

746. These verses are also at AN 3.35:8.1.

747. I have translated the slightly varying texts here and at Thig 3.6 the same,
except this line which is clearly different.

- 3.1 But the wise—
 it's as if they drink it up,
 so irresistible, delectable, and nutritious,
 like travelers enjoying a cool cloud."

SN 10.10

With the Nun Sukkā (2nd)

Dutiyasukkāsutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.
- 1.2 Now at that time a certain lay follower gave food to the nun Sukkā.⁷⁴⁸ Then a native spirit was so devoted to Sukkā that he went from street to street and from square to square, and on that occasion recited these verses:
- 2.1 "O! He has made so much merit!
 That lay follower is so very wise.
 He just gave food to Sukkā,
 who is released from all ties."

SN 10.11

With the Nun Cīrā

Cīrāsutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.
- 1.3 Now at that time a certain lay follower gave a robe to the nun Cīrā. Then a native spirit was so devoted to Cīrā that he went from street

748. As a donor once remarked, "It's difficult for women to get material support" (Bu Pd 1:1.23). Passages like this serve to elevate nuns as worthy recipients of donations.

to street and from square to square, and on that occasion recited these verses:

“O! He has made so much merit! 2.1
That lay-follower is so very wise.
He gave a robe to Cīrā,
who is released from all yokes.”

SN 10.12

With ĀḬavaka

ĀḬavakasutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near ĀḬavī 1.1
in the haunt of the native spirit ĀḬavaka.⁷⁴⁹

Then the native spirit ĀḬavaka went up to the Buddha, and said to 1.3
him: “Get out, ascetic!”

Saying, “All right, respectable sir,” the Buddha went out. 1.5

“Get in, ascetic!” 1.6

Saying, “All right, respectable sir,” the Buddha went in. 1.7

And for a second time the native spirit ĀḬavaka said to the Buddha, 1.8
“Get out, ascetic!”

Saying, “All right, respectable sir,” the Buddha went out. 1.10

“Get in, ascetic!” 1.11

Saying, “All right, respectable sir,” the Buddha went in. 1.12

And for a third time the native spirit ĀḬavaka said to the Buddha, 1.13
“Get out, ascetic!”

Saying, “All right, respectable sir,” the Buddha went out. 1.15

“Get in, ascetic!” 1.16

Saying, “All right, respectable sir,” the Buddha went in. 1.17

749. Another spirit of place, ĀḬavaka’s story (also at Snp 1.10) is perhaps the most beloved of all the *yakkha* conversions. He is provided with an extensive backstory in the Pali commentaries, and another quite different story in a Chinese Dharmapada (T 211, pp. 575–609). | ĀḬavī was a town between Sāvattthī and Rājagaha.

- 1.18 And for a fourth time the native spirit ĀḶavaka said to the Buddha,
 1.19 “Get out, ascetic!”
 1.20 “No, respectable sir, I won’t get out. Do what you must.”
 1.22 “I will ask you a question, ascetic. If you don’t answer me, I’ll
 drive you insane, or explode your heart, or grab you by the feet and
 throw you to the far shore of the Ganges!”
 1.24 “I don’t see anyone in this world with its gods, Māras, and di-
 vinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and
 humans who could do that to me. But anyway, ask what you wish.”
- 2.1 “What’s a person’s best wealth?
 What brings happiness when practiced well?
 What’s the sweetest taste of all?
 The one they say has the best life: how do they live?”
- 3.1 “Faith here is a person’s best wealth.
 The teaching brings happiness when practiced well.
 Truth is the sweetest taste of all.
 The one they say has the best life lives by wisdom.”
- 4.1 “How do you cross the flood?
 How do you cross the deluge?
 How do you get over suffering?
 How do you get purified?”
- 5.1 “By faith you cross the flood,
 and by diligence the deluge.
 By energy you get past suffering,
 and you’re purified by wisdom.”
- 6.1 “How do you get wisdom?
 How do you earn wealth?
 How do you get a good reputation?
 How do you hold on to friends?
 How do the departed not grieve

when passing from this world to the next?”

“One who is diligent and discerning 7.1
gains wisdom by wanting to learn,
having faith in the perfected ones,
and the teaching for becoming extinguished.

Being responsible, acting appropriately, 8.1
and working hard you earn wealth.
Truthfulness wins you a good reputation.
You hold on to friends by giving.
That’s how the departed do not grieve
when passing from this world to the next.

A faithful householder of discernment 9.1
who possesses these four qualities⁷⁵⁰
does not grieve after passing away:
truth, principle, steadfastness, and generosity.

Go ahead, ask others as well, 10.1
there are many ascetics and brahmins.
See whether anything better is found
than truth, principle, generosity, and patience.”⁷⁵¹

“Why now would I question 11.1
the many ascetics and brahmins?
Today I understand
what’s good for lives to come.

It was truly for my benefit 12.1

750. Following Cone’s *Dictionary of Pali*, Pali *gharamesin* probably stands for Sanskrit *grhamedhin*, an “householder of discernment”, a man of mature years who has completed his education.

751. Readings are uncertain. Chinese parallels at SA2 325 and SA 1326 support *dama* or *danta* here rather than *dhamma*. DN 30:1.6.2 has both, and elsewhere we find both *dhamma* and *dama* commonly used alongside *sacca*.

that the Buddha came to stay at ĀḶavī.
Today I understand
where a gift is very fruitful.

- 13.1 I myself will journey
village to village, town to town,
paying homage to the Buddha,
and the clear rightness of the teaching!”

The Linked Discourses with Native Spirits are complete.

LINKED DISCOURSES WITH SAKKA

Chapter One

SN 11.1

With Suvīra

Suvīrasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvathī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!”
- 1.5 “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:
- 2.1 “Once upon a time, mendicants, the titans marched against the gods.⁷⁵²
- 2.2 Then Sakka, lord of gods, addressed the godling Suvīra,⁷⁵³ ‘Dear Suvīra, the titans march against the gods! Go, and march against the titans!’

752. The gods (*deva*) stem from Proto Indo-European *dyew*, “shining, sky, heavens” (cf. Pali *diva*, “day”; English “day”, however, is a false friend), while the titans (*asura*) are the negative form of Proto Indo-European *sóh₂w*, “sun”, so *asura* is “sunless, night”. As the day vanquishes the dark of night each dawn, the gods defeat the titans. Victory is sweet but short-lived, for soon follows dusk, at which the titans prevail and plunge the world into darkness once more (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.5.1, Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3.2.9.7). Note: The Vedas know the sense of *asura* as (human) “lord”; but given that the opposition between *deva* and *asura* is known to the Avesta, I assume that is the older sense and the sense “lord” derivative; cf. English “titan of industry”.

753. Suvīra (“good hero”) appears only here.

‘Yes, lord,’ replied Suvīra. But he fell into negligence.⁷⁵⁴ 2.5

For a second time Sakka addressed Suvīra, ‘Dear Suvīra, the titans 2.6
march against the gods! Go, and march against the titans!’

‘Yes, lord,’ replied Suvīra. But for a second time he fell into negli- 2.9
gence.

For a third time Sakka addressed Suvīra, ‘Dear Suvīra, the titans 2.10
march against the gods! Go, and march against the titans!’

‘Yes, lord,’ replied Suvīra. But for a third time he fell into negli- 2.13
gence.

Then Sakka addressed the godling Suvīra in verse: 2.14

‘Suvīra, go to that place 3.1
where you can achieve happiness
without working for it or trying hard—
and take me with you!’

‘That a lazy man who does no work, 4.1
and doesn’t do his duty,
can fulfill all his desires:
Sakka, render me this boon!’⁷⁵⁵

‘Suvīra, go to that place 5.1
where a lazy man who does no work
prosperes in unending happiness—
and take me with you!’

‘O Sakka, first among gods, 6.1

754. Sakka himself is accused of negligence by Moggallāna at MN 37:11.2. Sakka or Indra is a heroic deity associated with the accomplishment of great deeds, and accordingly here he extols energy. | As a historical curio, in the earliest mention of Sanskrit *pramāda* (Rig Veda 8.2.18), it is the “exhilaration” from drinking Soma which grants the gods led by Indra unsleeping tirelessness. This passage lends support to the idea that Soma was originally a stimulant, perhaps ephedra. Nonetheless, *pamāda* became associated with drunkenness and hence “negligence”.

755. *Disa* is imperative of *disati* (“show”) in the sense “render, bestow, confer”.

that we might find the happiness
that's sorrowless, unstressed:
Sakka, render me this boon!

- 7.1 'If there exists anywhere a place
where one can live happily without working,⁷⁵⁶
that surely would be extinguishment's path!
Go there, Suvīra,
and take me with you!'

- 8.1 Since, mendicants, even that Sakka, lord of gods—while living off of the fruit of his good deeds, and ruling as sovereign lord over these gods of the thirty-three—will speak in praise of initiative and energy, you can excel at this, for you who have gone forth in such a well explained teaching and training can try hard, strive, and make an effort to attain the unattained, achieve the unachieved, and realize the unrealized.”⁷⁵⁷

SN 11.2

With Susīma

Susīmasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvatthī.⁷⁵⁸

756. The Chinese texts at both SA2 43 (活) and SA 1114 (生) appears to support *jīvati* rather than *jyati*. Bingenheimer at SA2 43 has, “Have you ever seen or heard of someone who, without effort, attains happiness in life?” Both Chinese texts have more lines than the Pali; given that the Pali has five lines, it seems likely the text has suffered loss. I translate according to what I guess the meaning to have been.

757. This is a tricky construction. The idiom *idha kho taṃ, bhikkhave, sobhetha* occurs several times, always in the same context: someone is said to have some quality, and the mendicants are encouraged to have it even more so. The preceding clause usually includes *hi nāma*, suggesting a dependent clause (SN 11.2:8.2, SN 11.4:13.2, SN 35.103:5.7, Kd 16:6.4.2, Kd 5:4.3.1). *Sobhetha* is second plural optative in the sense “you all can (out)shine or excel”.

758. Apart from the change of name, this discourse is identical to the previous.

- There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!” 1.2
- “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this: 1.4
- “Once upon a time, mendicants, the titans marched against the 2.1
gods.
- Then Sakka, lord of gods, addressed the godling Susīma,⁷⁵⁹ ‘Dear 2.2
Susīma, the titans march against the gods! Go, and march against
the titans!’
- ‘Yes, lord,’ replied Susīma. But he fell into negligence. 2.5
- For a second time ... 2.6
- For a third time ... 2.8
- Then Sakka addressed the godling Susīma in verse: 2.10
- ‘Susīma, go to that place 3.1
where you can achieve happiness
without working for it or trying hard—
and take me with you!’
- ‘That a lazy man who does no work, 4.1
and doesn’t do his duty,
should fulfill all his desires:
Sakka, render me this boon!’
- ‘Susīma, go to that place 5.1
where a lazy man who does no work
prosperes in unending happiness—
and take me with you!’
- ‘O Sakka, first among gods, 6.1
that we might find the happiness
that’s sorrowless, unstressed:
Sakka, render me this boon!’
- ‘If there exists anywhere a place 7.1
where one can live happily without working,

759. A deity Susīma praises Sāriputta at SN 2.29:4.1.

that surely would be extinguishment's path!
 Susīma, go to that place
 and take me with you!'

- 8.1 Since, mendicants, even that Sakka, lord of gods—while living off of the fruit of his good deeds, and ruling as sovereign lord over these gods of the thirty-three—will speak in praise of initiative and energy, you can excel at this, for you who have gone forth in such a well explained teaching and training can try hard, strive, and make an effort to attain the unattained, achieve the unachieved, and realize the unrealized.”

SN 11.3

The Banner's Crest

Dhajaggasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.⁷⁶⁰
- 1.2 There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!”
- 1.4 “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:
- 2.1 “Once upon a time, mendicants, a battle was fought between the gods and the titans. Then Sakka, lord of gods, addressed the gods of the thirty-three:
- 3.1 ‘Good fellows, when the gods are fighting, if you get scared or terrified, just look up at my banner’s crest.⁷⁶¹ Then your fear and terror will go away.

760. This discourse invokes several major Vedic deities invoked as martial deities, gods of war. Compare their mention at DN 13:25.2, where these deities, though aristocrat warriors, are invoked by brahmins. In Theravada it is a popular protection chant (*paritta*) included in the *Maha Pirit Potha*.

761. Compare the martial exhortation at Rig Veda 10.103.11: “Ours is Indra when the banners clash.” Varāhamihira tells the full story of Indra’s banner at *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 42.

If you can't see my banner's crest, then look up at the banner's 4.1
crest of the Progenitor, king of gods.⁷⁶² Then your fear and terror
will go away.

If you can't see his banner's crest, then look up at the banner's 5.1
crest of Varuṇa, king of gods.⁷⁶³ Then your fear and terror will go
away.

If you can't see his banner's crest, then look up at the banner's 6.1
crest of Īsāna, king of gods.⁷⁶⁴ Then your fear and terror will go away.'

However, when they look up at those banner's crests their fear 7.1
and terror might go away or it might not.

Why is that? Because Sakka is not free of greed, hate, and delusion. 8.1
He is fearful, scared, nervous, quick to flee.

But, mendicants, I say this: If you've gone to a wilderness, or to 9.1
the root of a tree, or to an empty hut and you get scared or terrified,
just recollect me: 'That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened
Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of
the world, supreme guide for those fit for training, teacher of gods
and humans, awakened, blessed.' Then your fear and terror will go
away.

If you can't recollect me, then recollect the teaching: 'The teach- 10.1
ing is well explained by the Buddha—apparent in the present life,
immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible

762. Pajāpati ("progenitor") was the lonely and "undefined" (*anirukta*) god of creation ("Let Prajāpati generate progeny for us", Rīg Veda 10.85.3). The heat of his fervent exertions (*tapas*) created the world and all things in it (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6).

763. Varuṇa is invoked frequently in the Vedas, and in the suttas he is associated with other leading deities such as Indra and Soma (DN 13:25.2, DN 20:13.3, DN 32:10.2). As one of the twelve children of Aditi he stood for a calendar month, and grew a wide and sometimes baffling array of associations—the oceans, water, the sky (at night), and justice. Vedic Varuṇa was the god of command, the king of tough rule. He was identified with the aristocrats, his partner Mītra with the brahmins (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.1.4).

764. Īsāna (Sanskrit Īśāna) was created by Pajāpati as "president", said to be the sun (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.1.3). He was also identified with Rudra and Śiva.

people can know it for themselves.’ Then your fear and terror will go away.

11.1 If you can’t recollect the teaching, then recollect the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Buddha’s disciples is practicing the way that’s good, direct, systematic, and proper. It consists of the four pairs, the eight individual persons. This is the Saṅgha of the Buddha’s disciples that is worthy of offerings dedicated to the gods, worthy of hospitality, worthy of a religious donation, worthy of greeting with cupped palms, and is the supreme field of merit for the world.’ Then your fear and terror will go away.

12.1 Why is that? Because the Realized One is free of greed, hate, and delusion. He is fearless, brave, bold, and stands his ground.”

12.3 That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

13.1 “In the wilderness, at a tree’s root,
or an empty hut, O mendicants,
recollect the Buddha,
and no fear will come to you.

14.1 If you can’t recollect the Buddha—
the eldest in the world, the captain of men—⁷⁶⁵
then recollect the teaching,
emancipating, well taught.

15.1 If you can’t recollect the teaching—
emancipating, well taught—
then recollect the Saṅgha,
the supreme field of merit.

16.1 Thus recollecting the Buddha,

765. *Narāṣabha* is literally “a bull of a man”, but the predominant sense is “chief, lord, captain” rather than “bull”. *Vṛṣabha* was widely used in this sense as far back as the Rig Veda. The same is true of its synonyms *janavasabha* and *purisanisabha*, but not *purisūsabha* at Bu Pj 1:10.21.4.

the teaching, and the Saṅgha, mendicants,
fear and terror
and goosebumps will be no more.”

SN 11.4

With Vepacitti

Vepacittisutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

“Once upon a time, mendicants, a battle was fought between the gods and the titans. 1.2

Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, addressed the titans,⁷⁶⁶ ‘My good fellows, if the titans defeat the gods in this battle, bind Sakka, the lord of gods, by his limbs and neck and bring him to my presence in the citadel of the titans.’ 1.3

Meanwhile, Sakka, lord of gods, addressed the gods of the thirty-three, ‘My good fellows, if the gods defeat the titans in this battle, bind Vepacitti by his limbs and neck and bring him to my presence in the Hall of Clear Right of the gods.’ 1.5

In that battle the gods won and the titans lost. So the gods of the thirty-three bound Vepacitti by his limbs and neck and brought him to Sakka’s presence in the Hall of Clear Right of the gods. 1.7

And as Sakka was entering and leaving the hall, Vepacitti abused and insulted him with rude, harsh words.⁷⁶⁷ So Mātali the chariot handler addressed Sakka in verse:⁷⁶⁸ 1.9

766. Vepacitti (“wise thinker”) was the lord of the *asuras* and Sakka’s counterpart; their relationship status is complicated. The Sanskrit form is *vipracitti*, but in Buddhist texts it is incorrectly Sanskritized to *vemacitra*. He seems not to appear in early Sanskrit texts, but the Mahābhārata and Purāṇas regard him as the eldest son of Danū and hence chief of the Dānavas.

767. It seems they had strong feelings for each other.

768. Mātali is the charioteer of Sakka. He appears at DN 20:10.8 as one of the centaur lords, and is father to the centaur Sikhaṇḍi, Pañcasikha’s rival in love (DN 21:1.6.8). In Pali, he is never addressed with the usual word for charioteer

- 2.1 ‘O Maghavā, O Sakka,⁷⁶⁹
is it from fear or from weakness
that you endure such harsh words
in the presence of Vepacitti?’
- 3.1 ‘It’s not out of fear or weakness
that I’m patient with Vepacitti.
For how can a sensible person like me
get in a fight with a fool?’
- 4.1 ‘Fools would vent even more
if there’s no one to put a stop to them.
So an attentive one should stop
a fool with forceful punishment.’⁷⁷⁰
- 5.1 ‘I think that this is the only way
to put a stop to a fool,
when you know that the other is upset,
be mindful and stay calm.’
- 6.1 ‘In this mere endurance, Vāsava,
I see a flaw.
When a fool thinks,
“He endures me out of fear,”
the simpleton will go after you even harder,

(*sārathi*), but by the epithet *saṅgāhaka*, literally “gatherer” in the sense “one who holds the reins”, here “chariot handler”, recalling the centaur who took the reins from Indra (Rig Veda 1.163.2). Later Brahmanical literature also knows him as Indra’s charioteer, but pre-Buddhist references are few and obscure. He flourishes in the land of Yama along with the poets (Rig Veda 10.14.3 = Atharva Veda 18.1.47); he is made of magic (Atharva Veda 8.9.5); he knows the immortal balm bought by a chariot’s price that is infused by Indra in the waters (Atharva Veda 11.6.23).

769. For Sakka’s epithets, see SN 11.12 and notes there.

770. Throughout this chapter, Mātali displays more of the old martial character, and Sakka leads him to growth, as he does for the titans.

like a cow chasing someone who runs away.’

‘Let him think this if he wishes, or not— 7.1

“He endures me out of fear.”

For the highest goal, one’s own,⁷⁷¹
naught better than patience is found.⁷⁷²

When a strong person 8.1

endures a weakling,
they call that the ultimate patience,
for a weakling must always be patient.

The strength of folly 9.1

is really just weakness, they say.
But no one can challenge a person
who’s strong, guarded by the teaching.

When you get angry at an angry person 10.1

you just make things worse for yourself.
When you don’t get angry at an angry person
you win a battle hard to win.

When you know that the other is angry, 11.1

you act for the good of both
yourself and the other
if you’re mindful and stay calm.

People inexpert in the teaching 12.1

consider one who heals both
oneself and the other
to be a fool.’

771. I take *sadatthaparamā atthā* as truncated dative of purpose; see discussion at SN 11.8:2.2.

772. This phrase parallels SN 11.8:3.4.

- 13.1 Since, mendicants, even that Sakka, lord of gods—while living off of the fruit of his good deeds, and ruling as sovereign lord over these gods of the thirty-three—will speak in praise of patience and gentleness, you can excel at this, for you who have gone forth in such a well explained teaching and training can develop patience and gentleness.”

SN 11.5

Victory by Good Speech

Subhāsitaḥayasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattḥi.
 1.2 “Once upon a time, mendicants, a battle was fought between the gods and the titans.
 1.3 Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, said to Sakka, lord of gods, ‘Lord of gods, let there be victory by fine words!’
 1.5 ‘Vepacitti, let there be victory by fine words!’
 1.6 Then the gods and the titans appointed a panel of judges, saying, ‘These will understand our good and bad statements.’
 1.8 Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, said to Sakka, lord of gods, ‘Lord of gods, recite a verse!’
 1.10 When he said this, Sakka said to him, ‘Vepacitti, you are the elder gods here.’⁷⁷³ Recite a verse.’
 1.13 So Vepacitti spoke this verse:⁷⁷⁴
 2.1 ‘Fools would vent even more

773. “Elder god” (*pubbadeva*) because originally the earth belonged to the titans and was tricked from them by employing the verses of the rites (Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa 3.2.9e, cf. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.5.1). This battle by debate recalls Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 1.3.1, which explains that the titans are the elder children of Pajāpati. The younger children, the gods, sought to overcome them by means of reciting the sacred word (*udgītha*), but the titans pierced it with the evil that is bad speech.

774. Vepacitti adopts the same position as Mātali in the previous discourse.

if there's no one to put a stop to them.
 So an intelligent person should stop
 a fool with forceful punishment.'

The titans applauded Vepacitti's verse, while the gods kept silent. 3.1
 Then Vepacitti said to Sakka, 'Lord of gods, recite a verse!' So 3.2
 Sakka spoke this verse:

'I think that this is the only way 4.1
 to put a stop to a fool,
 when you know that the other is upset,
 be mindful and stay calm.'

The gods applauded Sakka's verse, while the titans kept silent. 5.1
 Then Sakka said to Vepacitti, 'Vepacitti, recite a verse!' So 5.2
 Vepacitti spoke this verse:

'In this mere endurance, Vāsava, 6.1
 I see a flaw.
 When a fool thinks,
 "He endures me out of fear,"
 the simpleton will go after you even harder,
 like a cow chasing someone who runs away.'

The titans applauded Vepacitti's verse, while the gods kept silent. 7.1
 Then Vepacitti said to Sakka, 'Lord of gods, recite a verse!' So 7.2
 Sakka spoke this verse:

'Let him think this if he wishes, or not— 8.1
 "He endures me out of fear."
 For the highest goal, one's own,
 naught better than patience is found.

When a strong person 9.1
 endures a weakling,

they call that the ultimate patience,
for a weakling must always be patient.

- 10.1 The strength of folly
 is really just weakness, they say.
 But no one can challenge a person
 who's strong, guarded by the teaching.
- 11.1 When you get angry at an angry person
 you just make things worse for yourself.
 When you don't get angry at an angry person
 you win a battle hard to win.
- 12.1 When you know that the other is angry,
 you act for the good of both
 yourself and the other
 if you're mindful and stay calm.
- 13.1 People inexpert in the teaching
 consider one who heals both
 oneself and the other
 to be a fool.'
- 14.1 The gods applauded Sakka's verses, while the titans kept silent.
- 14.2 Then the panel of judges consisting of both gods and titans said
 this, 'The verses spoken by Vepacitti evoke punishment and violence.
 That's how you get fights, arguments, and quarrels. The verses spoken
 by Sakka don't evoke punishment and violence. That's how you stay
 free of fights, arguments, and quarrels.
- 14.7 Sakka, lord of gods, wins victory by fine words!'
- 14.8 And that's how Sakka came to win victory by fine words."

SN 11.6

Bird Nests

Kulāvakasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

“Once upon a time, mendicants, a battle was fought between the gods and the titans. In that battle the titans won and the gods lost. Defeated, the gods fled north with the titans in pursuit.

Then Sakka, lord of gods, addressed his chariot handler Mātali in verse:

‘Mātali, don’t ram the bird nests⁷⁷⁵

2.1

in the Red Silk-Cotton Woods with your draft-pole.

I’d rather give up our lives to the titans

than deprive these birds of their nests.’

‘Yes, lord,’ replied Mātali. And he turned the chariot back around, with its team of a thousand thoroughbreds.

Then the titans thought, ‘Now Sakka’s chariot has turned back. The titans will have to fight the gods a second time!’ Terrified, they retreated right away to the citadel of the titans.

And that’s how Sakka came to win victory by principle.”

3.5

SN 11.7

Not Betray

Nadubbhiyasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

775. This verse is also in Ja 31. This delightful story shows the complete transformation of Indra from the war god who revels in slaughter (Atharva Veda 8.8). Indra showed a comparable development in Hinduism, too, for he is said to have saved a wise parrot in his nest when the tree was poisoned (Mahābhārata, Anuśāsanaparva 5).

- 1.2 “Once upon a time, mendicants, as Sakka, lord of gods, was in private retreat this thought came to his mind, ‘I should never betray even a sworn enemy.’
- 1.4 And then Vepacitti, lord of titans, knowing Sakka’s train of thought, approached him.⁷⁷⁶
- 1.5 Sakka saw Vepacitti coming off in the distance, and said to him, ‘Stop, Vepacitti, you’re caught!’
- 2.1 ‘Good fellow, don’t give up the idea you just had!’
- 3.1 ‘Swear, Vepacitti, that you won’t betray me.’
- 4.1 ‘Whatever bad things happen to a liar,⁷⁷⁷
or to someone who slanders the noble ones,
or to someone who betrays a friend,
or to someone who’s ungrateful,
the same bad things impact
anyone who betrays you, Sujā’s husband.’”⁷⁷⁸

SN 11.8

Verocana, Lord of Titans

Verocanaasurindasutta

- 1.1 Near Sāvattṥi in Jeta’s Grove.⁷⁷⁹

776. It seems that even when on retreat, Sakka was thinking of Vepacitti, and Vepacitti was thinking of Sakka.

777. Despite their differences, both sides in a dispute respect morality and each other.

778. Vepacitti is reminding Sakka of their family connection. His wife is the Asura maiden Sujā (SN 11.12:6.1), hence the titans are his brothers (DN 20:12.3).

779. Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.7–12 tells of how Virocana studies with Indra under their Progenitor, Prajāpati, to learn about the higher Self that is free from evil and death. The Sutta responds to that dialogue, drawing its key vocabulary and ideas from the Upaniṣad and setting them to a quite different purpose (cf. SN 3.8). A number of interpretive difficulties can be resolved in this light, resulting in a more satisfying text.

Now at that time the Buddha had gone into retreat for the day's 1.2
meditation.

Then Sakka, lord of gods, and Verocana, lord of titans, approached 1.3
the Buddha and stationed themselves one by each door-post.⁷⁸⁰
Then Verocana spoke this verse in the Buddha's presence:

"A man should make an effort⁷⁸¹ 2.1
until his goal is accomplished.⁷⁸²
A goal is splendid when accomplished—⁷⁸³
this is the word of Verocana!"⁷⁸⁴

"A man should make an effort 3.1

780. Verocana is "son of Virocana" (Agni or the Sun). He is called Bali at DN 20:12.9. His story, detailed in various legends of later times, tells how he was a great king of the titans who at times even defeated the gods and ruled heaven, but did so justly. Here he seems to have settled his long enmity with Indra. In the Sutta, he may as well be Virocana himself, as Pali is not always assiduous in maintaining patronymics.

781. The Upaniṣad says the "highest man" (*uttamapuruṣa*) is the one who rises up from his body and manifests in his own form as the perfect light (8.12.3). | The theme of effort is implicit when the Upaniṣad urges that the Self "should be discovered, should be cognized" (*so 'nveṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ*). It is hidden from normal perception and requires a long spiritual training.

782. The Sutta substitutes *attha* ("goal, purpose, good") for the Upaniṣad's *ātman* ("Self") in line with the dictum, "the goal is spoken of, but the self is not involved" (AN 3.72:6.3, AN 6.49:4.3). | For *nipphadā* ("accomplishment"), Pali normally uses the prefixed form *abhinipphanna* ("produced, manifested") in this sense (MN 101:29.3, SN 47.10:6.11). And that is the form the root appears in the Upaniṣad, in the sense of the Self that "achieves" or "emerges into" its own true form (8.12.2).

783. Pali texts read this as either *nipphannasobhano attho* (nominative singular) or *nipphannasobhino atthā* (dative singular). I propose both phrases occur as suits each speaker. The titan Verocana makes a simple statement (nominative), which the god Sakka improves by pointing to the cause (dative, following SN 11.4:7.3). This echoes the narrative form of the Upaniṣad, where Virocana is easily satisfied with surface teachings, taking only the body to be the Self. | The "splendid" or "shining" (*sobhana*) goal recalls the "highest light" (*param jyotir*) of the manifest Self.

784. Verocana asserts his authorship in imitation of the Upaniṣad, which repeatedly states, "this is the word of Prajāpati" (*iti ha prajāpatir uvāca*, 8.12.6).

until his goal is accomplished.
For the goal that's splendid when accomplished,
naught better than patience is found.”⁷⁸⁵

4.1 “All beings are in need,⁷⁸⁶
as they deserve in each case.”⁷⁸⁷
But even so, harnessed work is the highest⁷⁸⁸
thing of value for all living creatures.⁷⁸⁹
A goal is splendid when accomplished—
this is the word of Verocana!”

5.1 “All beings are in need,
as they deserve in each case.
But rather than harnessed work being the highest⁷⁹⁰
thing of value for all living creatures,
for the goal that's splendid when accomplished,
naught better than patience is found.”

785. Indra and Virocana spent 32 years as Prajāpati's students. Satisfied, Virocana left, while Indra stayed for a total of 101 years. Only then did Prajāpati reward his patience by revealing the deep truth.

786. In the Upaniṣad, “all” qualifies that which is to be attained, namely all worlds and all desires (8.12.6). | Text has *sattā* (“beings”) and *pāṇi* (“creature”) for the Upaniṣad's *bhūta* (8.11.1; also *sarvabhūtāni* at 8.15.1).

787. In other words, all creatures have individual and differing needs (see AN 4.32:2.4, DN 31:34.24). Verocana is arguing that the different needs of creatures can be satisfied if only they'd work hard enough, yoked in perpetuity like a beast of burden.

788. For *samyoga*, compare the Upaniṣad, “The life breath is yoked to this body, as a draft animal to a cart” (*sa yathā prayogya ācaraṇe yukta evam evāyam asmiṃ charīre prāṇo yuktaḥ*, 8.12.3, translation Olivelle). This shows the original meaning of root *yuj* as “yoke” for beasts of burden, and hence the “work” those beasts do when “harnessed”.

789. When, in the Upaniṣad, Indra rejects lower teachings of the Self, he says he sees in it nothing “of value” (*bhogya*), corresponding to *sambhoga* here.

790. I translate *tveva* as “but even so” when spoken by Verocana, and as “but rather than” when spoken by Sakka. I think Sakka's response plays on the ambiguity of the term to reiterate his subtly different message. Verocana advocates for the virtue of hard work, Sakka for calm patience.

Seers in the Wilderness

Araññāyatanaśisutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

“Once upon a time, mendicants, several seers who were ethical, 1.2 of good character, settled in leaf huts in a wilderness region.⁷⁹¹

Then Sakka, lord of gods, and Vepacitti, lord of titans, went to those seers. Vepacitti put on his lined sandals, strapped on his sword, and, carrying a sunshade, entered the hermitage through the main gate. He walked right past those seers, keeping them at arm's length.⁷⁹²

Sakka took off his lined sandals, gave his sword to others, and, putting down his sunshade, entered the hermitage through the same gate. He stood downwind of those seers, revering them with cupped palms.⁷⁹³

Then those seers addressed Sakka in verse:⁷⁹⁴

1.6

791. “Seer” is *isi* (Sanskrit *ṛṣi*), for which the Proto-Dravidian root *icai* (“sing”) has been proposed. It was taken to mean that they had “seen” the Vedas (*mantra-draṣṭa*) or directly “heard” them from Brahmā through divine inspiration, rather than “composing” them like ordinary authors. Here, however, the Buddha says they were “authors” (*kattāro*). The Buddha adopted *isi* in the sense “enlightened sage”. | A comparable encounter with seers is depicted at MN 93:18.2; see also the description of ancient brahmins at DN 27:22.6.

792. At Kv 12.8:4,3, it is said that a Buddhist would not treat a pagoda with disrespect by keeping it *apabyāmato*. The variant there is *asabyākato*, which is similar to *apasabyato* at Ud 5.3:11.5, where it seems to mean “turning off to the left”. Here, however, I think it relates to the specific situation, corresponding to “downwind” in the next sentence. Vepacitti keeps the seers “at arm’s length” (*apabyāmato*) because they smell.

793. Each of these details corresponds with a training rule for monastics, who should not wear sandals or teach one wearing them; should not carry a sword or teach one carrying a sword; and should not carry a parasol or teach one carrying a parasol. There are exceptions for sandals and parasols for health. See too Thag 7.1 and SN 35.133.

794. These verses also at Ja 522:6.1.

- 2.1 ‘When seers have been long initiated,⁷⁹⁵
 the odor of their bodies goes with the gale.
 You’d better leave, O thousand-eyed!
 The odor of the seers is unclean, king of gods.’⁷⁹⁶
- 3.1 ‘When seers have been long initiated,
 let the odor of their bodies go with the gale.
 We yearn for this odor, sirs,
 like a colorful crown of flowers.
 The gods don’t see it as repulsive.’”

SN 11.10

Seers by the Ocean

Samuddakasutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
- 1.2 “Once upon a time, mendicants, several seers who were ethical,
 of good character, settled in leaf huts on the ocean shore.”⁷⁹⁷
- 1.3 Now at that time a battle was fought between the gods and the
 titans.

795. “Initiated” (*dikkhita*, Sanskrit *dīkṣita*) is the technical term for a priest who has been consecrated in preparation for a ritual.

796. One might expect the initiated to have a sweet smell (*punyagandha*; cf. *sīlagandha* at Dh 55), and this is indeed the case normally (Gopātha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.2, Jaimini Gṛhyasūtra 1.18). Jain ascetics were known for body odors, as they did not bathe, but brahmins were fastidious about cleanliness. Humans generally are thought to be malodorous to the gods (DN 23:9.30), but the text specifies it is the odor of those long initiated.

797. This opening is reminiscent of Ud 1.10, which specifies the location as Suppāraka

Then the seers thought, ‘The gods are principled, the titans are unprincipled.’⁷⁹⁸ We may be at risk from the titans. Why don’t we approach Sambara, lord of titans, and beg him for a pledge of safety?’⁷⁹⁹ 1.4

Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, those seers vanished from those leaf huts on the ocean shore and reappeared in Sambara’s presence. Then those seers addressed Sambara in verse: 1.8

‘The seers have come to Sambara
to beg for a pledge of safety. 2.1
For you can give them what you wish,
whether danger or safety.’

‘There is no safety for seers, 3.1
the hated associates of Sakka!
Though you beg me for your safety,
I’ll only give you fear!’

‘Though we beg you for our safety, 4.1
you give us only fear.
This is what we get from you:
may endless peril come to you!’

Whatever kind of seed you sow, 5.1
that is the fruit you reap.
A doer of good gets good,
a doer of bad gets bad.

798. The sages may have been virtuous, but they were not above a little realpolitik.

799. A barbarian (*dāsa*) who “fancied himself godlike” (Rig Veda 7.18.20), Śambara’s 99 mountain forts were destroyed for their bounty (6.47.23) by Indra on behalf of Divodāsa Atithigva (4.26.3). His mention close to Virocana (SN 11.8) fits the Arthaśāstra, where they are both invoked together (14.3.19). Despite his decisive defeat at the hands of Indra, later legend makes him a formidable foe and master of sorcery (see SN 11.23).

You, my dear, have sown your own seed,⁸⁰⁰
now you'll experience the fruit.'

- 6.1 Then those seers, having cursed Sambara, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, vanished from Sambara's presence and reappeared in those leaf huts on the ocean shore.
- 6.2 But after being cursed by the seers, Sambara woke in alarm three times that night."⁸⁰¹

800. *Tāta* ("my dear") here is an endearment of pity ("oh hon").

801. This inverts the power of his magic to put people to sleep (*Arthaśāstra* 14.3.19).

Chapter Two

SN 11.11

Vows

Vatapadasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

“Mendicants, in a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he undertook seven vows. And it was because of undertaking these that he achieved the status of Sakka.⁸⁰² What seven?⁸⁰³

1.2

As long as I live, may I support my parents. As long as I live, may I honor the elders in the family. As long as I live, may I speak gently. As long as I live, may I not backbite. As long as I live, may I live at home with heart rid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, loving to let go, committed to charity, loving to give and to share. As long as I live, may I speak the truth. As long as I live, may I be free of anger, or should anger arise, may I quickly get rid of it.

1.4

802. The oldest stories of Indra already evidence a shift from the violent victory over the serpent Vṛtra (see SN 2.3:3.4) to his liberating the Vala cave, which he did by the power of truth in his role as *brhaspati*, the “lord of hymns”. Curiously, just as this discourse follows one featuring Sambara, later legend connects Indra’s power in this life to advice he received from Sambara in the past; namely, to always honor and respect brahmins (Mahābhārata 13.36).

803. The seven vows and following verses also appear in the next two discourses.

1.11 In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he undertook seven vows. And it was because of undertaking these that he achieved the status of Sakka.

- 2.1 A child who respects their parents,⁸⁰⁴
and honors the elders in the family,
whose speech is gentle and courteous,
and has given up backbiting;
- 3.1 who's committed to getting rid of stinginess,
is truthful, and has mastered anger:
the gods of the thirty-three declare
them to be a true person."

SN 11.12

Sakka's Names

Sakkanāmasutta

- 1.1 Near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove. There the Buddha said to the mendicants:
- 1.3 "Mendicants, in a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he was a student named Magha. That's why he's called Maghavā, the Bounteous.⁸⁰⁵
- 2.1 In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he was first to give gifts. That's why he's called Purindada, the Firstgiver.⁸⁰⁶

804. Here *jantu* shows its original meaning of "one who is born", namely a human child.

805. *Maghavā* ("bounteous one") is a common epithet of Indra (eg. Rig Veda 3.39.09a, Atharva Veda 8.4.19a, Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 24.5.22). It is from the Vedic *magha*, "gift, bounty". The name Māgha, with the same meaning, is a name of Sakka at SN 2.3, while at Snp 3.5:1.3 a brahmin student Māgha asks about generosity. Finally, the good king of MN 83 is named Maghadeva, "god of bounty". The passage here attributes the name to his ancestry, but it goes on to praise his generosity.

806. *Purandara* ("Fortbreaker") is another epithet (eg. Rig Veda 1.102.7). The Buddha reforms it to *Purindada* ("Firstgiver") at SN 11.12:2.1. But Indra's

In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he gave gifts ably. 3.1
That's why he's called Sakka, the Able.⁸⁰⁷

In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he gave the gift 4.1
of a guest house. That's why he's called Vāsava, the Houser.⁸⁰⁸

Sakka thinks of a thousand needs in an hour. That's why he's called 5.1
Sahassakkha, the Thousand-Eyed.⁸⁰⁹

Sakka's wife is the titan maiden named Sujā. That's why he's called 6.1
Sujampati, Sujā's Husband.⁸¹⁰

Sakka rules as sovereign lord over the gods of the thirty-three. 7.1
That's why he's called Devānaminda, the Lord of Gods.⁸¹¹

generosity is long renowned: "He is the able one, and he will be able for us—
Indra who distributes the goods" (Rig Veda 1.10.6).

807. *Sakka* (*śakra*, the "able one") was originally an epithet of Indra (as per
previous note).

808. *Vāsava* means "endowed with wealth" (*vasu*; see for example Rig Veda
1.9.9a *indram vasupatim* "Indra, lord of wealth"). This passage, rather, plays on
the word *avasatha* and calls him the "giver of a guesthouse". Later Brahmanical
texts enumerated eight Vasus, with Indra as their lord, who are reckoned among
the thirty-three.

809. "Thousand eyes" is *sahassakkha*, more commonly *sahassanetta* SN 11.9:2.3,
Snp 2.12:5.4, Thag 21.1:58.4). In the Rig Veda it describes the sparkle of the
Soma, perhaps alluding to its visionary effects (9.60, 9.65.7). It is in this context
that Indra, along with Vāyu, is first called "thousand-eyed" (1.23.3). It is also
used for Agni, the fire with eyes all around (1.79.12, 10.79.5). | "Needs" (*atthā*)
here recalls SN 11.8:5.1.

810. Sanskrit sources know his wife as Śacī ("the powerful"), daughter of the
titan maiden Pulomā, who came to be known as Indrāṇī. The Pali *sujampati*
("Sujā's husband") evidently draws from Indra's epithet *śacipati* ("lord of power";
Rig Veda 1.106.06, 4.30.17, 8.15.13). But as Śacī Paulomī she is also author
of a Vedic hymn in her own right (10.159). There she gains power through
the same oblation by which Indra gained his power. She does this in order to
gain victory over her co-wives and husband ("only my will should my husband
follow"; "I will rule widely over this hero and over his people"). Indra was
evidently not threatened by such a powerful woman and took her to wife. *Sujā*
should be considered the Pali spelling of *śacī*. These indomitable characters
forged a harmonious relationship, as seen when they share domestic duties by
working together at the loom (Ud 3.7:3.2).

811. The concept of 33 gods goes back as far as Rig Veda 8.28.1. The number
is a reduplication of the trinity. In Buddhist texts they are not enumerated,

- 8.1 In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he undertook seven vows. And it was because of undertaking these that he achieved the status of Sakka. What seven?
- 8.3 As long as I live, may I support my parents. As long as I live, may I honor the elders in the family. As long as I live, may I speak gently. As long as I live, may I not backbite. As long as I live, may I live at home with heart rid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, loving to let go, committed to charity, loving to give and to share. As long as I live, may I speak the truth. As long as I live, may I be free of anger, or should anger arise, may I quickly get rid of it.
- 8.10 In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he undertook seven vows. And it was because of undertaking these that he achieved the status of Sakka.
- 9.1 A child who respects their parents,
and honors the elders in the family,
whose speech is gentle and courteous,
and has given up backbiting;
- 10.1 who's committed to getting rid of stinginess,
is truthful, and has mastered anger:
the gods of the thirty-three declare
them to be a true person."

but Yājñavalkya reckons them as eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas, plus Indra and Prajāpati (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.9.2). The final pair are elsewhere said to be Dyaus ("Heaven" = Zeus) and Pṛthivī ("Earth"), or the twin Aśvins.

SN 11.13

With Mahāli

Mahālisutta

SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Vesālī, 1.1
at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof.

Then Mahāli the Licchavi went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat 1.3
down to one side, and said to him,⁸¹² “Sir, have you seen Sakka, lord
of gods?”

“I have, Mahāli.” 3.1

“But surely, sir, you must have seen someone who looked like 4.1
Sakka. For Sakka is hard to see.”⁸¹³

“Mahāli, I understand Sakka. And I understand the things that 5.1
he undertook and committed to, which enabled him to achieve the
status of Sakka.

In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he was a student 6.1
named Magha. That’s why he’s called Maghavā, the Bounteous.

In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he gave gifts ably. 7.1
That’s why he’s called Sakka, the Able.

In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he was first to 8.1
give gifts. That’s why he’s called Purindada, the Firstgiver.

In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he gave the gift 9.1
of a guest house. That’s why he’s called Vāsava, the Houser.

Sakka thinks of a thousand needs in an hour. That’s why he’s called 10.1
Sahassakkha, the Thousand-Eyed.

Sakka’s wife is the titan maiden named Sujā. That’s why he’s called 11.1
Sujampati, Sujā’s Husband.

812. Mahāli also features in AN 10.47 on the causes of good and bad deeds; in SN 22.60 on Pūraṇa Kassapa’s theory that there is no purification of beings; and in DN 6, where he is called Oṭṭhaddha (“hare-lip”) and shows himself to be familiar with the failed ascetic Sunakkhatta.

813. In DN 6 he also asks about seeing celestial visions, and the Buddha gives a detailed explanation in terms of meditation attainments.

12.1 Sakka rules as sovereign lord over the gods of the thirty-three. That's why he's called Devānaminda, the Lord of Gods.

13.1 In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he undertook seven vows. And it was because of undertaking these that he achieved the status of Sakka. What seven?

13.3 As long as I live, may I support my parents. As long as I live, may I honor the elders in the family. As long as I live, may I speak gently. As long as I live, may I not backbite. As long as I live, may I live at home with heart rid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, loving to let go, committed to charity, loving to give and to share. As long as I live, may I speak the truth. As long as I live, may I be free of anger, or should anger arise, may I quickly get rid of it.

13.10 In a former life, when Sakka was a human being, he undertook seven vows. And it was because of undertaking these that he achieved the status of Sakka.

14.1 A child who respects their parents,
and honors the elders in the family,
whose speech is gentle and courteous,
and has given up backbiting;

15.1 who's committed to getting rid of stinginess,
is truthful, and has mastered anger:
the gods of the thirty-three declare
them to be a true person."

SN 11.14

Poor

Daliddasutta

1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"

“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this: 1.4

“Once upon a time, mendicants, there was a poor person, destitute 2.1
and pitiful. They took up faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and
wisdom in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized
One. After undertaking these things, when their body broke up, after
death, they were reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm, in the
company of the gods of the thirty-three. There they outshone the
other gods in beauty and glory.

But the gods of the thirty-three complained, grumbled, and ob- 2.5
jected, ‘Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! For when this
godling was a human being in their past life they were poor, des-
titute, and pitiful. And when their body broke up, after death, they
were reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm, in the company of
the gods of the thirty-three. Here they outshine the other gods in
beauty and glory.’

Then Sakka, lord of gods, addressed the gods of the thirty-three, 3.1
‘Good fellows, don’t complain about this godling. When this godling
was a human being in their past life they took up faith, ethics, learn-
ing, generosity, and wisdom in the teaching and training proclaimed
by the Realized One. After undertaking these things, when their
body broke up, after death, they’ve been reborn in a good place, a
heavenly realm, in the company of the gods of the thirty-three. Here
they outshine the other gods in beauty and glory.’

Then Sakka, lord of gods, guiding the gods of the thirty-three, 3.6
spoke this verse:

‘Whoever has faith in the Realized One, 4.1
unwavering and well grounded;
whose ethical conduct is good,
praised and loved by the noble ones;

who has confidence in the Saṅgha, 5.1
and correct view:
they’re said to be prosperous,
their life is not in vain.

- 6.1 So let the wise devote themselves
to faith, ethical behaviour,
confidence, and insight into the teaching,
remembering the instructions of the Buddhas.’”

SN 11.15

Delightful

Rāmaṇeyyakasutta

- 1.1 Near Sāvattḥī in Jeta’s Grove.
1.2 And then Sakka, lord of gods, went up to the Buddha, bowed,
stood to one side, and said to him, “Sir, what is a delightful place?”
- 2.1 “Shrines in parks and forests,
well-made lotus ponds,
are not worth a sixteenth part
of a delightful human being.
- 3.1 Whether in village or wilderness,
in a valley or the uplands,
wherever the perfected ones live
is a delightful place.”

SN 11.16

Sponsoring Sacrifice

Yajamānasutta

- 1.1 At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, on the Vulture’s
Peak Mountain.
1.2 And then Sakka, lord of gods, went up to the Buddha, bowed,
stood to one side, and addressed him in verse:
- 2.1 “For humans, those merit-seeking creatures,

who sponsor sacrifices,
making worldly merit,
where is a gift very fruitful?”

“Four practicing the path, 3.1
and four established in the fruit.
This is the upright Saṅgha,
with wisdom, ethics, and immersion.

For humans, those merit-seeking creatures, 4.1
who sponsor sacrifices,
making worldly merit,
what is given to the Saṅgha is very fruitful.”

SN 11.17

Homage to the Buddha

Buddhavandanāsutta

Near Sāvathī in Jeta’s Grove. 1.1

Now at that time the Buddha had gone into retreat for the day’s 1.2
meditation. Then Sakka, lord of gods, and the divinity Sahampati
approached the Buddha and stationed themselves one by each door-
post.⁸¹⁴

Then Sakka spoke this verse in the Buddha’s presence: 1.4

“Rise, hero! Victor in battle, with burden put down, 2.1
wander the world free of debt.
Your mind is fully liberated,
like the moon on the fifteenth night.”⁸¹⁵

814. The form of this discourse echoes that of SN 11.8, with Sakka and Sahampati in the roles of Verocana and Sakka. This time it is Sakka who gives the inferior verse that is trumped by Sahampati.

815. Sakka speaks to the personal liberation of the Buddha.

- 3.1 “Lord of gods, that’s not how to pay homage to the Realized Ones.
This is how it should be done:

- 4.1 ‘Rise, hero! Victor in battle, caravan leader,
wander the world free of debt.
Let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma!
There will be those who understand!’”⁸¹⁶

SN 11.18

Homage of Householders

Gahaṭṭhavandanāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattthī.
1.3 “Once upon a time, mendicants, Sakka, lord of gods, addressed
his chariot handler Mātali, ‘My dear Mātali, harness the chariot with
its team of a thousand thoroughbreds. We will go to a park and see
the scenery.’⁸¹⁷
1.5 ‘Yes, lord,’ replied Mātali. He harnessed the chariot and informed
Sakka, ‘Good fellow, the chariot with its team of a thousand thor-
oughbreds has been harnessed. Please go at your convenience.’
1.8 Then Sakka descended from the Palace of Victory, raised his
cupped palms, and revered the various quarters.⁸¹⁸
1.9 So Mātali the chariot handler addressed Sakka in verse:

2.1 ‘Those proficient in the three Vedas worship you,
as do all the aristocrats on earth,
the four great kings,

816. Sahampati encourages the Buddha to teach for the liberation of all beings, as he did after the Buddha’s awakening (SN 6.1:8.1).

817. Indra’s thousandfold team of horses evoke the swift, thundering storm (Rig Veda 6.47.18, 7.91.6).

818. As does Sigālaka in DN 31:1.3, where they are specified as east, south, west, north, below, and above. Gods were often revered in particular quarters (eg. Atharva Veda 19.17).

and the glorious host of Thirty.
So what's the name of the spirit
that you worship, Sakka?'

'Those proficient in the three Vedas worship me, 3.1
as do all the aristocrats on earth,
the four great kings,
and the glorious host of Thirty.

But I revere those accomplished in ethics, 4.1
who have long trained in immersion,
who have rightly gone forth
for the culmination of spiritual life.

I also worship those householders, 5.1
the ethical lay followers
who make merit, Mātali,
providing for a partner in a principled manner.'

'Those who you worship 6.1
seem to be the best in the world, Sakka.
I too will worship
those who you worship, Sakka.'

After saying this, Maghavā the chief, 7.1
king of gods, Sujā's husband,
having worshiped the various quarters
climbed into his chariot."

SN 11.19

Homage of the Teacher

Satthāravandanāsutta

Near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove. 1.1

- 1.2 “Once upon a time, mendicants, Sakka, lord of gods, addressed his chariot handler Mātali, ‘My dear Mātali, harness the chariot with its team of a thousand thoroughbreds. We will go to a park and see the scenery.’
- 1.4 ‘Yes, lord,’ replied Mātali. He harnessed the chariot and informed Sakka, ‘Good fellow, the chariot with its team of a thousand thoroughbreds has been harnessed. Please go at your convenience.’
- 1.7 Then Sakka descended from the Palace of Victory, raised his cupped palms, and revered the Buddha.
- 1.8 So Mātali the chariot handler addressed Sakka in verse:
- 2.1 ‘Gods and men
worship you, Vāsava.
So what’s the name of the spirit
that you worship, Sakka?’
- 3.1 ‘It’s the fully awakened Buddha,
the Teacher of peerless name
in this world with its gods—
that’s who I worship, Mātali.
- 4.1 Those in whom greed, hate, and ignorance
have faded away;
the perfected ones with defilements ended—
they’re who I worship, Mātali.
- 5.1 The trainees who enjoy reducing suffering,⁸¹⁹
diligently pursuing the training
for getting rid of greed and hate,
and going past ignorance—
they’re who I worship, Mātali.’
- 6.1 ‘Those who you worship

819. Read *rāgadosavinayā* and *avijjāsamattikkamā* as truncated dative of purpose (see SN 11.4:7.3).

seem to be the best in the world, Sakka.
I too will worship
those who you worship, Sakka.’

After saying this, Maghavā the chief, 7.1
king of gods, Sujā’s husband,
having worshiped the Buddha,
climbed into his chariot.”

SN 11.20

Homage of the Saṅgha

Saṅghavandanāsutta

Near Sāvathī in Jeta’s Grove. 1.1

“Once upon a time, mendicants, Sakka, lord of gods, addressed 1.3
his chariot handler Mātali, ‘My dear Mātali, harness the chariot with
its team of a thousand thoroughbreds. We will go to a park and see
the scenery.’

‘Yes, lord,’ replied Mātali. He harnessed the chariot and informed 1.5
Sakka, ‘Good fellow, the chariot with its team of a thousand thor-
oughbreds has been harnessed. Please go at your convenience.’

Then Sakka descended from the Palace of Victory, raised his 1.8
cupped palms, and revered the mendicant Saṅgha.

So Mātali the chariot handler addressed Sakka in verse: 1.9

‘It’s these who should worship you, 2.1
namely the humans stuck in their putrid bodies,
sunk in a carcass,
stricken by hunger and thirst.

Why then do you envy those 3.1
who are homeless, Vāsava?⁸²⁰

820. Mātali deploys this epithet very precisely. Vāsava, originally meaning “wealthy one” is interpreted in Pali as the “houser” (SN 11.12:4.1). Both senses

Relate the seers' way of life,
let us hear what you say.'

- 4.1 'This is why I envy the
homeless, Mātali.
When they leave a village,
they proceed without concern.
- 5.1 They hoard no goods in storerooms,
nor in pots or baskets.
They seek food prepared by others,⁸²¹
and, true to their vows, live on that.
- 6.1 The attentive, whose words are full of wisdom,
live peacefully and quietly.
Gods fight with titans,
and mortals fight each other, Mātali.
- 7.1 Not fighting among those who fight,
quenched among those who have taken up arms,
not grasping among those who grasp:
they're who I worship, Mātali.'
- 8.1 'Those who you worship
seem to be the best in the world, Sakka.
I too will worship
those who you worship, Vāsava.'
- 9.1 After saying this, Maghavā the chief,

draw on Indra's bounty, which he generously bestows on his acolytes. Mātali implies that, since renunciates have no home, they must have been deficient in their worship. The narrative hinges on the shift from the Vedic religion of prosperity to the Buddhist value of letting go.

821. "Prepared by others" is *paraniṭṭhita*. The same phrase is at Thig 13.2:13.3, where it is spelled *pari-*, but I assume they should both be *para* ("other"). Mendicants do not cook, but rely on what is cooked by others.

king of gods, Sujā's husband,
having worshiped the mendicant Saṅgha,
climbed into his chariot."

Chapter Three

SN 11.21

Slain

Chetvāsutta

1.1 Near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove.

1.2 And then Sakka, lord of gods, went up to the Buddha, bowed,
stood to one side, and addressed him in verse:

2.1 “When what is slain do you sleep at ease?
When what is slain is there no sorrow?
What is the one thing
whose killing you approve?”

3.1 “When anger’s slain you sleep at ease.
When anger’s slain there is no sorrow.
Anger has a poisonous root
and a sweet tip, O Vāsava.
The noble ones praise its killing,
for when it’s slain there is no sorrow.”

SN 11.22

Ugly

Dubbaṇṇiyasutta

Near Sāvattḥī in Jeta's Grove.

1.1

"Once upon a time, mendicants, there was a native spirit who was ugly and deformed. He sat on the throne of Sakka, lord of gods.

1.3

But the gods of the thirty-three complained, grumbled, and objected, 'Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! This ugly and deformed spirit is sitting on the throne of Sakka, the lord of gods.' But the more the gods complained, the more attractive, good-looking, and lovely that spirit became.

1.4

So the gods went up to Sakka and told him what had happened. He replied, 'Surely, good fellow, that must be the anger-eating spirit!'⁸²²

2.1

Then Sakka went up to that spirit, arranged his robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, raised his joined palms toward the anger-eating spirit, and pronounced his name three times: 'Good fellow, I am Sakka, lord of gods! Good fellow, I am Sakka, the lord of gods!' But the more Sakka pronounced his name, the uglier and more deformed the spirit became, until eventually it vanished right there.

3.1

Then Sakka, lord of gods, guiding the gods of the thirty-three, spoke this verse:

3.5

'My mind isn't easily upset;

4.1

I'm not easily drawn into the maelstrom.

I don't get angry for long,

anger doesn't last in me.

When I do get angry I don't speak harshly,

5.1

nor do I advertise my own virtues.

I carefully restrain myself

822. That the speaker is Indra is confirmed by the vocative *mārīsa*. Gods addressing Indra use *bhaddantava*.

out of regard for my own welfare.”⁸²³

SN 11.23

The Sambari Sorcery

Sambarimāyāsutta

- 1.1 At Sāvattḥī.
 1.2 The Buddha said this:
 1.3 “Once upon a time, mendicants, Vepacitti, lord of titans, was sick,
 suffering, gravely ill. So Sakka went to see him to ask after his illness.
 1.5 Vepacitti saw Sakka coming off in the distance, and said to him,
 ‘Heal me, lord of gods!’⁸²⁴
 1.8 ‘Teach me, Vepacitti, the Sambari sorcery.’⁸²⁵
 1.9 ‘I can’t do that, good fellow, until I have consulted with the ti-
 tans.’⁸²⁶
 1.10 Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, asked the titans, ‘Good fellows, may
 I teach the Sambari sorcery to Sakka, lord of gods?’
 1.12 ‘Do not, good fellow, teach the Sambari sorcery to Sakka!’⁸²⁷
 1.13 So Vepacitti addressed Sakka in verse:
 2.1 ‘O Maghavā, O Sakka,
 king of gods, Sujā’s husband:

823. It’s notable not just how Sakka defuses the situation, but that he is full aware of how he does it, and uses his own conduct to inspire others.

824. Such a tender and caring relationship between these erstwhile enemies.

825. Sambara’s magic was legendary: shape-shifting (Śiva Purāṇa 59.19), battle-illusions (Viṣṇu Purāṇa 27, Harivaṃśa 99.27), rains of deadly weapons (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 10.21). None of these, however, suit Sakka’s behavior—he was not the sort to blackmail a mate in time of need. And indeed, there was a benevolent side to Sambara’s power as well. It was said to induce sleep (Arthaśāstra 14.3.19, 14.3.43), which could be a way to ease Vepacitti’s pain. There is also a hint of its medicinal use, since several medicinal herbs are named after it.

826. Apparently demon society is quite democratic.

827. Understandable, given that it has military applications as well. Magic, like any other power, may be used for good or ill.

a sorcerer like Sambara falls
into the terrible hell for a full century.’”⁸²⁸

SN 11.24

Transgression

Accayasutta

At Sāvattthī.

1.1

Now at that time two mendicants had clashed. One of them 1.2
transgressed against the other. The transgressor confessed to the
other mendicant, but they didn’t accept it. Then several mendicants
went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him
what had happened.

“Mendicants, there are two fools.⁸²⁹ One who doesn’t recognize 2.1
when they’ve made a mistake. And one who doesn’t properly accept
the confession of someone who’s made a mistake. These are the two
fools.

There are two who are astute. One who recognizes when they’ve 2.4
made a mistake. And one who properly accepts the confession of
someone who’s made a mistake. These are the two who are astute.

Once upon a time, mendicants, Sakka, lord of gods, guiding the 3.1
gods of the thirty-three, spoke this verse:

‘Control your anger; 4.1
don’t let friendships decay.⁸³⁰
Don’t blame the blameless,
and don’t backbite.
For anger crushes bad people
like a mountain.’”

828. Powerful magics come at a cost, and are unworthy of the lord of gods.

829. Also at AN 2.21. This procedure is formalized in the fortnightly confession
between mendicants at the *uposatha*.

830. Read *mittehi* as locative plural.

Don't Be Angry

Akkodhasutta

- 1.1 SO I HAVE HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattḥi in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.
- 1.3 There the Buddha addressed the mendicants:
- 1.4 "Once upon a time, mendicants, Sakka, lord of gods, guiding the gods of the thirty-three, spoke this verse:
- 2.1 'Don't let anger be your master,
don't get angry at angry people.
Kindness and harmlessness
are always present in the noble ones.
For anger crushes bad people
like a mountain.'

The Linked Discourses with Sakka are complete.

THE BOOK WITH VERSES IS FINISHED.

Colophon

The Translator

Bhikkhu Sujato was born as Anthony Aidan Best on 4/11/1966 in Perth, Western Australia. He grew up in the pleasant suburbs of Mt Lawley and Attadale alongside his sister Nicola, who was the good child. His mother, Margaret Lorraine Huntsman née Pinder, said “he’ll either be a priest or a poet”, while his father, Anthony Thomas Best, advised him to “never do anything for money”. He attended Aquinas College, a Catholic school, where he decided to become an atheist. At the University of WA he studied philosophy, aiming to learn what he wanted to do with his life. Finding that what he wanted to do was play guitar, he dropped out. His main band was named Martha’s Vineyard, which achieved modest success in the indie circuit.

A seemingly random encounter with a roadside joey took him to Thailand, where he entered his first meditation retreat at Wat Ram Poeng, Chiang Mai in 1992. Feeling the call to the Buddha’s path, he took full ordination in Wat Pa Nanachat in 1994, where his teachers were Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Jayasaro. In 1997 he returned to Perth to study with Ajahn Brahm at Bodhinyana Monastery.

He spent several years practicing in seclusion in Malaysia and Thailand before establishing Santi Forest Monastery in Bundanoon, NSW, in 2003. There he was instrumental in supporting the establishment of the Theravada bhikkhuni order in Australia and advocating for women’s rights. He continues to teach in Australia and globally,

with a special concern for the moral implications of climate change and other forms of environmental destruction. He has published a series of books of original and groundbreaking research on early Buddhism.

In 2005 he founded SuttaCentral together with Rod Bucknell and John Kelly. In 2015, seeing the need for a complete, accurate, plain English translation of the Pali texts, he undertook the task, spending nearly three years in isolation on the isle of Qi Mei off the coast of the nation of Taiwan. He completed the four main Nikāyas in 2018, and the early books of the Khuddaka Nikāya were complete by 2021. All this work is dedicated to the public domain and is entirely free of copyright encumbrance.

In 2019 he returned to Sydney where he established Lokanta Vihara (The Monastery at the End of the World).

Creation Process

Primary source was the digital Mahāsaṅgīti edition of the Pali Tipiṭaka. Translated from the Pali, with reference to several English translations, especially those of Bhikkhu Bodhi.

The Translation

This translation was part of a project to translate the four Pali Nikāyas with the following aims: plain, approachable English; consistent terminology; accurate rendition of the Pali; free of copyright. It was made during 2016–2018 while Bhikkhu Sujato was staying in Qimei, Taiwan.

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