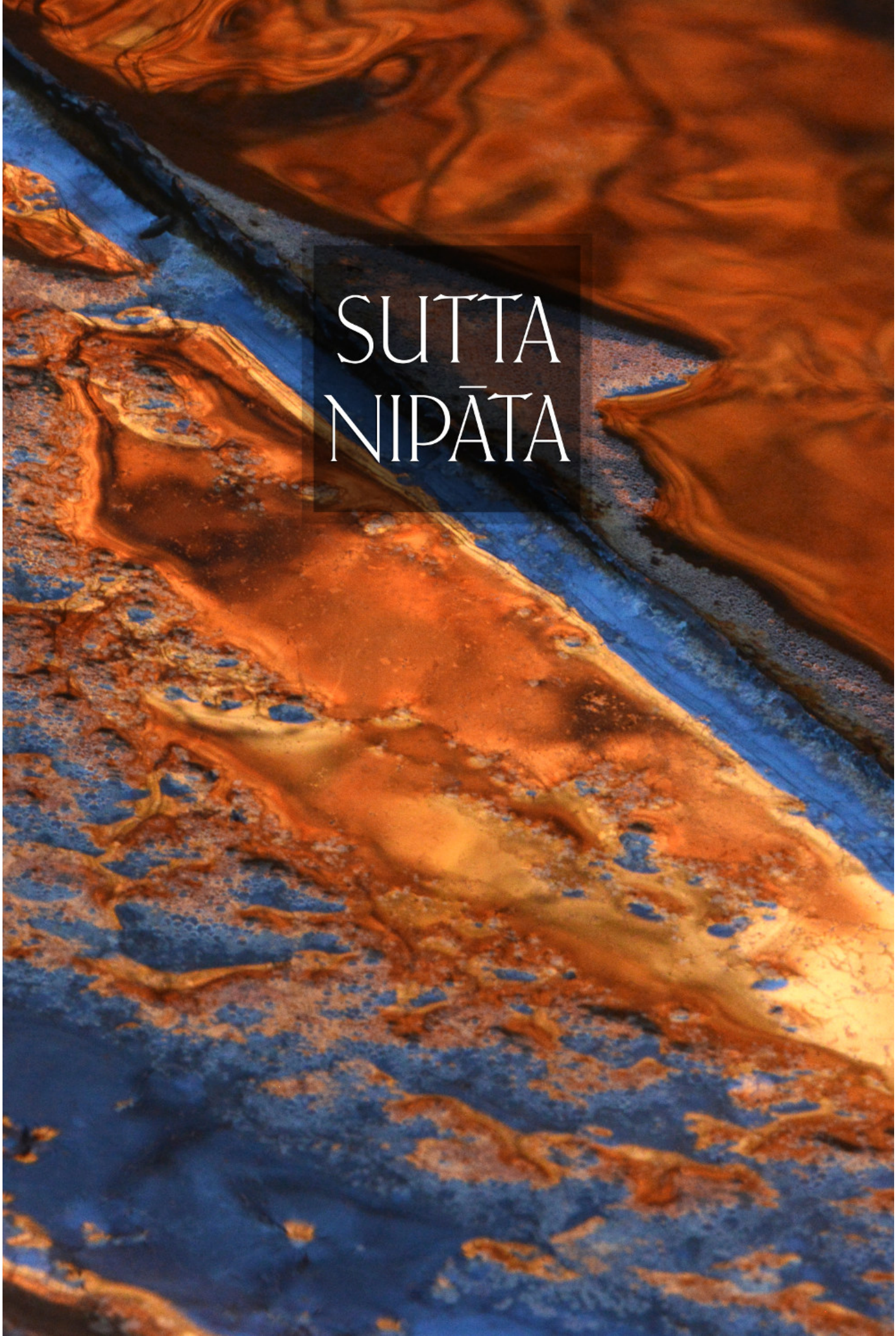
SUTTA
NIPĀTA

Sutta Nipāta

The Discourse Group

A TRANSLATION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION & NOTES

BY

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(Geoffrey DeGraff)

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Introduction

The Sutta Nipāta—the Discourse Group—is the fifth text in the Khuddaka Nikāya, or Short Collection, which in turn is the fifth collection in the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali Canon.

The collection totals 72 suttas in all, arranged in five chapters, and includes some of the most famous poems in the Pali Canon, such as the Discourse on Goodwill *(Karaṇīya-Mettā Sutta,* 1:8), the Discourse on Treasures *(Ratana Sutta,* 2:1), and the Discourse on Protection *(Maṅgala Sutta,* 2:4). It also contains two sets of poems that were apparently well-known in the Buddha's time as deep expressions of advanced points of doctrine: the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, a set of sixteen poems on the theme of non-clinging, and the Pārāyana Vagga, a set of sixteen dialogues, with a prologue and epilogue, in which the Buddha provides succinct answers to questions posed to him by brahmans who appear to have been adept in concentration practice. In addition to these more well-known poems, the collection also contains many useful instructions of a highly practical nature, covering everything from the most basic standards of conduct to the most subtle issues of discernment.[1]

The Sutta Nipāta differs from its neighbors in the Khuddaka—the Dhammapada, the Udāna, and the Itivuttaka—in that its suttas follow no standard form. All of them contain passages of poetry, but some suttas are entirely in verse, whereas others include prose passages as well. The poems vary greatly in length, the longest consisting of 63 verses; the shortest, of three. In some cases the longer poems present a continuous argument; in others, they are strings of short verses tied together by a common image or refrain. The longest poem in the collection, 3:9, combines both formats. The predominant verse form is the poetic dialogue, in which two or more people converse in verse—an ability that was highly prized in the Buddha's time—but there are other verse forms as well, including short monologues

(such as 2:10), longer narratives (such as 3:1, 3:2, and 3:10), and poems appended to prose discourses as memory aids (as in 3:12).

Because the suttas collected here follow no standard form, we have to look elsewhere to get an idea of what holds the collection together and how it functions in the context of Dhamma as taught by the Pali Canon as a whole. Of course, it's possible that there is no overall unity to this collection, that its compilers simply gathered poems that didn't fit elsewhere in the Canon, but two points suggest otherwise.

1) To begin with, there is some overlap between the Sutta Nipāta and other poetic texts in the Canon. Five of its suttas—1:10, 2:5, 3:3, 3:7, and 3:9—are identical with suttas found in the Majjhima and Saṁyutta Nikāyas, and a sixth—1:4—is nearly identical with a sutta in the Saṁyutta. If the Sutta Nipāta were intended to be merely a repository of suttas left over from the rest of the Canon, there would have been no reason for this overlap.

2) A comparison of the poetic texts in the Pali Canon with texts from other early Buddhist traditions—such as Sanskrit texts found in Nepal, translations in the Chinese Canon, and Gāndhārī manuscripts found in Central Asia—shows that different traditions shared many of the same verses, but that they organized those verses in different ways. The Chinese Canon, for instance, contains a section composed of 16 poems similar to the 16 poems in the fourth chapter of the Sutta Nipāta—the Aṭṭhaka Vagga—but to two of those poems it adds verses found elsewhere in the Pali Canon. A Sanskrit text quotes the first dialogue in the fifth chapter of the Sutta Nipāta—the Pārānaya Vagga—inserting a question and answer that, in the Pali version, is found in a sutta later in the same chapter. Gāndhārī manuscripts contain versions of two poems in the Sutta Nipāta that are composed of strings of smaller verses tied together by a common refrain, but in each case the verses are arranged in a different order.

All of this suggests that compilers in each tradition were working with many of the same building blocks in putting together their Canons, but that they organized those blocks in different ways, in line with their own ideas of what made thematic or aesthetic sense.

So the question is, what pattern can we detect underlying the choice of suttas that compose the Sutta Nipāta? This question might yield a number of valid answers, but one fact about the collection suggests an answer that is especially useful in helping to understand and interpret the teachings it contains. That fact is the sheer number of times that brahmans play a role in these poems, and the number of poems that, even when not mentioning brahmans by name, discuss issues that would be especially important for brahmans learning about the Dhamma.

In focusing on this fact, there is the possible danger of limiting the message of the Sutta Nipāta too narrowly to its historical context, giving the impression that it deals exclusively with brahmanical issues in ancient India and missing its more universal import. But there are three reasons why understanding how the Buddha and his early followers dealt with the brahmans can actually help in understanding how the message of the Sutta Nipāta applies to our time as well.

1. Many of the issues raised by brahmanical teachings—such as racism, classism, the best use of wealth and status, and the desire to secure well-being both now and after death—are still very much alive.

2. The brahmans, along with the noble warriors, were the educated elite of ancient India. As the Sutta Nipāta portrays the brahmans of the Buddha's time, they were torn between pride in their education and culture on the one hand, and a sense that the training provided by their education was still uncertain and incomplete. This is similar to the situation in which we find ourselves now that the Dhamma is coming West: Westerners are proud of their education but often sense that it has not made them truly happy, and that something important is missing. The way the early Buddhists approached the pride and ambivalence of the brahmans gives useful lessons in how to deal with the pride and ambivalence of the West.

3. Brahmanical education focused not only on the content of brahmanical doctrines, but also on the language in which those doctrines were expressed. Thus the brahmans had very particular ideas about how to use words, to compose literary texts, and to conduct philosophical dialogues. Buddhists, to speak effectively to brahmans, had to satisfy the brahmans' expectations on these issues. And of course, some Buddhist monks themselves had obtained a brahmanical education before their ordination—or, as in the

Buddha's case, seem to be conversant in the content of brahmanical education—so it would be natural for them to express themselves in the literary forms in which they had been trained from an early age.

As we will see, the suttas in the Sutta Nipāta portray the Buddha as being conversant not only with the content of brahmanical doctrines, but also with the brahmanical standards for how to present a teaching in a persuasive way. The problem for us, when reading these suttas, is that if we don't understand these standards, it's easy for us to miss what the Buddha is saying, and why he says it in the way he does. A prime example is his use of ambiguity and wordplay, which for the brahmans was a prized talent in philosophical dialogues, but for us—operating with different assumptions—can simply be confusing. But if we understand the background from which both the Buddha and his listeners were coming, it casts light on passages that otherwise would be obscure.

So the purpose of this introduction is to provide some information on that background, in hopes that it will be an aid in getting the most out of the act of reading the suttas in this collection.

A stock passage describing a highly educated brahman of the Buddha's time, found both in the Sutta Nipāta and in the four main nikāyas, runs as follows:

"He was a master of the Three Vedas [Knowledges] with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, etymology, & histories as a fifth; skilled in philology & grammar, he was fully versed in cosmology and in the marks of a Great Man."

Several terms in this description provide a good framework for analyzing the various ways in which the Sutta Nipāta deals with brahmanical issues. Under "Three Vedas" we will discuss how the Buddha redefined the three knowledges that constituted a true education, along with the ways in which he showed how Buddhist knowledge was superior to brahmanical knowledge. Under "liturgy," we will discuss the liturgical passages contained in the Sutta Nipāta. Under "history" we will discuss the ways in which the Sutta Nipāta rewrites brahmanical history on the one hand, and provides an alternative history, focused on the Buddha, on the other. Under "philology and grammar" we will discuss the ways in which passages in the

Sutta Nipāta play with brahmanical assumptions on the use of language and literary forms; under "cosmology," we will discuss how Buddhist cosmology as shown in the Sutta Nipāta dealt with—and challenged—brahmanical debates surrounding the structure of the universe; and under the "marks of a Great Man" we will discuss the ways in which the Sutta Nipāta presents the Buddha as the ultimate person, superior even to the Brahmās from which the brahmans claimed descent and with whom they hoped to gain union.

The Three Vedas were ancient religious texts that constituted the core of the brahmanical education. A person who had memorized these texts was called an attainer-of-knowledge *(vedagū)* or a three-knowledge person *(tevijja).* The Buddha adopted these terms and applied them to himself on the basis of the three knowledges he had gained on the night of his awakening: knowledge of previous births, knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings through the power of their actions, and knowledge of the ending of the mental effluents *(āsava).* He also asserted that the brahmanical use of the terms *vedagū* and *tevijja* was illegitimate, and that these words found their legitimate meaning only in a person who had mastered the same three knowledges that he had (3:9).

The Sutta Nipāta portrays several ways in which the Buddha convinces his brahmanical listeners of the validity of his claims. To begin with, he shows knowledge of a brahmanical hymn that was considered the highest expression of the Vedas (3:4, 3:7), and that the brahmans held to be their exclusive possession. This was a signal that he was not making his claims in ignorance, and instead had knowledge of an esoteric point in their education —implying that he knew other things about their education as well.

Although he recognized that there were good teachings in the brahmanical tradition, that most brahmans of the past had been serious meditators (2:7), and that some individual brahmans in the present were still holding to those traditions (5 Prologue), he maintained that, by and large, brahmans of the present day had fallen away from the good traditions of their past. Some were now nothing more than common householders, living in great luxury (2:7). Many passages in the Sutta Nipāta focus on criticizing the practices of brahmans in the Buddha's time, and from these passages we learn that the brahmans were a heterogeneous lot. The Buddha

criticizes them for practicing useless austerities (2:2, 5:3), for engaging in philosophical debates (4:3, 4:5, 4:8, 4:11–13), for making their living through interpreting dreams and omens (2:13, 4:14), for believing that purity could be attained through rituals or through seeing specific sights or hearing specific sounds (4:4), and for conducting animal sacrifices (2:7).

In return, we learn that brahmans had criticized the early Buddhists for eating meat and doing no work, criticisms that are rebutted in 1:4 and 2:2.

On a more positive note, the Buddha most often shows the superiority of his Dhamma by simply teaching it, providing solid instruction based on the second and third knowledges he gained on the night of his awakening to clear up issues that the brahmans debated among themselves. Based on the second knowledge, he describes how lay people can reach heaven by behaving in a moral way—rather than by hiring brahmans to perform animal sacrifices (1:6–7, 1:10, 2:3–4, 3:3). He also teaches how to attain the brahmanical goal of reaching the Brahmā world (1:3, 1:8, 3:5). Based on the third knowledge, he teaches brahmans who are apparently advanced in their practice of concentration how to go beyond the dimension of nothingness and gain full release from rebirth (5:1–16).

Based on both the second and third knowledges he sets new standards for what it means to be learned, who qualifies as a good teacher, and the proper etiquette for treating one's teachers (2:8–10, 3:6, 3:10). In particular, in two suttas in the collection he makes it clear that teachers should not teach for a fee—which, of course, is a standard that would deprive many brahmans of their source of livelihood (1:4, 3:4).

He also redefines many brahmanical terms to bring them in line with both knowledges. Most importantly, he redefines the term "brahman" itself, saying that arahants—fully awakened people—are the only true brahmans, regardless of their caste at birth (3:9, 4:4–5, 4:9, 4:13, 4:15, 5:4–5). There are even cases, such as 5:14, where this redefinition is asserted by one of his brahman interlocutors. Underlying this redefinition is the general principle that one becomes a brahman, not by birth, but by one's actions (1:7, 3:6, 3:9). Here the Buddha is taking an issue that had already arisen among brahmans, and redefined the meaning of "action." As 3:9 shows—and it is supported by MN 93—brahmans themselves had debated whether mere birth to brahman parents was enough to qualify as a genuine brahman,

or if one had to be virtuous and act in line with brahmanical practices as well. In other words, did status as a brahman require only birth or both birth and brahmanical action? The Buddha, however, removed both birth and brahmanical practices from the question entirely, making status as a brahman entirely a result of one's actions in line with the precepts and other factors of the path to awakening. In this way, he entirely rejected the racism and classism underlying both sides of the brahmanical argument. An individual's merit is thus purely a matter of his/her behavior, and has nothing to do with his/her race or cultural traditions.

Conversely, and in line with the same principle, the Buddha redefined the term "outcaste" so as to apply to any individual, regardless of caste at birth —even a brahman—who behaves in an immoral way (1:7).

Even the Buddhist term "arahant" is borrowed from the brahmans, giving it a new meaning. The word literally means "worthy one," and as 3:5 shows, it was applied to those who were held to be worthy recipients of the cake produced by a brahmanical sacrifice—"worthy" in the sense that giving to such recipients produced great merit for the donor (3:5). By calling fully awakened people "arahants," the Buddha was making the point that they are the most meritorious individual recipients of any gift.

Arahants are also given the title *vedagū*—attainer-of-knowledge—as a way of asserting that their knowledge is superior to that of the three brahmanical Vedas (2:8, 3:4–6, 3:12, 4:9, 4:15, 5 Prologue, 5:4).

A large number of suttas redefine another brahmanical term, that of the "sage" *(muni),* and describe in great detail how to behave so as to become a sage (1:1–3, 1:5, 1:12, 2:6, 2:11, 2:13, 3:4–5, 3:9, 3:11, 4:6–7, 4:9–10, 4:14–16, 5:1–2, 5:7, 5:9). An old brahmanical tradition identified a "sage" as a person who takes a vow of silence, thereby arriving at a state of peace (see Dhp 268). The Buddha, however, redefines the term so that sagehood *(mona)* and sagacity *(moneyya)* are a matter of one's actions and one's ability to attain total release from the cycle of rebirth: That, in his eyes, was what truly counted as arriving at peace. The concept of sage was so important in ancient India that Asoka, in his list of suttas that Buddhists should listen to and ponder frequently, included a "Muni-gāthā," which may be identical to 1:12.

Liturgy. As noted above, the Buddha criticized the brahmans for their useless recitations. One sutta (2:4) tackles this point head on, asserting that protection *(maṅgala)* comes from one's actions, and providing a long list of actions that act as protection, ranging from not associating with fools to gaining arahantship. Pointedly, brahmanical recitations are not included in the list.

Nevertheless, the Sutta Nipāta contains two suttas that apparently served (and one of them still serves) a liturgical purpose. One, 2:1, is a blessing chant for general well-being that bases its efficacy on the truth of the noble attainments. The other, 4:13, is a chant that was apparently used to frame the ceremony of taking the precepts, placing it in the context of the Buddha's own original experience of *saṁvega,* thus providing the proper frame of mind for those who are taking the precepts.

In this way, although the early Buddhists criticized the brahmans for their useless liturgies, they did provide their followers with the comfort of protection so that they wouldn't be tempted to revert to brahmanical practices.

History. In a similar pattern, the Sutta Nipāta undercuts the histories that the brahmans told about themselves, while at the same time providing alternative histories of the Buddha to inspire its readers/listeners to practice the Dhamma. On the one hand, 2:7 provides a revisionist history of the brahmans that casts their sacrifices, in particular, in a very bad light: The brahmans composed their hymns and designed their animal sacrifices, not through divine inspiration, but through greed for wealth and status. Instead of being pleased by the sacrifices, as the brahmans maintained, the devas were horrified by them. Instead of bringing prosperity and harmony to the human race, the sacrifices brought disease, discord, and violence.

On the other hand, three suttas—3:1, 3:2, and the beginning of 3:11—provide inspiring histories of the Buddha's birth and quest for awakening. One of them, 3:2, contains passages describing the events in the Buddha's own words. The other two are told entirely in the third person. These histories fill the vacuum left when the brahmanical histories were discredited, providing alternative examples for what counts as heroic in the conduct of one's life. Tellingly, the Sutta Nipāta contains no history of the most important event in the Buddha's life: his awakening. It recounts only a

few of the events leading there. There is no way of knowing why early Buddhists did not put the events of the night of the Buddha's awakening into verse, but it may have been that they didn't want the constraints of meter to get in the way of giving an accurate portrayal of the knowledges the Buddha gained in the course of that awakening.

Philology and grammar. Linguistic theory and usage were areas in which brahmanical knowledge appears to have been in flux throughout the ancient period in India. Of special interest for our purposes are brahmanical texts that lay down rules for how poetic texts should be composed. These texts postdate the Buddha's time by a few centuries, but they appear to have been based on earlier oral traditions developed among actors and directors in the very ancient, and very active, Indian theater. Poetry in the Pali Canon shows signs of having been composed in line with many of the aesthetic and literary theories of these texts. This indicates that the educated classes of the time—the brahmans and noble warriors—were familiar with those theories and had developed a taste for them. In fact, the Canon contains some of the earliest extant records of works composed in line with those theories.[2]

At the same time, it contains passages that appear to be contributions to the on-going development of those theories. However, not all the passages in the Canon—or even a poetic text like the Sutta Nipāta—were composed with an eye to their literary flair. In particular, many of the dialogues in the Sutta Nipāta appear to fall into another tradition, that of the philosophical enigmas posed as part of the brahmanical rituals.

Thus the discussion here will fall into three parts: an analysis of how some of the poems in the Sutta Nipāta follow the generally accepted literary theories of the time; a discussion of its contributions to those theories; and a treatment of how the tradition of the philosophical enigma influenced some of its more perplexing passages. Understanding these three topics will go a long way toward dismantling many of the misconceptions that have grown up around the way the Dhamma is expressed within the Sutta Nipāta.

General aesthetic theory. The central concept in ancient Indian aesthetic theory was that every artistic text should have *rasa,* or "savor," and the theory around savor was this: Artistic literature expressed states of emotion or states of mind called *bhāva.* The classic analysis of basic emotions listed eight: love (delight), humor, grief, anger, energy, fear, disgust, and

astonishment. The reader/listener exposed to these presentations of emotion did not participate in them directly; rather, he/she savored them as an aesthetic experience at one remove from the emotion. Although the savor was related to the emotion, it was somewhat different from it. The proof of this point was that some of the basic emotions were decidedly unpleasant, whereas the savor of the emotion was meant to be enjoyed.

Each of the emotions had its corresponding savor, as follows:

love — sensitive
humor — comic
grief — compassionate
anger — furious
energy — heroic
fear — apprehensive
disgust — horrific
astonishment — marvelous

Thus, for instance, a heroic character would feel energy, rather than heroism, but the reader/listener would taste that energy as heroic. Characters in love would feel their love, but the reader/listener, in empathizing with their love, would not experience love, but instead would taste that empathy as an experience of being sensitive.

An ideal work of literary art was supposed to convey one dominant savor, but if it was long enough, it was expected, like a good meal, to offer many subsidiary savors as well. The Sutta Nipāta is unlike the Dhammapada and Udāna in that it does not have a single dominant savor—in this respect, it's like the Itivuttaka—but many of its individual poems do. The most common savors in the collection are:

- the heroic (1:1–3, 1:11–12, 3:1–2, 3:4, 3:7–9, 3:11, the end of 3:12, 4:1–6, 4:9–10, 5:4, 5:6, 5 Epilogue) and
- the marvelous (1:4, *1:6*, *1:9–10*, 2:1, *2:4*, 2:5, 3:4, 3:6–7, 3:9, 3:11, 5 Prologue & 5 Epilogue—although in the italicized cases the marvelous savor comes simply from the fact that the Buddha's interlocutors are devas and yakkhas).

In all these examples—and especially in the ones where the Buddha is doing battle with Māra and yakkhas—the heroic and marvelous savor surround the person of the Buddha, providing a particularly Buddhist perspective on what it means to be a hero, and what kind of people with what kinds of qualities should be regarded as amazing.

Less frequent in the Sutta Nipāta are the horrific savor (1:11, 3:10) and the apprehensive (the beginning of 4:15 and 5:16). In the case of 1:11, which goes into detail on the disgusting aspects of the body, the horrific savor is a direct inversion of the sensitive savor that would normally be evoked through descriptions of the human body in erotic poetry. In this way, it subverts the lust that stands in the way of awakening. The remaining cases of the horrific and apprehensive evoke a sense of horror and apprehension surrounding the dangers of rebirth.

In these ways, early Buddhists—beginning, presumably, with the Buddha himself—employed the concept of savor to make their poetry attractive while at the same time directing the concept toward a specifically Buddhist end: inspiring the qualities that will lead to awakening and freedom from the cycle of repeated birth and death.

One of the prime ways of giving savor to a literary text was through the use of ornamental language. Classical treatises devoted a great deal of space to discussions of how language could be used to convey different savors. Many of their recommendations had to do with the sound of the language, as in alliteration and rhyme, and so are hard to convey when translating. Others, however, do survive translation.

This is particularly true of three types of ornamentation: similes, metaphors, and a type of figure called a "lamp" *(dīpaka).* Lamps are a peculiarity of poetry in Indian languages, which are heavily inflected, a fact that allows a poet to use, say, one adjective to modify two different nouns, or one verb to function in two separate sentences. (The name of the figure derives from the idea that the two nouns radiate from the one adjective, or the two sentences from the one verb.) In English, the closest we have to this is parallelism combined with ellipsis. An example from the Sutta Nipāta is in 2:5—

> thoughts fling the mind around,

as boys, a (captive) crow

—where "fling around" functions as the verb-phrase in both clauses, even though it is elided from the second. This is how I have rendered some of the lamps in many of the poems, although in other cases, such as the end of 3:6, I have repeated the lamp word either to emphasize its double role or simply because it was hard to render into English syntax a parallel construction in which a single word would work effectively. I have flagged some examples of lamp words and phrases in the notes to the individual suttas.

By far the most common types of ornamentation are similes and metaphors. A list of the suttas in which they are found would include these:

Simile *(upamā):* 1:1, 1:3, 1:8–9, 1:12, 2:1, 2:3, 2:5–6, 2:8, 2:14, 3:1–2, 3:4–6, 3:8–12, 4:1–2, 4:4, 4:6–9, 4:14–16, 5 Prologue, 5:6, 5:11, 5 Epilogue.

Metaphor (which in the time of the Buddha was considered as a type of simile): 1:6, 1:9, 1:12, 2:1, 2:9, 2:13–14, 3:2, 3:6–7, 3:11–12, 4:7, 4:13, 4:15, 5 Prologue, 5:1–3, 5:6, 5:10, 5:13, 5 Epilogue.

Especially striking are the repeated similes that tie together the verses in 1:1 and 1:3, and the complete metaphor—in which several comparisons are drawn between the parts of two things—in 1:4.

Other ornaments frequently used in the Sutta Nipāta include:

Praise *(guṇakīrtana)*: 1:9, 1:10, 2:7, 2:12–14, 3:3–7, 3:11, 4:2–6, 4:10, 4:16, 5 Prologue, 5:4–5, 5:11–12, 5:14, 5 Epilogue;

Admonitions *(upadiṣṭa):* 1:3, 2:6, 2:8, 2:10, 3:7–8, 3:10, 4:1–2, 4:7, 4:14, 4:16, 5:1, 5:5, 5:12, 5:15–16; and

Rhetorical questions *(pṛcchā):* 1:3, 1:5, 1:11, 2:8, 3:2, 3:12, 4:3, 4:8, 4:13, 5 Epilogue.

The praise is primarily directed toward the Buddha, as a way of enhancing the sense of the marvelous around his attainment and his ability to teach that attainment to others; the admonitions reflect the strong didactic tone in many of the suttas; and the rhetorical questions reflect the fact that many of the poems are presenting a reasoned argument of a particular point.

Ornaments less frequently used include:

Alliteration/rhyme *(yamaka):* 1:2, 3:6;
Ambiguity *(akṣarasaṁghāta):* 4:9, 4:13, 4:15, 5:11;
Benediction *(āśis):* 2:1;
Criticism *(garhaṇa):* 1:7, 2:6–7, 4:7–9;
Distinctions *(viśeṣaṇa):* 1:2, 1:5–7, 2:2–3, 3:9, 3:12, 4:3;
Encouragement *(protsāhana):* 2:8, 2:11, 4:16;
Entreaty *(yācña):* 2:1, 2:12, 5:12;
Etymology *(nirukta):* 3:6;
Examples *(dṛṣtānta):* 1:3, 1:7;
Explanations of cause and effect *(hetu):* 2:8, 3:12, 4:11–12;
Narration *(ākhyāna):* 1:7, 2:7, 2:14, 3:1–2, 4:15, 5 Prologue & 5 Epilogue;
Prohibitions *(pratiṣedha):* 2:10, 3:10; and
Wish *(manoratha):* 5:16.

Another way in which poetic language can convey savor is through a varied use of meters. Classic brahmanical poetry—such as the Vedas and the Upaniṣads—were composed primarily in two meters. But at approximately the time of the Buddha, new types of musical meters were being developed—"musical" both in the sense that they were inspired apparently by specific songs, and in the sense that two short syllables were precisely equal to one long syllable, just as two half notes equal one whole note in music. These meters quickly multiplied into a large variety of permutations, syncopated and not, that greatly expanded the repertoire of Indian poets from that time onward.

Although the majority of the suttas in the Sutta Nipāta are composed in the old meters, seven are composed in the new: 1:1, 2:13, and 3:6 are either entirely or primarily in combinations of the *opacchandasaka* and *vetāliya* meters; 1:8 and 4:14 are entirely or primarily in the *ariyā* meter; 4:6 is entirely in the *vetāliya* meter; and 3:10 is composed in several meters, including the *vetāliya, vegāvatī,* and *dodhaka*.[3] These meters are difficult to reproduce in English, but their existence in the Sutta Nipāta is worth noting for three reasons.

One is that their existence belies the idea, often advanced, that the style of the Sutta Nipāta is consistently old, and therefore must represent an old

stratum in the Pali Canon. The fact that some of the poems are in the new meters shows that this is not necessarily the case. At the same time, however, their existence does not prove that the poems in which they were composed postdated the Buddha. There is no way of knowing when the meters were introduced, although the Canon contains hints that the new meters may have already been current in his time. For instance, a verse in one of the most famous poems in the Canon, the summary of the Ovāda Pāṭimokkha (Dhp 184), is composed in the *opacchandasaka* meter. The tradition teaches that the Buddha recited this poem during the first year of his teaching career, which—if the tradition is correct, and there are no grounds for doubting it—would indicate that the new meters were already in circulation when he was alive. Similarly, 3:6—one of the poetic dialogues composed in the new meters—mentions in passing that the Buddha was still young at the time when the dialogue took place, which also suggests that the meters did not postdate his time.

The second reason for noting the existence of the new meters in the Sutta Nipāta is that they were apparently meant to show that the Buddha was current with the latest developments in literary expression. In two of the cases where he uses them—2:13 and 3:6—he is speaking in response to questions posed in the new meters. Throughout the Sutta Nipāta, when a person opens a poetic dialogue with the Buddha, the Buddha always answers in the same meter (or meters) in which the question was posed. His ability to respond in the new meters was thus one more example of his skill with language.

Third, it's also worth noting that none of the interlocutors identified as brahmans in the Sutta Nipāta use any of the new meters. This may account for the larger number of suttas composed in the old meters: The brahmans themselves may have preferred the old meters because of their association with Vedic and other brahmanical texts. The old meters were thus "theirs." This would indicate that even with the existence of new meters, there would be reasons to compose new verses in the old style. The same point applies to the choice of vocabulary in these poems as well. Still, the compilers of the Sutta Nipāta included a few poems in the new style, showing that the Buddha and the tradition he founded were not bound by old ways of

expression. They embraced the developments in poetics and the means of inducing savor when they saw that it would further their ends.

Nevertheless, despite the ornamental language used in some of its suttas, the Sutta Nipāta also contains a fairly large number of suttas that either provide none of the standard savors or, at most, convey those savors only weakly: 1:5, 1:8, 2:2–3, 2:6, 2:9, 2:11, 2:13–14, 3:5, 4:11–12, 4:16, 5:1–3, 5:7–15. This fact may be related to the strong didactic nature of the collection, but it also seems to be related to a particularly Buddhist contribution to ancient Indian aesthetic theory.

Buddhist aesthetic theory. It was common practice in ancient India for writers to announce the dominant savor they were trying to produce in their works, usually stating in passing that the savor of that particular work was the highest savor of all. This tendency carried over into the Pali Canon, where, for example, the Dhammapada—whose dominant savor is the Dhamma savor, traditionally a variant of the heroic—announces that Dhamma is the highest savor (Dhp 354).

Similarly, the Sutta Nipāta contains a passage identifying the highest savor—one, however, that is not one found in the standard list. In 1:10, the Buddha is quoted as saying that the highest savor is truth. This statement is nowhere explained, but it is echoed in the statement in 3:3 that "Truth indeed is deathless speech," and seems related to a remark that appears twice in the Pārānaya Vagga (5:8 and 5 Epilogue):

> In the past,
> before hearing Gotama's message,
> when anyone explained 'It is,' 'It will be,'
> all that was hearsay,
> quotation marks.
> All that promoted conjecture
> and gave me no pleasure.

In other words, for a person seeking truth, there is only one savor that is genuinely satisfying: the savor of a direct statement of the truth. Thus, even though many of the poems in the Sutta Nipāta provided pleasure in their use of ornamental language, that use was meant to serve a higher purpose, the conveying of truth—and was truly satisfying only to the extent that it

allowed the truth to shine through. And as the passages in 1:10 and 5:8 seem to be saying, even an unornamented passage, if it states the truth, has a savor that gives pleasure to a person tired of hearsay.

Because the Canon gives no further explanation of truth as a savor, it's hard to tell whether the Buddha proposed this savor as a ninth addition to the standard list of eight or as a subset of one of the eight: the savor of the marvelous. This latter possibility is suggested by the Buddha's reference in DN 11 and AN 3:61 to the miracle of instruction:

"And what is the miracle of instruction? There is the case where a monk/person gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.'"

This instruction is miraculous because, in the Buddha's hands, it can lead to a direct and true experience of unbinding.

The sense that genuine truth is miraculous is also suggested by 2:1, in which the statement of truths about the noble attainments is said to have the power to bring about well-being. And it is suggested by the many passages elsewhere in the Canon where, after the Buddha states an especially perceptive truth, his listener(s) comment that it is amazing and astounding how well he has stated it (see, for example, MN 82, MN 87, MN 106, and SN 42:11).

Whether the savor of truth was meant to be an independent savor or a variant of the marvelous, the high position that the Sutta Nipāta gives to the savor of truth relates to another specifically Buddhist point of aesthetic theory: the Canon's classification of poets into four types. The classification is found at AN 4:231:

"Monks, there are these four kinds of poets. Which four? The thought-poet, the heard-poet, the meaning *(attha)*-poet, and the extemporaneous poet. These are the four kinds of poets."

The Canon does not explain these terms, and they are not found in any other records of ancient Indian aesthetic theory. The Commentary states that the thought-poet invents stories, the heard-poet retells old legends, the meaning-poet gets to the meaning of things, and the extemporaneous poet comes up with a new poem on the spot.

Of the four, the meaning-poet is most concerned with the truth, and his accomplishment is pleasurable in direct relationship to his ability to convey the savor of truth in his poetry. This is precisely the role that the Buddha plays throughout the Sutta Nipāta. Even more impressive is when the meaning-poet can at the same time play the role of the extemporaneous poet, which the Buddha does in all of the poetic dialogues except one: 1:2, 1:4–7, 1:9–10, 2:4–5, 2:9, 2:13–14, 3:2, 3:4–7, 3:9–11, 4:7, 4:8–14, 4:16, 5 Prologue, and 5:1–16. The one exception is 2:2, where the main speaker is not our Buddha, but a previous one: the Buddha Kassapa.

In translation, it may be hard to fully appreciate the Buddha's accomplishment as a combined meaning- and extemporaneous poet, but it's possible to gain at least some sense of his level of skill by comparing his verses with those of three other extemporaneous poets portrayed in the Sutta Nipāta: Ven. Vaṅgīsa in 2:12 and 3:3; Sabhiya in 3:6; and Sela in 3:7. In only one case—Ven. Vaṅgīsa in 3:3—do these poets display anything near the Buddha's ability to convey useful, detailed truths in extemporaneous verse.

Philosophical enigmas. Even though the meaning of the vast majority of the Buddha's verses is direct and clear, there are a few cases where the verses seem deliberately ambiguous or obscure. On the surface, this would seem to be a flaw in a meaning-poet, but verses of this sort have to be understood in the context of another ancient Indian tradition: the philosophical enigma. Evidence in the Rig Veda shows that ancient Vedic ritual included contests in which elder brahmans used puns and other wordplay to express philosophical teachings as riddles that contestants were then challenged to solve. The purpose of these contests was to teach the contestants—usually students studying to become ritual experts—to use their powers of ingenuity in thinking "outside the box," in the justified belief that the process of searching for inspiration and being illuminated by the answer would transform the mind in a much deeper way than would be achieved simply by absorbing information.[4] In other words, there are occasions when ambiguity can be a useful pedagogical tool.

The Canon contains occasional examples in which the Buddha seems to be deliberately following this tradition. In MN 18 and MN 138, for instance, he makes an enigmatic statement and then, without allowing any time for

questions, gets up from his seat and enters his dwelling, leaving it to the monks to figure out for themselves what the statement meant. In SN 1:1 he answers a deva's question—"Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood"—with a paradox: "I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place." Apparently, his purpose there was to subdue her pride. In other cases, he plays with words in a shocking way to shake up his listeners' sense of language—as when, in Dhp 97, he says that the ultimate person is *akataññū,* which can mean both "ungrateful" and "knowing the unmade." In still other cases, he quotes a passage from one of his own poems and then interprets it in a way that is not at all obvious from the surface meaning of the passage (see 5:3, note 5). The purpose in these cases is apparently to convey the point that some of his statements have multiple levels of meaning and so are worth pondering in depth.

The problem with this sort of pedagogical tool is that it can be understood only in context. Outside of that context, it can seem strange and even lead to confusion. This is true of several passages in the Sutta Nipāta, but two examples in particular stand out. The first is 3:6, in which the Buddha is asked to define a long list of terms, and many of his definitions revolve around wordplay. In the context of the philosophical enigma, this sort of wordplay was highly prized, which is why Sabhiya, the Buddha's interlocutor, is so impressed by it. Outside of that context, the wordplay loses its force.

Another even more serious example is the grammatical pun that lies at the heart of the Buddha's dialogue with Māgandiya in 4:9. On the surface, the pun seems to be saying that the goal is not by means of views, learning, knowledge, habits, or practices, but that it cannot be attained except through views, learning, knowledge, habits, or practices. Actually, though, the grammatical case indicating "by means of" in Pali can also mean "in terms of": Thus the passage actually means that the goal is not defined in terms of those things, but it cannot be attained except through those things—a point made in many other passages in the Canon as well. As with the deva in SN 1:1, the Buddha's purpose in making this pun was apparently to subdue Māgandiya's pride. Māgandiya, unfortunately, caught only the surface meaning, and so was confused. Even more unfortunately, many scholars today catch only the surface meaning, which has led to many

misunderstandings. But if we keep in mind the fact that many of the dialogues in the Sutta Nipāta were intended for people whose sense of the philosophical dialogue included a taste for the philosophical enigma, we can be alert to look for deeper meanings in cases where the surface meaning of a passage may seem contradictory or ambiguous. I have tried to provide notes to help unlock many of these enigmas, but there may be instances that I have missed. Reading and interpreting ancient poetry, even with a sense of ancient context, requires care.

Cosmology. In SN 12:48, a brahman cosmologist approaches the Buddha and asks where he stands on the two big issues that cosmologists at the time debated in an attempt to base their cosmology on first principles: (1) whether everything exists or doesn't exist; and (2) whether everything is a oneness or a plurality. The Buddha refuses to take a stance on either issue, saying that all four positions given in answer to these questions are "extremes," and that he avoids these extremes with his teaching on dependent co-arising *(paṭicca samuppāda).* Because dependent co-arising is essentially a teaching on how the actions of the mind can give rise to suffering and can put an end to suffering, he is stating in effect that the most important principle in understanding the cosmos is not the nature of its existence, but the efficacy of actions, delineating which actions are skillful or unskillful in putting an end to suffering, along with the possible consequences of acting in either way.

In 3:9, the Buddha states this point in this way:

> The wise see action *[kamma]* in this way
> as it has come to be,
> seeing dependent co-arising,
> cognizant of action's results.
> Through action the world rolls on.
> People roll on through action.
> In action are beings held bound together,
> as in a linchpin,
> a chariot traveling along.

When considering the possible consequences of action, the brahmans of the Buddha's time were primarily concerned with two issues: whether there

was life after death and, if there was, what kind of actions in this lifetime might play a role in shaping that life. Several of the classic Upaniṣads—such as the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, and Kāṭha Upaniṣads—accepted the possibility of life after death, although they differed among themselves as to how one's actions might affect the way in which one was reborn. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad, for instance, taught that actions played a role in the post mortem fate of only middling and lower beings. Brahmans with knowledge of the self, it taught, were higher beings who would not be affected by their actions, and instead were guaranteed union with Brahmā after death (ChU V.3–10).

However, not all brahmans of the Buddha's time believed in the possibility of rebirth. DN 1 reports the existence of brahmans and contemplatives who, for various reasons, taught that the self was annihilated at death. In one case, these brahmans defined the self in a way similar to the views of modern materialists as to what constitutes a person: A person is nothing but a body, and so no longer exists after death.

So when the Buddha gained his second knowledge on the night of his awakening—knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings in line with their actions—he was not simply following an assumption shared by everyone in his culture. He saw that rebirth was a fact, and that it was shaped by the skillfulness of one's actions, which in turn were shaped by one's views. He also saw that one's caste in this lifetime played no role in determining one's future course after death.

This was a point on which he differed radically from the beliefs of many of the brahmans of his time. Among the brahmans who believed in rebirth, many also believed that their status as brahmans prevented them from falling into lower states after death. Instead, they were at the very least guaranteed rebirth in the brahman caste in the next life. This is one of the reasons why they debated whether having simply been born in the brahman caste was enough to earn this guarantee, or if one had to follow brahmanical traditions as well.

As we have already noted, the Buddha redefined this question by making the action that qualifies one as a brahman, not a matter of brahmanical traditions, but a matter of virtue and all the other skills that lead to full awakening.

This meant that neither brahmanical birth nor brahmanical traditions could guarantee a good rebirth after death, a point that the Buddha makes clear in 1:7:

> Though born into a family of scholars,
> brahmans, with chants as their kinsmen,
> are repeatedly seen with evil deeds:
> blameworthy in the here-&-now,
> with a bad destination in the afterlife.
> Their birth doesn't prevent them
> from blame & a bad destination.

As for the range of possible destinations that await a person after death, the Sutta Nipāta does not give a complete account. It simply notes that the Buddha knows the way to the Brahmā world (3:5), and that he also has directly known hell and the way leading to hell (3:10). Also, the many suttas in which devas and yakkhas appear or are mentioned (1:6, 1:9–10, 2:4–5, 2:14, 3:6) indicate that these levels of beings are among those from which one may come to the human world and to which, depending on one's actions, one may be reborn.

So the Sutta Nipāta's teachings on rebirth and action challenged a wide variety of views that brahmans held at the time. This is an important point to remember when we consider how these teachings challenge modern views on these topics as well. Instead of bowing to the beliefs of his culture, the Buddha maintained the truth of what he had known and seen, and what he regarded as useful—in light of that knowledge and vision—for the long-term welfare and happiness of his listeners.

Marks of a Great Man. For a modern reader, some of the least appealing passages in the Sutta Nipāta concern the brahmanical view that there were 32 marks to look for in a great man—one who would either become a universal monarch or a Rightly Self-Awakened One—and the corresponding Buddhist assertion that the Buddha was endowed with all 32 marks. These passages, found in 3:7 and 5 Prologue, seem to be in direct contradiction to the Buddha's own assertion in 3:9 that a person's physical attributes are no measure of his/her worth.

Nevertheless, these passages are best understood as part of a strategy to convince brahmans that the Buddha was worthy of the highest respect. And fortunately, the compilers of the Sutta Nipāta provided plenty of examples to show that the Buddha really did possess the excellence of which the marks were supposed to be signs.

The most immediate proof of the Buddha's excellence lies in the quality of his teaching, and in particular his understanding of the intricacies of the mind and how they can be mastered so as to put an end to suffering. As is typical of the poetry in the Khuddaka Nikāya, most of the poems in the Sutta Nipāta give no more than brief mention to many of the Buddha's basic teachings—such as the noble truths and their duties (2:1, 2:4, 3:7), the five hindrances (1:1), the five faculties (2:11), mindfulness (1:4, 1:8, 2:11, 3:2, 3:4–6, 3:12, 4:1, 4:10, 4:14, 4:16, 5:1–2, 5:4–6, 5:8, 5:10, 5:12–13, 5:15), jhāna (1:1, 1:9, 1:12, 3:2, 3:5, 3:9, 3:11, 4:14, 4:16, 5:13), unbinding (1:5, 1:10–11, 2:1, 2:4, 2:13, 3:3, 3:6, 3:12, 4:7, 4:14–15, 5:5, 5:8, 5:10, 5:13), and the ending of birth (1:4, 1:12, 2:1, 2:12, 3:4–7, 3:9, 3:12, 5:3–4, 5:7, 5:10–11, 5:16).

However, three poems give very detailed instructions on practical points of Dhamma—direct proof that the Buddha was an excellent teacher. The descriptions of goodwill practice in 1:8, of body contemplation in 1:11, and of the factors of dependent co-arising, rendered in poetry and prose in 3:12, are among the most detailed instructions on those topics found anywhere in the Canon. At the same time, the subtle points of doctrine discussed in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga and Pārānaya Vagga show that the Buddha had really mastered the ways of the mind and could offer practical instruction to others in how to attain that mastery as well.

In addition to technical discussions of doctrine, the suttas here also show how the Buddha taught an admirable set of values. Many of these values fall under the eight headings listed in AN 8:51 as proof that a teaching qualifies as genuine Dhamma: if, when put into practice, it is conducive to being unfettered (1:3, 4:10), to gaining dispassion (2:14, 4:1, 4:4, 4:6, 4:9, 5:6), to shedding pride and conceit (2:14, 4:3, 4:5, 4:8–10, 4:14–15), to modesty (2:9, 4:3, 3:11, 4:8, 4:10, 4:14), to contentment (1:12, 2:14, 3:11, 4:16), to reclusiveness (1:3, 2:14, 3:11), to aroused persistence (2:10, 3:2, 4:14, 4:16), and to being unburdensome (3:11, 4:16).

In line with the teaching that all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness (AN 10:15), several of the suttas focus on the need for heedfulness in the face of the fact of death and separation (3:8, 4:6), and the corresponding need to overcome attachment to the body (1:11), greed and sensuality (4:1), and sexual intercourse (4:7).

The ultimate proof of the value of these teachings, of course, comes only when the reader/listener puts them to use and finds that they do, in fact, lead to the ending of suffering and stress (MN 27). But the Sutta Nipāta also provides provisional proof in the way it depicts the Buddha's demeanor as an embodiment of how these teachings are lived. He is able to read minds (5 Prologue). He is ready with an answer to all the questions put to him (except in 4:8, where he is distrustful of his listener's motivation in looking for an argument), and he shows many admirable attributes in the way he engages with his interlocutors. For instance, in 2:7 and 3:9, he doesn't criticize brahmans until brahmans directly ask for his opinion of them and their traditions. In 3:6 he shows an open readiness to answer questions that had sparked other religious teachers to behave in a surly and impolite way.

All of this prepares the reader/listener to accept the many passages in the Sutta Nipāta devoted to praise of the Buddha. In line with a passage from DN 16—saying that the Buddha is praised by those who themselves are worthy of praise—the suttas here quote the praise that brahmans, excellent poets, and even supernatural beings have bestowed on him (1:9, 1:10, 2:1, 2:12, 2:14, 3:3, 3:6–7, all of 5). Some of the terms of this praise had special meaning for brahmans: In 3:5 and 3:7, brahmans actually call him Brahmā, their highest possible praise, and in 3:4–5 and 3:7, they agree that the Buddha and his noble disciples are the most deserving recipients of brahmanical sacrificial gifts.

They also call him the "One with Eyes" or the "All-around Eye" (1:2, 1:9, 2:12, 2:14, 3:9, 5 Prologue, 5:5, 5:6, 5:9, 5 Epilogue), terms that require special explanation. From Vedic times, a person's spiritual power was thought to reside in his/her eyes. The power of the eye was indicative not only of the ability to see—and thus being an "Eye" meant that one had especially penetrating knowledge of things—but also of the ability to grant blessings or inflict curses with a glance. This is why it was considered auspicious to gaze into the eyes of a holy person or heavenly being, and to

be gazed upon by such a being as well. Moreover, divine beings were thought to be "all eye," in the sense that they could see with every part of their body. Thus simply to be in their presence or to see any part of their body was considered a blessing.[5] So when the poems here call the Buddha an Eye or and All-around Eye, they are treating the Buddha as a divine being of great power and insight.

However, they do not stop with depicting the Buddha simply in these terms, or even as the highest figure in the brahmanical cosmos. He is something higher. All of the awakened, the poems say, have gone beyond the Brahmā world (3:6), and their course can't even be known by devas (this includes Brahmās) or human beings (3:9, 5:6). In 3:10, a Brahmā bows down to the Buddha as a sign that he recognizes the Buddha's superiority—and that all other beings, brahmans included, should do so as well.

Perhaps even more impressive than the praise showered on the Buddha is the way in which he responds to that praise. He is not abashed by it—after all, as he notes in DN 1, there is no way that the praise given by others can do full justice to his attainment. At the same time, though, he is not made proud by the praise. Instead, he looks to see what provoked it. In 3:7, for example, his response to Sela's high praise is first to affirm his status as Buddha, but then to penetrate further to the fact that Sela's praise is actually motivated by doubt. So the main thrust of his response to Sela is to address that doubt directly. In other words, his concern is less with his own image in the eyes of others, and more with the genuine well-being of others, whether they give him praise or blame.

When we understand the various ways in which the Sutta Nipāta engages the main elements of brahmanical education—the Vedas, liturgy, history, philology and grammar, cosmology, and the marks of a Great Man—we can see that the Buddha and his early followers borrowed many of their concepts and techniques of expression from the brahmans. On one level, this is only natural, in that the Buddha and his more literate followers had received a brahmanical education or were familiar with its terms. This was the language in which they were already trained to think.

However, as a general principle, they did not allow the brahmans or brahmanical education to set the agenda as to what and how they taught.

Everything from Indian culture, whether new or old, was evaluated as to how it did and didn't fit in with the Buddha's own three knowledges as gained on the night of his awakening—and if it didn't fit, how it might be altered to further the Buddhist purpose of teaching the path of awakening to others.

The Sutta Nipāta contains only one sutta that breaks with this general principle. In 3:7, brahmanical traditions set the terms of the discussion. Sela is impressed with the Buddha simply because the latter exhibits all 32 marks of the Great Man, and because his response to praise falls in line with what Sela had learned from "the aged line of teachers." The Buddha, in response to Sela's questions, does not encourage Sela to have faith in him only after having tested his teachings (see MN 95, AN 3:66, and AN 4:192). Instead, he simply tells Sela to abandon his doubts immediately. How this sutta was received by brahmans of the time may be indicated by the fact that it was translated into Sanskrit and included in the Divyāvadāna. But from a modern perspective the sutta is one of the weakest in the collection, conveying the least amount of practical Dhamma. Thus, even though it is an exception to the general principle of not allowing brahmanical beliefs to set the agenda in conveying the Dhamma, it shows the wisdom of the general principle with which it breaks.

From this perspective, we can see that the Buddhist appropriation of brahmanical terms was strategic. In some cases, the Sutta Nipāta uses brahmanical terms in a way that preserves their original brahmanical meaning. In others, it gives new meanings to those terms so that they will fit with the entirely new standard, set by the Buddha's awakening, for what counts as knowledge and what that knowledge can enable people to do.

Similarly with brahmanical practices: In some cases, such as animal sacrifice and racism, the brahmanical practice is denounced and rejected outright. In others, such as the practice of sacrifice in general, or in the conduct of philosophical debates, certain key concepts—such as the means of sacrifice, the merit of donation to a worthy recipient, the use of philosophical enigmas—are converted to serve the purpose of a culture devoted to awakening.

Although the act of reading the Sutta Nipāta at present requires that we step outside of our own educational background to develop an appreciation

for the background that the poems here assume, we can take these poems as lessons in how to understand the Dhamma in relation to our own context: using the Buddha's awakening as a standard for determining what in our culture can serve the purposes of our own awakening, and what needs to be redefined and reimagined if it is to serve that end.

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

The primary foundation for this translation is the Thai edition of the Pali text, printed by Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, Bangkok, 1980. I have also consulted Sri Lankan and Burmese editions available online through the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* and the *Digital Pali Reader.* All of these texts have their flaws, so I have had to make choices among them. In cases where the Thai text contained readings that were obviously wrong, I have chosen readings from one or both of the other sources. In cases where none of the variant readings in the different editions seemed obviously better than the others, I have stood by the Thai reading because there already exist English translations based on the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions; I felt that the Thai edition should have its chance to speak to the larger world.

The attempt to render Pali verse into set meters in English, in imitation of the meters in the original, leads inevitably to distortions, in which words are cut from some lines, and extraneous words are used to pad others to maintain the meter. To avoid this sort of misrepresentation, I have chosen to render the poems here into free verse, as this allows for the fewest distortions in meaning, as well as for the ability to highlight parallel constructions and to emphasize words that are emphasized in the original in ways that normal English prose syntax would not allow.

JULY, 2016

NOTES

1. There is no firm evidence that any other early Buddhist tradition had a text corresponding to the Sutta Nipāta. However, there is one text suggesting

that at least one other tradition might have had such a collection. That text is the Milinda Pañhā—the Questions of King Milinda. This text exists now in a Pali rendering, which in Myanmar is actually considered as part of the Pali Canon. Internal evidence, however, suggests that the text came originally from another tradition. Its dialogues often quote the words of the Buddha, but in many cases the quotations cannot be traced to any part of the existing Pali Canon—a sign that the text possibly had its origins in a tradition that accepted different records of what the Buddha had said. However, in five of the dialogues the text quotes short passages that it identifies as "in the Sutta Nipāta," and which are found in the Pali Sutta Nipāta. (The passages are found in 1:2, 1:12, 2:6, and 3:11.) Of course, the phrase "in the Sutta Nipāta" may have been added when the text was translated into Pali, but at the very least it leaves open the possibility that the Pali tradition was not the only one to have such a compilation.

As for records of other traditions as they relate to the Sutta Nipāta: In addition to those mentioned here in the Introduction, two complete Sanskrit texts—the Mahāvastu from the Lokottaravādin school, and the Divyāvadāna from the Mūlasarvāstivādin school—contain versions of some of the suttas. The Mahāvastu contains Sanskrit parallels with 1:3, 2:1, 3:1–2, 3:6, and 4:9; the Divyāvadāna, with 2:1, 3:7, and 4:9. A manuscript discovered in Central Asia contains fragments of four suttas from the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, 4:7–10. The Mahāyāna philosopher Asaṅga quotes Sanskrit versions of three short passages from 4:1, 4:13, and 5:1. Also, in addition to the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, there are passages from some of the other suttas in the Sutta Nipāta found in the Chinese Canon, but I do not have access to them.

In the case of parallels to which I do have access, I have not attempted to use them as a basis for altering the Pali in search of what might strike me as a more original version of any of the poems. Such judgments are inevitably subjective, and reveal more about the interpreter than about the text being interpreted. This point applies even more forcefully to Chinese versions of the Canon than to Sanskrit ones, in that they are linguistically and chronologically even further remote from the Pali than the Sanskrit versions are.

2. On the topic of ancient Indian aesthetic theory and its affect on the Pali Canon, see A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature,* volumes 1 and 2.

3. For more information on these meters, see A. K. Warder, *Pali Metre.*

4. See Willard Johnson, *Poetry and Speculation of the Ṛg Veda.*

5. See Jan Gonda, *Eye and Gaze in the Veda.*

I : The Snake Chapter (Uraga Vagga)

1:1 The Snake

Alternative versions of this poem—a Sanskrit version included in the Udānavarga, and a Gāndhārī version included in the Gāndhārī Dharmapada—have many of the same verses included here, but arranged in a different order. This suggests that the verses originally may have been separate poems, spoken on separate occasions, and that they were gathered together because they share the same refrain.

The monk who subdues his arisen anger
as, with herbs, snake-venom once it has spread,
  sloughs off the near shore & far—
  as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who has cut off passion
without leaving a trace,
as he would, plunging into a lake, a lotus,
  sloughs off the near shore & far—
  as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who has cut off craving
without leaving a trace,
drying up the swift-flowing flood,[1]
  sloughs off the near shore & far—
  as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who has uprooted conceit
without leaving a trace,
as a great flood, a very weak bridge made of reeds,
  sloughs off the near shore & far—
  as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk seeing
in states of becoming
no essence,
as he would,
when examining fig trees,
no flowers,
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk with no inner anger,
who has thus gone beyond
becoming & not-,
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk whose discursive thoughts are dispersed,
well-dealt with inside
without leaving a trace,
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who hasn't slipped past or held back,[2]
transcending all
this objectification,[3]
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who hasn't slipped past or held back,
knowing with regard to the world
that "All this is unreal,"
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who hasn't slipped past or held back,
without greed, as "All this is unreal,"
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who hasn't slipped past or held back,

without aversion, as "All this is unreal,"
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who hasn't slipped past or turned back,
without delusion, as "All this is unreal,"
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk in whom
there are no obsessions[4]
—the roots of unskillfulness totally destroyed—
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk in whom
there's nothing born of disturbance[5]
that would lead him back to this shore,
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk in whom
there's nothing born of the underbrush[6]
that would act as a cause
for binding him to becoming,
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

The monk who's abandoned five hindrances,
who, untroubled, de-arrowed,[7]
has crossed over doubt,
    sloughs off the near shore & far—
    as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

vv. 1–17

Notes

1. On craving as a flooding river, see Dhp 251, 337, 339–340, and 347.
2. See Iti 49.

3. On objectification, see Sn 4:11, note 4, and the introduction to MN 18.

4. The seven obsessions, listed in AN 7:11, are: sensual passion, resistance, views, uncertainty, conceit, passion for becoming, and ignorance. The relationship of three of these obsessions—the first two and the last—to the three types of feeling is discussed in MN 44.

5. *Daratha*. For a detailed description of the subtleties of disturbance, see MN 121.

6. Underbrush stands for desire. See Dhp 344.

7. The arrow can stand for becoming, craving, or grief. See SN 36:6, Sn 3:8, Sn 4:15, Dhp 351, Thag 6:13, Thig 3:5, and Thig 6:1.

1:2 Dhaniya the Cattleman

Dhaniya the cattleman:[1]

"The rice is cooked,
my milking done.
I live with my people
along the banks of the Mahi;
my hut is roofed, my fire lit:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain."

The Buddha:

"Free from anger,
my rigidity gone,[2]
I live for one night
along the banks of the Mahi;
my hut's roof is open, my fire out.[3]
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain."

Dhaniya:

“No mosquitoes or gadflies
are to be found.
The cows range in the marshy meadow
where the grasses flourish.
They could stand the rain if it came:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain.”

The Buddha:

“A raft, well-made,
has been lashed together.[4]
Having crossed over,
gone to the far shore,
I’ve subdued the flood.
No need for a raft
is to be found[5]:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain.”

Dhaniya:

“My wife is composed, not wanton,
is charming, has lived with me long.
I hear no evil about her at all:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain.”

The Buddha:

“My mind is composed, released,
has long been nurtured, well tamed.
No evil is to be found in me:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain.”

Dhaniya:

"I support myself on my earnings.
My sons live in harmony,
free from disease.
I hear no evil about them at all:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain."

The Buddha:

"I'm in no one's employ,[6]
I wander the whole world
on the reward [of my Awakening].
No need for earnings
is to be found:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain."

Dhaniya:

"There are cows, young bulls,
cows in calf, & breeding cows,
& a great bull, the leader of the herd:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain."

The Buddha:

"There are no cows, no young bulls,
no cows in calf or breeding cows,
no great bull, the leader of the herd[7]:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain."

Dhaniya:

“The stakes are dug-in, immovable.
The new muñja-grass halters, well-woven,
not even young bulls could break:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain.”

The Buddha:

“Having broken my bonds
like a great bull,
like a great elephant
tearing a rotting vine,[8]
I never again
will lie in the womb:
So if you want, rain-god,
go ahead & rain.”[9]

The great cloud rained down
straightaway,
filling the lowlands & high.
Hearing the rain-god pour down,
Dhaniya said:

“How great our gain
that we’ve gazed
on the Blessed One!
We go to him,
the One with Eyes,[10]
for refuge.
May you be our teacher, Great Sage.
My wife & I are composed.
Let’s follow the holy life
under the One Well-Gone.
Gone to the far shore
of aging & death,
let’s put an end

to suffering & stress."

Māra:[11]

"Those with children
delight
because of their children.
Those with cattle
delight
because of their cows.
A person's delight
comes from acquisitions,
for a person with no acquisitions
doesn't delight."

The Buddha:

"Those with children
grieve
precisely because of their children.
Those with cattle
grieve
precisely because of their cows.
A person's grief
comes from acquisitions,
for a person with no acquisitions
doesn't grieve."[12]

vv.18–34

Notes

1. Dhaniya Gopa: literally, One Whose Wealth is in Cattle. According to SnA, his herd consisted of 30,000 head of cattle.

2. The first line in the Buddha's verse plays on words in the first line of Dhaniya's. "Free from anger" *(akkodhano)* plays on "rice is cooked" *(pakkodano);* and "rigidity" *(khilo)* plays on "milk" *(khīro).*

3. "Open" means having a mind not covered or concealed by craving, defilement, or ignorance. This image is also used at Ud 5:5 and Sn 4:4. "My fire out" refers to the fires of passion, aversion, & delusion; birth, aging, & death; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. See SN 35:28; Iti 93; and *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*.

4. The raft stands for the noble eightfold path. See MN 22 and SN 35:197.

5. As this verse doesn't seem to be a direct response to the preceding one, SnA suggests that we are missing part of the conversation here. An alternative possibility is that the Buddha is engaging in word play—the word "crossed over" *(tiṇṇa)* being a pun on Dhaniya's reference to grass *(tiṇa)*.

6. According to SnA, the Buddha is not in anyone else's employ nor even in his own employ—i.e., he is not in the employ of craving.

7. The Buddha may be speaking literally here—he has no cattle, so there is no way that a heavy rain could cause him harm—but he may also be speaking metaphorically. See SN 4:19 and Thag 1:1.

8. See MN 66.

9. This verse is quoted in the Milinda Pañhā.

10. On the theme of the Buddha as "One with Eyes," see DN 16, note 44. See also, Sn 2:12, note 2.

11. According to SnA, Māra suddenly comes on the scene to try—unsuccessfully—to prevent Dhaniya and his wife from going forth. His verses here, together with the Buddha's response, are also found at SN 4:8.

12. See Sn 3:12, note 2.

See also: SN 4:8; AN 3:35; AN 3:110; AN 7:6-7; Ud 2:10; Thig 1:1

1:3 A Rhinoceros

The refrain in this sutta is a subject of controversy. The text literally says, "Wander alone like a 'sword-horn,' which is the Pali term for rhinoceros. SnA, however, insists that this refers not to the animal but to its horn, because the Indian rhinoceros, unlike the African, has only one horn. Still, some scholars have noted that while the Indian rhinoceros is a solitary animal, rhinoceros horns don't wander, and that in other verses in the Pali Canon, the phrase "wander alone like…" takes a person or an animal, not

an animal part, for its object. Thus, for example, in Dhp 329 (repeated below), one is told to "wander alone like a king renouncing his kingdom, like the elephant in the Mataṅga woods, his herd." It's possible that the rhinoceros was chosen here as an example of solitary wandering both because of its habits and because of its unusual single horn. However, in a translation, it's necessary to choose one reading over the other. Thus, because wandering "like a rhinoceros" sounds more natural than wandering "like a horn," I have chosen the former rendering. Keep in mind, though, that the singularity of the rhinoceros horn reinforces the image.

Other versions of this poem exist in Sanskrit: a short Sanskrit version in the Mahāvastu, and a Gāndhārī version in a manuscript discovered in Central Asia. The Gāndhārī version contains many of the same verses given here, but in a different order. The Mahāvastu version contains only 12 verses, but it is followed by a statement that the full version of the sutta contained 500 verses. How that number was achieved is suggested by the fact that, of the 12 verses, several contain only minor variations from one another. All of this suggests that the verses here originally may have been separate poems, composed on separate occasions, and that they were gathered together because of their common refrain.

Like the Pārānaya Vagga, this poem is given a detailed interpretation in Nd II. Nd II ends its discussion of this sutta by saying that it was spoken by a Private Buddha, i.e., one who gains awakening on his own but is unable to formulate the Dhamma in such a way as to teach others to gain awakening. This assertion, however, is contradicted by the content of some of the verses, such as the one beginning, "Consort with one who is learned, who maintains the Dhamma, a great & quick-witted friend." Such a friend would not have existed in the time of a Private Buddha.

There is evidence suggesting that in the centuries after the rule of King Asoka, monastery-dwelling monks began to look askance at forest-dwelling monks, and in some cases even forbade them from entering the precincts around the stupas of their monasteries. Because Nd I and Nd II were most likely composed by monastery-dwelling monks, it might be the case that they tried to blunt the message of this sutta by attributing it to a Private Buddha

rather than to our Buddha, the implication being that its advice was not appropriate for monks of their day and age.

Renouncing violence
for all living beings,
harming not even one of them,
you would not wish for offspring,
    so how a companion?
Wander alone[1]
like a rhinoceros.

For a person by nature entangled
there are affections;
on the heels of affection, this pain.
Seeing the drawback born of affection,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

One whose mind
is enmeshed in sympathy
for friends & companions,
neglects the goal.
Seeing this danger in intimacy,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Like spreading bamboo,
    entwined,
is concern for offspring & spouses.
Like a bamboo sprout,
    unentangling,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

As a deer in the wilds,
    unfettered,[2]
goes for forage wherever it wants:
The observant person, valuing freedom,

wanders alone
like a rhinoceros.

In the midst of companions
—when staying at home,
    when going out wandering—
you are prey to requests.
Valuing the freedom
that no one else covets,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

There is sporting & love
in the midst of companions,
& abundant love for offspring.
    Feeling disgust
at the prospect of parting
from those who'd be dear,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Without resistance in all four directions,
content with whatever you get,
enduring troubles without panic,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

They are hard to please,
some of those gone forth,
as well as those living the household life.
Being unconcerned
with the offspring of others,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Cutting off the householder's marks,[3]
    like a kovilara tree
    that has shed its leaves,
the enlightened one, cutting all household ties,

wanders alone
like a rhinoceros.

> If you gain an astute companion,
> a fellow traveler, right-living, enlightened,
> overcoming all troubles,
> go with him, gratified,
> mindful.
>
> If you don't gain an astute companion,
> a fellow traveler, right-living & wise,
> wander alone
> like a king renouncing his kingdom,
> like the elephant in the Mataṅga wilds,
> [his herd].[4]

We praise companionship
 —yes!
Those on a par, or better,
should be chosen as friends.
If they're not to be found,
 living faultlessly,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Seeing radiant bracelets of gold,
well-made by a smith,
 clinking, clashing,
 two on an arm,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros,

[Thinking:]
"In the same way,
if I were to live with another,
there would be conversation or attachment."
Seeing this future danger,
wander alone

like a rhinoceros.

Because sensual pleasures,
elegant, honeyed, & charming,
bewitch the mind with their manifold forms—
seeing this drawback in sensual strings[5]—
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

“Calamity, tumor, misfortune,
disease, an arrow, a danger for me.”
Seeing this danger in sensual strings,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Cold & heat, hunger & thirst,
wind & sun, horseflies & snakes:
Enduring all these, without exception,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

As a great white elephant,
with massive shoulders,
renouncing his herd,
lives in the wilds wherever he wants,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

“There’s no way
that one delighting in company
can touch even momentary release.”[6]
Heeding the words
of the Kinsman of the Sun,[7]
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Transcending the contortion of views,[8]
the sure way attained,
the path gained,

[realizing:]
“Unled by others,
I have knowledge arisen,”
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

With no greed, no deceit,
no thirst, no hypocrisy—
    delusion & blemishes
        blown away—
with no inclinations for all the world,
            every world,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Avoid the evil companion
    disregarding the goal,
    intent on the discordant[9] way.
Don’t associate yourself
with someone heedless & hankering.
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Consort with one who is learned,
    who maintains the Dhamma,
    a great & quick-witted friend.
Knowing the meanings,
subdue your perplexity,
[then] wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Free from longing, finding no pleasure
in the world’s sport, ardor, or sensual bliss,
abstaining from adornment,
speaking the truth,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Abandoning offspring, spouse,

father, mother,
riches, grain, relatives,
& sensual pleasures
    altogether,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

    “This is a bondage.
There’s little happiness here,
next to no enjoyment,
all the more suffering & pain.[10]
    This is a boil”[11]:
Knowing this, circumspect,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Shattering fetters,
like a fish in the water tearing a net,
like a fire not coming back to what’s burnt,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Eyes downcast, not footloose,
senses guarded, with protected mind,
not soggy, not burning,[12]
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Taking off the householder’s marks,[13]
    like a coral tree
    that has shed its leaves,
going forth in the ochre robe,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Showing no greed for flavors, not wanton,
going from house to house for alms
with mind unenmeshed in this family or that,

wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Abandoning barriers to awareness,
expelling all defilements—all—
non-dependent, cutting aversion,
affection,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Turning your back on pleasure & pain,
as earlier with sorrow & joy,
attaining pure
equanimity,
tranquility,[14]
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

With persistence aroused
for the highest goal's attainment,
with mind unsmeared, not lazy in action,
firm in effort, with steadfastness & strength arisen,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Not neglecting seclusion, jhāna,
constantly living the Dhamma
in line with the Dhamma,
comprehending the danger
in states of becoming,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Intent on the ending of craving & heedful,
neither drooling nor dumb,
but learned, mindful,
—having reckoned the Dhamma—
certain & striving,
wander alone

like a rhinoceros.

Unstartled, like a lion at sounds.
Unsnared, like the wind in a net.
Unsmeared, like a lotus in water[15]:
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Like a lion—forceful, strong in fang,
living as a conqueror, the king of beasts—
resort to a solitary dwelling.
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

At the right time consorting
with the release through goodwill,
compassion,
empathetic joy,
equanimity,
unobstructed by all the world,
any world,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Having let go of passion,
aversion,
delusion;
having shattered the fetters;
unfazed at the ending of life,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

People follow & associate
for a motive.
Friends without a motive these days
are rare.
They're shrewd for their own ends, & impure.
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Notes

1. Nd II details the various ways in which a Private Buddha can be said to wander alone *(eko).* Two of the ways have to do with physical seclusion: He goes forth alone and wanders without a companion. The remaining have to do with mental seclusion: He has abandoned craving; is free of passion, aversion, and delusion; and has followed the path going one way only *(ekāyanamagga).* Interestingly enough, Nd II defines this path, not as just the four establishings of mindfulness (see DN 22) but as all seven sets of dhammas in the Wings to Awakening.

Nd II illustrates its reference to the abandoning of craving as a type of seclusion with this verse from Iti 15:

> With craving his companion, a man
> wanders on a long, long time.
> Neither in this state here
> nor anywhere else
> does he go beyond
> the wandering-on.
> Knowing this drawback—
> that craving brings stress into play—
> free from craving,
> devoid of clinging,
> mindful, the monk
> lives the mendicant life.

Nd II illustrates its reference to the path going one way only with this verse from SN 47:18 and SN 47:43:

> One with vision of the ending of birth,
> sympathetic to welfare,
> discerns the path going one way only,
> by which, in the past, they crossed over,
> are now crossing over,
> and will cross over
> the flood.

2. SN 35:191 lists two fetters: desire and passion. AN 10:13 lists ten: self-identification views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual desire, ill will, passion for form, passion for what is formless, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.

3. Hair and beard.

4. These verses = Dhp 328–329.

5. "There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire; sounds cognizable via the ear… aromas cognizable via the nose… flavors cognizable via the tongue… tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. But these are not sensuality. They are called strings of sensuality in the discipline of the noble ones." — *AN 6:63*

6. The temporary release from such things as the hindrances, attained when entering right concentration, or the temporary release from some of the factors of lower states of jhāna, attained when entering higher states of jhāna. This release lasts only as long as the necessary causal factors are still in place. This is apparently the same thing as the occasional release/liberation mentioned in MN 29. See note 2 to that sutta.

7. An epithet for the Buddha.

8. According to Nd II, the views here are the 20 forms of identity-views (see SN 22:1) and the 62 views discussed in DN 1. (The connection between these two lists is discussed in SN 41:3.) MN 2, however, explains a "contortion of views" in different terms, which may have been intended here.

9. *Visama.* See Sn 1:12, note 11.

10. See MN 54.

11. Reading *gaṇḍo* with the Thai editions. The other editions have *gaḷo,* fishhook. See AN 9:15.

12. Nd II explains "not soggy" by quoting Ven. Mahā Moggallāna's words in SN 35:202. The central part of the passage is this: "And how is one soggy? There is the case where a monk, when seeing a form via the eye, is, in the case of pleasing forms, committed to forms and, in the case of displeasing forms, afflicted by forms. He remains with body-mindfulness not present, and with limited awareness. And he does not discern, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen cease without trace. [Similarly with the remaining sense media.] …

"And how is one not soggy? There is the case where a monk, when seeing a form via the eye, is not, in the case of pleasing forms, committed to forms nor, in the case of displeasing forms, afflicted by forms. He remains with body-mindfulness present, and with immeasurable awareness. And he discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen cease without trace. [Similarly with the remaining sense media.]"

See also AN 3:110.

According to Nd II, "not burning" means not burning with the fires of passion, aversion, and delusion. See SN 35:28 and Iti 93.

13. Lay clothing.

14. This is a reference to the fourth jhāna. See MN 119.

15. These lines are repeated at Sn 1:12.

See also: SN 21:10; SN 35:63; AN 9:40; Ud 4:5; Iti 15; Iti 38

1:4 To Kasi Bhāradvāja

This sutta is nearly identical with SN 7:11—"nearly," because the incident reported here of Kasi's throwing away the milk-rice, and its sizzling in the water, is not included in that version.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Magadhans in Dakkhiṇāgiri near the brahman village of Ekanāḷā. Now at that time approximately 500 of the brahman Kasi [Plowing] Bhāradvāja's plows were yoked at the sowing time. Then, in the early morning, after adjusting his lower robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe, the Blessed One went to where Kasi Bhāradvāja was working. Now at that time Kasi Bhāradvāja's food-distribution was underway. So the Blessed One went to Kasi Bhāradvāja's food-distribution and, on arrival, stood to one side. Kasi Bhāradvāja saw the Blessed One standing for alms, and on seeing him, said to him, "I, contemplative, plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, I eat. You, too, contemplative, should plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, you (will) eat."

"I, too, brahman, plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, I eat."

"But, contemplative, we don't see the Master Gotama's yoke or plow, plowshare, goad, or oxen, and yet the Master Gotama says this: 'I, too, brahman, plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, I eat.'"

Then Kasi Bhāradvāja addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

You claim to be a plowman,
but we don't see your plowing.
Being asked, tell us about your plowing
so that we may know your plowing.

The Buddha:

Conviction's my seed,
austerity my rain,
discernment my yoke & plow,
shame my pole,
mind my yoke-tie,
mindfulness my plowshare & goad.

Guarded in body,
guarded in speech,
restrained in terms of belly & food,
I make truth a weeding-hook,
and composure my unyoking.
Persistence, my beast of burden,
bearing me toward rest from the yoke,
takes me, without turning back,
to where, having gone,
one doesn't grieve.
That's how my plowing is plowed.
It has
as its fruit
the deathless.
Having plowed this plowing,
one is unyoked
from all suffering
& stress.

Then Kasi Bhāradvāja, having heaped up milk-rice in a large bronze serving bowl, offered it to the Blessed One, [saying,] "May Master Gotama eat [this] milk-rice. The master is a plowman, for the Master Gotama plows the plowing that has as its fruit the deathless."

The Buddha:

What's been chanted over with verses
shouldn't be eaten by me.
That's not the nature, brahman,
of one who's seen rightly.
What's been chanted over with verses
Awakened Ones reject.
That being their Dhamma, brahman,
this is their way of life.
Serve with other food & drink
a fully-perfected great seer,
his effluents ended,
his anxiety stilled,
for that is the field
for one looking for merit.

"Then to whom, Master Gotama, should I give this milk-rice?"

"Brahman, I don't see that person in this world—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk—by whom this milk-rice, having been eaten, would be rightly digested, aside from a Tathāgata or a Tathāgata's disciple. In that case, brahman, throw the milk-rice away in a place without vegetation, or dump it in water with no living beings."

So Kasi Bhāradvāja dumped the milk-rice in water with no living beings. And the milk-rice, when dropped in the water, hissed & sizzled, seethed & steamed. Just as an iron ball heated all day, when tossed in the water, hisses & sizzles, seethes & steams, in the same way the milk-rice, when dropped in the water, hissed & sizzled, seethed & steamed.

Then Kasi Bhāradvāja—in awe, his hair standing on end—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, throwing himself down with his head at the

Blessed One's feet, said to him, "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life. Let me obtain the Going-forth in Master Gotama's presence, let me obtain Acceptance (into the Bhikkhu Saṅgha)."

Then the brahman Kasi Bhāradvāja obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here-&-now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And so Ven. Bhāradvāja became another one of the arahants.

vv. 76–82

See also: DN 16; SN 7:14; SN 7:17; AN 4:113; Thig 13:2

1:5 Cunda

Cunda the smith:

I ask the sage of abundant discernment,
awakened, lord of the Dhamma, free
of craving,
    supreme
among two-legged beings,
    best
of charioteers:
    How many contemplatives
    are there in the world?

Please tell me.

The Buddha:

Four contemplatives, there is no fifth.
Being asked in person, I disclose them to you:
the path-victor, the path-explainer,
one who lives by the path,
and the path-corrupter.

Cunda:

Whom do the awakened call
the path-victor?
How is one unequaled
in pointing out the path?
When asked, tell me about
the one who lives by the path.
Then disclose the path-corrupter to me.

The Buddha:

Whoever, de-arrowed,
has crossed over doubt,
is refreshed in unbinding,
devoid of greed,
a guide to the world along with its devas:
The awakened call such a person
path-victor.

Whoever here knowing
the foremost as foremost,
who points out,
who analyzes the Dhamma right here,
he, the cutter of doubt, the sage unperturbed,
is called the second of monks:
path-explainer.

Whoever lives by the path,

the Dhamma-way well-explained,
restrained, mindful,
partaking of blameless ways,
is called the third of monks:
    with the path as his life.

Making a façade of good practices,
brash, reckless, a corrupter of families,[1]
idle, deceitful, unrestrained,
& going about as a counterfeit:
    He is a path-corrupter.

And when any householder
    —an instructed disciple of the noble ones,
        discerning—
understands these,
knowing, "Not all are like that one,"[2]
seeing one like that
doesn't kill his conviction.
For how would one equate
the corrupt   with the uncorrupt,
the impure   with the pure?

vv. 83–90

Notes

1. A corrupter of families is a monk who ingratiates himself into a family's affections by performing services for them that are inappropriate for a monk to do, thus diverting their faith away from those who live by the Dhamma and Vinaya. For more on this term, see *The Buddhist Monastic Code,* Saṅghādisesa 13.

2. "That one" = the path-corrupter.

See also: DN 16; AN 10:176

1:6 Decline

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then a certain deva, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she addressed him with a verse:

About the man in decline
we ask Gotama,
having come to question the Blessed One:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

Easily known is the one of good prospects;
easily known,[1] the one in decline.
The one of good prospects
loves the Dhamma,
the one in decline
detests it.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the first one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the second:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

The wicked are dear to him,
the good he doesn't hold dear.
He approves of the ideas of the wicked:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.

That's the second one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the third:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

Prone to sleep, prone to company,
the man with no initiative,
lazy & known for his anger:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the third one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the fourth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

Though capable, one doesn't support
one's mother or father
—old, their youth over & done:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the fourth one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the fifth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

Whoever deceives with a lie
a brahman, contemplative,
or other mendicant:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the fifth one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the sixth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

The man of great wealth,
with gold & food,
enjoys his luxuries alone:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the sixth one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the seventh:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

The man proud of his birth,
proud of his wealth,
proud of his clan,
despises his own relatives:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the seventh one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the eighth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

The man debauched with women,

debauched in drink,
debauched in gambling,
squanders his earnings:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the eighth one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the ninth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

One uncontent with his own wives,
misbehaves with prostitutes
& the wives of others[2]:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the ninth one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the tenth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

His youth past,
a man takes a young woman
with timbara-fruit breasts,
and, jealous of her, doesn't sleep:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the tenth one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the eleventh:

What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

To place in authority
a woman given to drink & squandering
or a man of that sort:
That is the way leading to decline.

The deva:

We know, indeed, that that is so.
That's the eleventh one in decline.
May the Blessed One tell the twelfth:
What is the way leading to decline?

The Buddha:

One of meager means
but great craving,
born into a noble family,
who aspires to kingship:
That is the way leading to decline.

Contemplating
these ones in decline
in the world,
the wise one,
consummate in noble view,
heads to a world
auspicious.

vv. 91–115

Notes

1. *Suvijāno.* The Thai edition reads, *duvijāno,* "hard to know," which doesn't fit with the meaning or with SnA's explanation of the verse.

2. Reading *padussati* and *dussati* with the Thai edition. The PTS and Sri Lankan editions read *padissati/dissati,* "he is seen."

See also: AN 5:129; AN 5:175; AN 8:54; AN 10:165

1:7 An Outcaste

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then, in the early morning, after adjusting his lower robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe, he entered Sāvatthī for alms. Now at that time, in the house of the brahman Aggika Bhāradvāja, a (sacrificial) fire was burning and an offering was lifted up. Then the Blessed One, going through Sāvatthī on a methodical almsround,[1] approached the house of Aggika Bhāradvāja. Aggika Bhāradvāja saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him: "Stop right there, you little shaveling! Right there, you little contemplative! Right there, you little outcaste!"

When this was said, the Blessed One said to the brahman Aggika Bhāradvāja, "But do you know, brahman, what an outcaste is, or the actions that make one an outcaste?"

"No, in fact, Master Gotama, I *don't* know what an outcaste is, or the actions that make one an outcaste. It would be good if Master Gotama taught me the Dhamma so that I would know what an outcaste is and the actions that make one an outcaste."

"In that case, brahman, listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, master," the brahman Aggika Bhāradvāja responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

> Whatever man is angry, resentful,
> evil, merciless,
> deceitful, and defective in his views:
> He should be known as 'outcaste.'
>
> Whoever here harms a living being
> once-born or twice-born,[2]
> who has no sympathy for a living being:
> He should be known as 'outcaste.'

Whoever destroys or besieges
villages or towns,
a notorious oppressor:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, from village or wilderness,
takes in a manner of theft
what others claim as ‘mine’:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, actually incurring a debt,
when pressed to pay, evades,
(saying,) ‘I’m in no debt to you’:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, desiring whatever-the-thing,
strikes a person going along a road,
to take whatever-the-thing:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whatever man, for his own sake,
the sake of another,
or the sake of wealth,
tells a lie when asked to bear witness:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever misbehaves
with the wives of relatives or friends,
by force or with their consent:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, though capable, doesn’t support
his mother or father
—old, their youth over & done:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever strikes
and reviles with his speech
mother or father,
sister or brother,

or mother-in-law:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, asked about what’s beneficial,
teaches what’s not
and gives counsel concealing some points:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, doing an evil deed,
wishes, ‘May I not be known,’
acting in hiding:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, having gone to another’s house,
being offered pure food,
doesn’t honor (the host) in return
when he comes (to one’s house):
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever deceives with a lie
a brahman, contemplative,
or other mendicant:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, when a brahman or contemplative
appears at mealtime,
reviles him with speech and doesn’t give:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’[3]

Whoever, wrapped in delusion,
speaks here what is untrue,
greedy for whatever-the-thing:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever exalts himself
and disparages others,[4]
debased by his own pride:
He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Angry, mean, evil in his desires,
miserly, dishonest,

devoid of shame & compunction:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever heaps verbal abuse
on an Awakened One
or his disciple,
wanderer or householder:
    He should be known as ‘outcaste.’

Whoever, though not an arahant,
claims to be an arahant:
He is the thief in this world with its Brahmās.[5]
    He is the vilest of outcastes.

These are said to be outcastes,
as I have proclaimed them to you.
Not by birth is one an outcaste,
    not by birth a brahman.
By action one is an outcaste.
    By action is one a brahman.[6]

Know, too, by this,
as I give an example:
Sopāka, the son of an outcaste,
was well-known as Mātaṅga:
    He, Mātaṅga,
attained the highest prestige,
    hard to gain.
They came into his service,
many noble warriors & brahmans.
Mounting the divine chariot,[7]
and the great, stainless road,
dispassioned for sensual passion,
he reached the world of the Brahmās.
    His birth didn’t prevent him
    from reaching the world of the Brahmās.

Though born into a family of scholars,

brahmans, with chants as their kinsmen,
are repeatedly seen with evil deeds:
blameworthy in the here-&-now,
with a bad destination in the afterlife.
    Their birth doesn't prevent them
    from blame & a bad destination.

Not by birth is one an outcaste,
    not by birth a brahman.
By action one is an outcaste.
    By action is one a brahman.

When this was said, the brahman Aggika Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."

vv. 116–142

Notes

1. The practice of not bypassing any donors on one's almsround, one of the thirteen ascetic *(dhutaṅga)* practices. See Thag 16:7.

2. Birds and reptiles count as "twice-born" in that the laying of an egg is the first birth, and the emergence of the chick or baby reptile from the egg is the second.

3. This, of course, is a comment on what Aggika Bhāradvāja has just done.

4. See AN 4:28 and AN 5:159.

5. The Vibhaṅga to Pārājika 4 states that those who make false claims to superior human attainments—meaning the four jhānas and the noble attainments—are the greatest thieves in the world in that they consume the almsfood of the countryside by theft.

6. See Sn 3:9.

7. SnA: The divine chariot stands for the eight concentration attainments: the four jhānas and the four formless states.

See also: AN 5:175; AN 10:165; Dhp 129–140; Dhp 306–319;

1:8 Goodwill

(This sutta is identical with Khp 9.)

This is to be done by one skilled in aims
appreciating the state of peace:
Be capable, upright, & straightforward,
easy to instruct, gentle, & not conceited,
content & easy to support,
with few duties, living lightly,
with peaceful faculties, astute,
modest, & no greed for supporters.

Do not do the slightest thing
that the observant would later censure.

Think: *Happy, at rest,*
may all beings be happy at heart.
Whatever beings there may be,
weak or strong, without exception,
long, large,
middling, short,
subtle, gross,
seen & unseen,
living near & far away,
born or seeking birth:
May all beings be happy at heart.
Let no one deceive another
or despise anyone anywhere,
or, through anger or resistance-perception,
wish for another to suffer.

As a mother would risk her life
to protect her child, her only child,
even so should one cultivate the heart limitlessly
with regard to all beings.[1]
With goodwill for the entire cosmos,
cultivate the heart limitlessly:
above, below, & all around,
unobstructed, without hostility or hate.
Whether standing, walking,
sitting, or lying down,
as long as one has banished torpor,
one should be resolved on this mindfulness.[2]
This is called a Brahmā abiding
here.

Not taken with views,
but virtuous & consummate in vision,
having subdued greed for sensuality,
one never again
will lie in the womb.

vv. 143–152

Notes

1. The image here is sometimes misconstrued as saying that one should protect all beings as a mother would protect her only child. Actually, the parallel is not between the child and all living beings; it is between the child and one's cultivation of the heart: One should protect one's goodwill toward all beings in the same way that a mother would protect her only child. On this point, see MN 21.

2. This line has to be read in line with the Buddha's definition of mindfulness as the ability to keep something in mind. See SN 48:10.

See also: MN 52; MN 97; MN 135; SN 42:8; SN 46:54; SN 55:7; AN 3:66; AN 4:67; AN 4:96; AN 4:125–126; AN 4:178; AN 4:200; AN 5:20; AN 5:27; AN 6:12–13; AN 8:70; AN 10:176; AN 10:196; AN 11:16; Ud 5:1; Iti 22; Iti 27

1:9 Hemavata

Sātāgira the yakkha:

Today is the fifteenth,
the uposatha day.
A divine night is at hand.
Let's go see Gotama,
the Teacher perfectly named.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Is his mind well-directed,
Such,[1] toward all beings?
Are his resolves mastered
regarding what's desirable & not?

Sātāgira the yakkha:

His mind is well-directed
and Such toward all beings.
And his resolves are mastered
regarding what's desirable & not.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Does he not take what's not given?
Is he restrained toward beings?
Is he far from complacency?
Does he not neglect jhāna?[2]

Sātāgira the yakkha:

He doesn't take what's not given,
and he's restrained toward beings.
He's far from complacency and,
awakened, he does not neglect jhāna.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Does he not tell lies?
Do his ways of speaking not cut things off?
Does he not speak destructively?
Does he not speak idly?[3]

Sātāgira the yakkha:

He doesn't tell lies.
His ways of speaking don't cut things off.
He doesn't speak destructively.
Deliberating, he speaks what's of benefit.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Is he not passionate for sensuality?
Is his mind unmuddied?
Has he gone beyond delusion?
Does he have an Eye
with regard to phenomena?

Sātāgira the yakkha:

He's not passionate for sensuality.
His mind is unmuddied.
He has gone beyond all delusion.
Awakened, he has an Eye
with regard to phenomena.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Is he consummate in clear-knowing?
Is he pure in his conduct?[4]
Are his effluents ended?
Does he have no further becoming?

Sātāgira the yakkha:

He is both consummate in clear-knowing
& pure in his conduct.
All his effluents are ended.
He has no further becoming.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Consummate the mind of the sage
in action & in ways of speech,
you rightly praise him
as consummate in clear-knowing & conduct.
Consummate the mind of the sage
in action & in ways of speech,
you rightly rejoice in him
as consummate in clear-knowing & conduct.
Consummate the mind of the sage
in action & in ways of speech,
let's go see Gotama,
consummate in clear-knowing & conduct.
Come, let's go see Gotama,
enlightened,
with legs like an antelope, thin,
eating little, not greedy,
doing jhāna in the forest.
Having gone to the nāga,[5]
the lion wandering alone,
indifferent to sensuality,
let's ask him
about release from Death's snare.
Let's ask Gotama,
proclaimer, preacher,
attained to the far shore
of all phenomena:
awakened,
gone past animosity
& fear.

* * *

Hemavata the yakkha:

In what has the world arisen?
In what does it make acquaintance?
From clinging to what
is the world?
In what is the world
afflicted?

The Buddha:

In six has the world arisen.[6]
In six does it make acquaintance.
From clinging just to six
is the world,
in six is the world[7]
afflicted.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Which is that clinging
where the world is afflicted?
When asked the way leading out, please tell
how is one released
from suffering & stress.

The Buddha:

The five strings of sensuality in the world,[8]
with the heart described as the sixth:
Being dispassioned for desire there:
    That's how one's released
    from suffering & stress.

That is the way leading out of the world
proclaimed to you as it really is,
I have proclaimed to you:

That's how one is released
from suffering & stress.

Hemavata the yakkha:

Who here crosses
over the flood?
Who here crosses
over the ocean?
Unestablished,
without support,[9]
who doesn't sink
into the deep?

The Buddha:

Always consummate in virtue,
discerning, well-centered,
internally percipient,[10] mindful,
one crosses over the flood
hard to cross.
Abstaining from perceptions of sensuality,
overcoming all fetters,
having totally ended delight in becoming,
one doesn't sink
into the deep.[11]

Hemavata the yakkha:

The one deeply discerning,
seeing the subtle goal,
having nothing,
unattached in sensual becoming:
See him, everywhere released,[12]
the great seer, going the divine way!

Perfectly named,
seeing the subtle goal,

granting discernment,
unattached to sensual nostalgia:
    See him, all-knowing, wise,
    the great seer, going the noble way!

Truly, it was well-seen today,
well-dawned, well-arisen,
that we saw the One Self-Awakened,
crossed over the flood,
effluent-free.

These ten hundred yakkhas,
powerful, prestigious,
all go to you for refuge.
You are our teacher unexcelled.

We will wander from village to village,
        town to town,
paying homage to the One Self-Awakened
& to the Dhamma's true rightness.

vv. 153–180

Notes

1. Such *(tādin):* An adjective applied to the mind of one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the mind "is what it is"—indescribable but not subject to change or alteration.

2. See MN 6 and AN 10:71.

3. According to SnA, these four questions deal with the four forms of wrong speech: telling lies, speaking harshly, engaging in divisive tale-bearing, and engaging in idle chatter.

4. See MN 53.

5. See AN 6:43 and Thag 15:2.

6. According to SnA, the "six" are the six internal and external sense media. See the definition of "world" in SN 35:82.

7. The phrase, "is the world," functions as a lamp here.

8. See Sn 1:3, note 5.

9. On unestablished consciousness, see Ud 8:1, SN 12:64, SN 22:87, and the discussion in *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapter 7.

10. Reading *ajjhatta-saññī* with the Thai edition. The other editions read *ajjhatta-cintī,* "internally thinking."

11. See SN 1:1.

12. On the phrase, "everywhere released," see *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapter 7.

1:10 Āḷavaka

(This sutta is identical with SN 10:12.)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Āḷavī in the haunt of the Āḷavaka yakkha. Then the Āḷavaka yakkha went to the Blessed One and on arrival said to him: "Get out, contemplative!"

[Saying,] "All right, my friend," the Blessed One went out.

"Come in, contemplative!"

"All right, my friend," the Blessed One went in.

A second time.… A third time, the Āḷavaka yakkha said to the Blessed One, "Get out, contemplative!"

"All right, my friend," the Blessed One went out.

"Come in, contemplative!"

"All right, my friend," the Blessed One went in.

Then a fourth time, the Āḷavaka yakkha said to the Blessed One, "Get out, contemplative!"

"I won't go out, my friend. Do what you have to do."

"I will ask you a question, contemplative. If you can't answer me, I will hurl out your mind or rip open your heart or, grabbing you by the feet, hurl you across the Ganges."

"My friend, I see no one in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, who could hurl out my mind or rip open my heart or,

grabbing me by the feet, hurl me across the Ganges. But nevertheless, ask me what you wish."

Āḷavaka:

What is a person's highest wealth here?
What, when well-practiced, brings bliss?
What is the most excellent of savors?
Living in what way
is one's life called the best?

The Buddha:

Conviction is a person's highest wealth here.
Dhamma, when well-practiced, brings bliss.
Truth is the most excellent of savors.[1]
Living with discernment,
one's life is called best.

Āḷavaka:

How does one cross over the flood?
How over the sea?
How does one overcome suffering & stress?
How is a person purified?

The Buddha:

Through conviction one crosses over the flood.
Through heedfulness, the sea.
Through persistence one overcomes
suffering & stress.
Through discernment a person is purified.

Āḷavaka:

How does one gain discernment?
How does one find wealth?
How does one attain honor?

How bind friends to oneself?
Passing from this world
to
the next world,
how does one not grieve?

The Buddha:

Convinced of the arahants' Dhamma
for attaining unbinding,
—heedful, investigating—
one listening well
gains discernment.
Doing what's fitting,
enduring burdens,
one with initiative
finds wealth.
Through truth
one attains honor.
Giving
binds friends to oneself.

Endowed with these four qualities,
—truth,
self-control,
stamina,
generosity—
a householder of conviction,
on passing away, doesn't grieve.
Now, go ask others,
common brahmans & contemplatives,
if anything better than
truth,
self-control,
stamina,
& generosity
here can be found.

Āḷavaka:

How could I go ask
common brahmans & contemplatives?—
now that today I discern
    what benefits
    the next life.
It was truly for my well-being
    that the Awakened One came
        to stay in Āḷavī.
Today I discern
where what is given
bears great fruit.
I will wander from village to village,
        town to town,
paying homage to the One Self-Awakened
& to the Dhamma's true rightness.

vv. 181–192

Note

1. This is apparently a reference to the concept of "savor" *(rasa)* in Indian aesthetic theory. For more on this topic, see the Introduction to this translation.

See also: MN 35; Sn 2:5

1:11 Victory

Whether walking, standing,
sitting, or lying down,
it flexes & stretches:
    This is the body's movement.
Joined together with tendons & bones,
plastered over with muscle & skin,
hidden by complexion,
    the body isn't seen

for what it is:
filled with intestines, filled with stomach,
with the lump of the liver,
bladder, lungs, heart,
kidneys, spleen,
mucus, sweat, saliva, fat,
blood, synovial fluid, bile, & oil.
On top of that,
in nine streams,
filth is always flowing from it—
from the eyes : eye secretions,
from the ears : ear secretions,
from the nose : mucus,
from the mouth it vomits :
now vomit,
now phlegm,
now bile;
from the body : beads of sweat.

And on top of that,
its hollow head is filled with brains.
The fool, beset by ignorance,
thinks it beautiful,
but when it lies dead,
swollen, livid,
cast away in a charnel ground,
even relatives don't care for it.
Dogs feed on it,
jackals, wolves, & worms.
Crows & vultures feed on it,
along with any other animals there.

Having heard the Awakened One's words,
the discerning monk
comprehends, for he sees it
for what it is:
"As this is, so is that.

As that, so this."
Within & without,
he should let desire for the body
    fade away.
With desire & passion faded away,
the discerning monk arrives here:
    at the deathless,
    the calm,
    the unfallen, undying[1] state
    of unbinding.

This two-footed thing is cared for,
filthy, evil-smelling,
filled with various carcasses,
oozing out here & there:
Whoever would think,
on the basis of a body like this,
to exalt himself or disparage another—
    What is that
    if not blindness?

vv. 193–206

Note

1. "Unfallen, undying": two meanings of the word, *accuta*.

See also: MN 119; AN 4:163; AN 7:48; AN 9:15; Dhp 147; Dhp 150; Thag 6:9; Thag 7:1; Thag 10:5; Thig 13:1

1:12 The Sage

Danger is born from intimacy,[1]
a home gives birth to dust.[2]
        Free from a home,
        free from intimacy:
Such is the vision of the sage.[3]

Who, destroying what's born,
wouldn't plant (again)
or nourish what's taking birth:
They call him the wandering, solitary sage.
    He, the great seer
has seen
the state of peace.

Considering the ground,
crushing the seed,
he wouldn't nourish the sap[4]
    —truly a sage—
seer of the ending of birth,
abandoning conjecture,
    he cannot be classified.

Knowing all dwellings,[5]
not longing for any one anywhere
    —truly a sage—
with no coveting, without greed,
    he does not build,[6]
for he has gone beyond.

Conquering all
knowing all,
    wise.
With regard to all things:
    unsmeared.
Abandoning all,
in the ending of craving,
released:
    The enlightened call him a sage.

With discernment his strength,
well-endowed in habit & practice,
    centered,
delighting in jhāna,
    mindful,

released from attachments,
free from rigidity, free
from effluent[7]:
    The enlightened call him a sage.

The solitary wandering sage,
uncomplacent, unshaken by praise or blame—
unstartled, like a lion at sounds,
uncaught, like the wind in a net,
unsmeared, like a lotus in water,[8]
leader of others, by others unled:
    The enlightened call him a sage.

Who becomes
like the pillar at a bathing ford,[9]
when others speak in extremes;
he, without passion,
his senses well-centered:
    The enlightened call him a sage.

Truly poised, straight as a shuttle,[10]
he loathes evil actions.
Pondering what is consonant & discordant[11]:
    The enlightened call him a sage.

Restrained in mind, he does no evil.
Young & middle-aged,
the sage self-controlled,
never angered, he angers none:
    The enlightened call him a sage.

From the best
    the middling
    the leftovers
    he receives alms.
Sustaining himself on what others give,
neither flattering
nor speaking disparagement:

The enlightened call him a sage.

The wandering sage
abstaining from sex,
in youth bound by no one,
abstaining from intoxication[12]
complacency,
totally apart:
The enlightened call him a sage.

Knowing the world,
seeing the highest goal,
crossing the ocean,[13] the flood,[14]
—Such[15]—
his chains broken,
unattached,
without effluent:
The enlightened call him a sage.

These two are different,
they dwell far apart:
the householder supporting a wife
and the unselfish one, of good practices.
Slaying other beings, the householder
is unrestrained.
Constantly the sage protects other beings,
is controlled.

Just as the crested,
blue-necked peacock,
when flying,
never matches
the wild goose
in speed,
even so the householder
never keeps up with the monk—
the sage secluded
in the forest,

doing jhāna.

vv. 207–221

Notes

1. SnA: Dangers in intimacy = Craving and views.

2. SnA: Dust = Passion, aversion, and delusion.

3. This verse is quoted in the Milinda Pañhā. The poem as a whole is apparently the same as the Munigāthā mentioned in King Asoka's Calcutta-Bairāṭ edict.

4. SnA: Ground, seed, and sap = The aggregates, sense media, and properties form the ground in which grows the seed of constructive consciousness—the consciousness that develops into states of being and birth. (For other instances of this image, see SN 22:53–55.) The sap of this seed is craving and views.

5. SnA: Dwellings *(nivesanāni)* = States of becoming and birth. This term can also be translated as "entrenchments." See Sn 4:3, note 2.

6. SnA: He does not build = He performs none of the good or bad deeds that give rise to further states of becoming and birth. See Dhp 39, 267, and 412.

7. Effluent *(āsava):* Three qualities—sensual desire, states of becoming, or ignorance—that "flow out" of the mind and defile it. Sometimes a fourth quality—views—is added to the list, to connect these qualities with the four floods *(ogha),* which are identical to the four yokes. See AN 4:10.

8. See Sn 1:3.

9. The pillar at a bathing ford: Cv V.l describes this as an immovable pillar, standing quite tall and buried deep in the ground near a bathing place, against which young villagers and boxers would rub their bodies while bathing so as to toughen them. The "extremes" in which others speak, according to SnA, are extremes of praise and criticism: These leave the sage, like the pillar, unmoved.

10. SnA: Straight as a shuttle = Having a mind unprejudiced by desire, aversion, delusion, or fear. See AN 4:19.

11. Consonant and discordant *(sama* and *visama):* Throughout ancient cultures, the terminology of music was used to describe the moral quality of people and acts. Discordant intervals or poorly-tuned musical instruments were metaphors for evil; harmonious intervals and well-tuned instruments were metaphors for good. In Pali, the term *sama*—"even"—described an instrument

tuned on-pitch. AN 6:55 contains a famous passage in which the Buddha reminds Ven. Soṇa Kolivisa—who had been over-exerting himself in the practice—that a lute sounds appealing only if the strings are neither too taut nor too lax, but "evenly" tuned. This image would have special resonances with the Buddha's teaching on the middle way. It also adds meaning to the term *samaṇa* —monk or contemplative—which the texts frequently mention as being derived from *sama*. The word *sāmaññā*—"evenness," the quality of being concordant and in tune—also means the quality of being a contemplative. The true contemplative is always in tune with what is proper and good. See also DN 2, MN 61, MN 97. Nd II, in commenting on Sn 4:2, equates discordant conduct with the ten types of misconduct described in MN 41.

12. Intoxication: The three intoxications are intoxication with youth, with good health, and with life. See AN 3:39.

13. SnA: Ocean = The way defilement splashes into undesirable destinations.

14. Flood: The flow of defilement: sensuality, becoming, views, and ignorance. See SN 45:171.

15. Such *(tādiṁ):* Unchanging; unaffected by anything, while at the same time undefined.

See also: AN 3:123; Dhp 268–269; Iti 66–67; Sn 3:11

II : The Lesser Chapter (Cūḷa Vagga)

2:1 Treasures

(This sutta is identical with Khp 6.)

Whatever spirits have gathered here,

—on the earth, in the sky—
may you all be happy
& listen intently to what I say.

Thus, spirits, you should all be attentive.
Show goodwill to the human race.
Day & night they bring offerings,
so, being heedful, protect them.

Whatever wealth—here or beyond—
whatever exquisite treasure in the heavens,
does not, for us, equal the Tathāgata.
This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Buddha.
By this truth may there be well-being.

The exquisite deathless—ending, dispassion—
discovered by the Sakyan Sage in concentration:
There is nothing to equal that Dhamma.
This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Dhamma.
By this truth may there be well-being.

What the excellent Awakened One extolled as pure
and called the concentration
of unmediated knowing[1]:
No equal to that concentration can be found.

This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Dhamma.
By this truth may there be well-being.

The eight persons—the four pairs—
praised by those at peace:
They, disciples of the One Well-Gone, deserve offerings.
What is given to them bears great fruit.
This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
By this truth may there be well-being.

Those who, devoted, firm-minded,
apply themselves to Gotama's message,
on attaining their goal, plunge into the deathless,
freely enjoying the liberation they've gained.
This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
By this truth may there be well-being.

An Indra pillar,[2] planted in the earth,
that even the four winds cannot shake:
That, I tell you, is like the person of integrity,
who—having comprehended
the noble truths—sees.
This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
By this truth may there be well-being.

Those who have seen clearly the noble truths
well-taught by the one deeply discerning—
regardless of what [later] might make them heedless—
will come to no eighth state of becoming,[3]
This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
By this truth may there be well-being.

At the moment of attaining sight,
one abandons three things:
identity-views, uncertainty,
& any attachment to habits & practices.[4]
One is completely released
from the four states of deprivation,[5]

and incapable of committing
the six great wrongs.[6]
    This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
    By this truth may there be well-being.

Whatever bad deed one may do
—in body, speech, or in mind—
one cannot hide it:
an incapability ascribed
to one who has seen the Way.
    This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
    By this truth may there be well-being.

Like a forest grove with flowering tops
in the first month of the heat of the summer,
so is the foremost Dhamma he taught,
for the highest benefit, leading to unbinding.
    This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Buddha.
    By this truth may there be well-being.

Foremost,
foremost-knowing,
foremost-giving,
foremost-bringing,
    unsurpassed, he taught the
foremost Dhamma.
    This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Buddha.
    By this truth may there be well-being.

Ended the old, there is no new taking birth.
Dispassioned their minds toward future becoming,
they,
                with no seed,
                no desire for growth,
enlightened,   go out like this flame.[7]
    This, too, is an exquisite treasure in the Saṅgha.
    By this truth may there be well-being.

Whatever spirits have gathered here,

—on the earth, in the sky—
let us pay homage to the Buddha,
the Tathāgata worshipped by beings
human & divine.
May there be
well-being.

Whatever spirits have gathered here,
—on the earth, in the sky—
let us pay homage to the Dhamma
& the Tathāgata worshipped by beings
human & divine.
May there be
well-being.

Whatever spirits have gathered here,
—on the earth, in the sky—
let us pay homage to the Saṅgha
& the Tathāgata worshipped by beings
human & divine.
May there be
well-being.

vv. 222–238

Notes

1. This is apparently equivalent to the liberation of immediacy, mentioned in Thig 5:8, and the concentration that is the fruit of gnosis, mentioned in AN 9:37.

2. Indra-pillar: A tall hardwood pillar, planted at the entrance to a village. Similar analogies for the awakened mind are found at AN 6:55 and AN 9:26.

3. The person who has reached this stage in the practice will be reborn at most seven more times. See AN 3:88. On the danger of heedlessness for one who has reached this level of awakening, see SN 55:40.

4. These three qualities are the fetters abandoned when one gains one's first glimpse of unbinding at stream-entry (the moment when one enters the stream to full awakening).

5. Four states of deprivation: rebirth as an animal, a hungry ghost, an angry demon, or a denizen of hell. In the Buddhist cosmology, none of these states is eternal.

6. According to SnA, the six great wrongs are: murdering one's mother, murdering one's father, murdering an arahant (fully awakened individual), wounding a Buddha, causing a schism in the Saṅgha, or choosing anyone other than a Buddha as one's foremost teacher. The first five are listed in AN 5:129 as leading immediately to hell after death.

7. See Thig 5:10.

See also: AN 4:67

2:2 Raw Stench

According to SnA, this poem is a dialogue between a brahman ascetic, Tissa, and the previous Buddha, Kassapa, who—unlike "our" Buddha, Gotama—was born into the brahman caste.

Tissa:

"Those peacefully eating
millet, Job's tears, green gram,
leaf-fruit, tuber-fruit, water-chestnut-fruit,
obtained in line with the Dhamma,
don't desire sensual-pleasures
or tell falsehoods.

But when eating what is well-made,
well-prepared,
exquisite, given, offered by others,
when consuming cooked rice,
Kassapa, one consumes a raw stench.

Yet you, kinsman of Brahmā, say,
'Raw stench is not proper for me,'
while consuming cooked rice
and the well-prepared fleshes of birds.

So I ask you, Kassapa, the meaning of that:
Of what sort is ‘raw stench’ for you?”

The Buddha Kassapa:

“Killing living beings,
hunting, cutting, binding,
theft, lying, fraud, deceptions,
useless recitations,
associating with the wives of others:
This is a raw stench,
not the eating of meat.

Those people here
who are unrestrained in sensuality,
greedy for flavors,
mixed together with what’s impure,
annihilationists,
discordant[1] & indomitable:
This is a raw stench,
not the eating of meat.

Those who are rough, pitiless,
eating the flesh off your back,
betraying their friends,
uncompassionate, arrogant,
habitually ungenerous,
giving to no one:
This is a raw stench,
not the eating of meat.

Anger, intoxication,
stubbornness, hostility,
deceptiveness, resentment,
boasting, conceit & pride,
befriending those of no integrity:
This is a raw stench,
not the eating of meat.

Those of evil habits,
debt-repudiators, informers,
cheats in trading, counterfeiters,
vile men who do evil things:
    This is a raw stench,
    not the eating of meat.

Those people here
who are unrestrained toward beings,
taking what's others',
intent on injury,
immoral hunters, harsh, disrespectful:
    This is a raw stench,
    not the eating of meat.

Those who are very greedy,
constantly intent
on hindering and killing;
beings who, after passing away,
go to darkness,
fall headfirst into hell:
    This is a raw stench,
    not the eating of meat.

No fish & meat,[2]
no fasting, no nakedness,
no shaven head, no tangled hair,
no rough animal skins,
no performance of fire oblations,
or the many austerities
to become an immortal in the world,
no chants, no oblations,
no performance of sacrifices
at the proper season—
    purify a mortal
    who hasn't crossed over doubt.

One should go about

guarded
with regard to those things,
one's faculties understood,
standing firm in the Dhamma,
delighting in being straightforward
& mild.
Attachments past,
all suffering abandoned,
the enlightened one
isn't smeared
by what's heard or seen."

Thus the Blessed One,
explained the meaning again & again.
The one
who had mastered chants
understood it.
With variegated verses
the sage—
free from raw stench,
unfettered, indomitable[3]—
proclaimed it.
Hearing the Awakened One's
well-spoken word—
free from raw stench,
dispelling all stress—
the one with lowered mind
paid homage to the Tathāgata,
chose the Going Forth right there.

vv. 239–252

Notes

1. *Visama:* See Sn 1:12, note 11.

2. According to SnA, this means "abstaining from fish & meat."

3. *Durannaya.* Notice that being indomitable, a "raw stench" in a discordant person, becomes a positive trait in the awakened. This sort of contrast provides

the basis for the wordplay that the Sutta Nipāta occasionally uses to describe the awakened in a paradoxical way. See, for instance, the conclusion to Sn 4:13.

See also: MN 55

2:3 Shame

One who,
flouting, despising
a sense of shame,
saying, "I am your friend,"
but not grasping
what he could do [to help]:
Know him as
"Not one of mine."

One who,
among friends,
speaks endearing words
to which he doesn't conform,
the wise recognize
as speaking without doing.

He's not a friend
who's always wary,
suspecting a split,
focusing just on your weakness.
But him on whom you can depend,
like a child on its parent's breast:
That's a true friend
whom others can't split from you.

Carrying one's manly burden,
the fruits & rewards develop
the conditions that make for joy,
the bliss that brings praise.
Drinking the savor of seclusion,

the savor of calm,
one is freed from evil, devoid
of distress,
refreshed with the savor
of rapture in the Dhamma.[1]

vv. 253–257

Note

1. This last verse = Dhp 205.

See also: AN 2:31–32; AN 2:118; AN 4:32; AN 6:12; AN 7:35; AN 8:54

2:4 Protection

(This sutta is identical with Khp 5.)

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then a certain deva, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she addressed him with a verse.

"Many devas & human beings
give thought to protection,
desiring well-being.
Tell, then, the highest protection."

The Buddha:

"Not consorting with fools,
consorting with the wise,
paying homage to those worthy of homage:
This is the highest protection.

Living in a civilized land,

having made merit in the past,
directing oneself rightly[1]:
    This is the highest protection.

Broad knowledge, skill,
well-mastered discipline,
well-spoken words:
    This is the highest protection.

Support for one's mother & father,[2]
assistance to one's wife and children,
consistency in one's work:
    This is the highest protection.

Generosity, living in rectitude,
assistance to one's relatives,
deeds that are blameless:
    This is the highest protection.

Avoiding, abstaining from evil;
refraining from intoxicants,
being heedful of mental qualities:
    This is the highest protection.

Respect, humility,
contentment, gratitude,
hearing the Dhamma on timely occasions:
    This is the highest protection.

Patience, composure,
seeing contemplatives,
discussing the Dhamma on timely occasions:
    This is the highest protection.

Austerity, celibacy,
seeing the noble truths,
realizing unbinding:
    This is the highest protection.

A mind that, when touched

by the ways of the world,[3]
is unshaken, sorrowless, dustless, at rest:
This is the highest protection.

When acting in this way,
everywhere undefeated,
people go everywhere in well-being:
This is their highest protection."

vv. 258–269

Notes

1. These are three of the four "wheels" leading to wealth and prosperity. See AN 4:31.

2. See AN 2:31–32.

3. Ways of the world *(lokadhamma):* gain, loss, status, loss of status, praise, criticism, pleasure, pain. See AN 8:6 and AN 4:192.

See also: SN 3:5; AN 3:110; AN 4:128; AN 10:17

2:5 Suciloma

(This sutta is identical with SN 10:3.)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Gayā at Ṭaṁkitamañca, the haunt of Suciloma [NeedleHair] the yakkha. And on that occasion Khara [Rough] the yakkha and Suciloma the yakkha passed by not far from the Blessed One.

Khara the yakkha said to Suciloma the yakkha, "That's a contemplative."

"That's not a contemplative. That's a fake contemplative. I'll find out whether that's a contemplative or a fake contemplative."

So Suciloma the yakkha approached the Blessed One and on arrival leaned his body up against the Blessed One. The Blessed One leaned his body away. So Suciloma the yakkha said to the Blessed One, "Are you afraid of me, contemplative?"

"No, I'm not afraid of you, friend, just that your touch is evil."

"I will ask you a question, contemplative. If you can't answer me, I will hurl out your mind or rip open your heart or, grabbing you by the feet, hurl you across the Ganges."

"My friend, I see no one in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, who could hurl out my mind or rip open my heart or, grabbing me by the feet, hurl me across the Ganges. But nevertheless, ask me what you wish."

So Suciloma the yakkha addressed the Blessed One in verse:

Passion & aversion
come from what cause?
Displeasure, delight,
horripilation
are born from what?
Arising from what
do thoughts fling the mind around,
as boys, a (captive) crow?

The Buddha:

Passion & aversion
come from this[1] as a cause;
displeasure, delight,
horripilation
are born from this;
arising from this
thoughts fling the mind around,
as boys, a (captive) crow:
They're born from affection
arisen from the mind,
from oneself,[2]
like the trunk-born (shoots)
of a banyan tree,
thick, attached to sensuality,

like a māluva vine spread in a forest.
Those who discern where it's born
drive it out—listen, yakkha!
They cross over this flood,
so hard to cross,
never crossed before,
for the sake of no further becoming.

vv. 270–273

Notes

1. According to SnA, "this" is one's own self-state *(attabhāva),* left unidentified in the verse. However, it seems more likely that "this" refers to the affection born, in turn, from one's own mind/self (see note 2) as mentioned after the simile of the boys with the captive crow. See DN 21, Sn 4:11, and the introduction to MN 18.

2. "The mind, oneself": Two meanings of the word, *attan.*

See also: Dhp 1-2; Dhp 347; Ud 1:7; Ud 4:4

2:6 The Dhamma Life

Living the Dhamma life,
living the holy life:
This, they say, is the highest power.
But if, having gone forth
from home into homelessness,
you are harsh-mouthed,
delighting in injury, a stupid beast,
your life is more evil.
You increase your own dust.
A monk delighting in quarrels,
shrouded under delusion,
doesn't know the Dhamma
even when proclaimed by the Awakened One.

Injuring those developed in mind,[1]
he, surrounded by ignorance,
doesn't know defilement
to be the path
that leads to hell.
Arriving at deprivation,
from womb to womb,
from darkness to darkness,
a monk of this sort, after death,
comes to suffering.
Just like a cesspit, full, used for many years,
one of this sort, befouled,
would be hard to clean.

Monks, whoever you know
to be like this,
depending on homes,
evil in his desires,
evil in his resolves,
evil in behavior & range,
all of you, united, shun him.

Sweep away the sweepings,
throw away the trash,
then remove the chaff:
non-contemplatives
who think they're contemplatives.
Having swept away those of evil desires, evil
in behavior & range,
then pure, affiliate mindfully
with the pure.
Then, united, astute,
you will put an end
to suffering & stress.[2]

vv. 274–283

Notes

1. According to MN 36, "developed in mind" means able to experience painful feelings without their invading and remaining in the mind.

2. These last two verses are quoted in the Milinda Pañhā.

See also: SN 35:200; AN 3:83; AN 3:129; AN 8:13–14; Ud 5:5

2:7 Brahman Principles

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then many Kosalan brahmans of great means—old, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life—approached the Blessed One. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, "Master Gotama, do brahmans at present live in conformity with the brahman principles of ancient brahmans?"

"No, brahmans. Brahmans at present *don't* live in conformity with the brahman principles of ancient brahmans."

"It would be good if Master Gotama described the brahman principles of ancient brahmans, if it wouldn't burden him."

"In that case, brahmans, listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, master," the brahmans of great means responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

> Seers, before, were austere
> & restrained in mind.
> Abandoning the five strings of sensuality,
> they practiced for their own benefit.
> They had no cattle,
> no gold,
> no wealth.
> They had study

as their wealth.
They protected the Brahmā treasure.[1]
They did not despise what was prepared for them:
food set at doors, prepared out of conviction
for those who seek.

Prosperous lands & kingdoms
honored brahmans with multi-colored clothes,
bedding, & dwellings.
Brahmans
protecting their principles,
protected by law,[2]
were not to be violated,
not to be beaten.
No one could block them
from the doors of any home.

For 48 years (young brahmans)
followed the holy life.
Brahmans of old practiced the search
for knowledge & conduct.
Brahmans went to no other (caste),[3]
nor did they buy their wives.
Living together from mutual love,
having come together, they found joy together.
Aside from the time
after menstruation,
brahmans didn't engage
in copulation.

They praised:
the holy life, virtue,
being straightforward, mild, austere,
composed, harmless, enduring.
The foremost brahman among them,
firm in perseverance,
didn't engage in copulation

even in a dream.
Those imitating his practice
praised the holy life, virtue,
& endurance.
They asked for rice, bedding, cloth,
butter & oil.
Having collected all that
in line with rectitude,
from that
they performed the sacrifice.
And in setting up the sacrifice,
they didn't harm cows.

"Like a mother, father,
brother, or other relative,
cows are our foremost friends.
From them comes medicine.
They give food, strength,
beauty, & happiness."

Knowing this line of reasoning,
they didn't harm cows.
Delicate, with large bodies,
beautiful, prestigious,
brahmans were committed to standards
of what should & shouldn't be done
in line with their principles.
As long as this lasted in the world,
humanity prospered in happiness.

But a perversion came among them.
Seeing, little by little,
the splendor of kings—
women well-ornamented,
chariots yoked to thoroughbreds,
well-made, with elaborate embroideries,
houses & homes,
well-proportioned, planned & laid out

lavish human wealth,
surrounded by circles of cows,
joined with groups of excellent women—
    the brahmans grew greedy.
Having composed chants there,
they went up to Okkāka.

    "You have much wealth & grain.
    Sacrifice! Much is your property!
    Sacrifice! Much is your wealth!"

Then the king, lord of charioteers,
induced by the brahmans,
having performed these sacrifices—
the horse sacrifice, the human sacrifice,
sammāpāsa, vājapeyya, & niraggaḷa[4]—
    gave the brahmans wealth:
cows, bedding, clothes,
women adorned,
chariots yoked to thoroughbreds,
well-made, with elaborate embroideries,
Having had delightful homes,
well-proportioned, filled throughout[5]
with various grains,
    he gave the brahmans wealth.

And they, receiving the wealth there,
found joy together in hoarding it.
Overcome by desire,
their craving grew more.
Having composed chants there,
they went up to Okkāka again.

    "Like water & earth,
    gold, wealth, & grain,
    are cows to human beings.
    This is a requisite for beings.
    Sacrifice! Much is your property!

Sacrifice! Much is your wealth!”

Then the king, lord of charioteers,
induced by the brahmans,
killed in a sacrifice
many hundred-thousands of cows.
The cows—
meek like sheep,
giving milk by the bucket—
hadn’t,
with their hooves or horns or
anything else, done
anyone
any harm.
But the king,
grabbing them by the horns,
killed them with a knife.

Then the devas, the Fathers,
Indra, and rakkhasas
cried out,
“An injustice!”
when the knife fell on the cows.

Three were the diseases before then:
desire, hunger, & aging.
But from violence against cattle
came ninety-eight.
This injustice of violence
has come down as ancient.
The innocent are killed;
the sacrificers fall away
from the Dhamma.

This tradition—ancient, vile—
is criticized by the observant.
Where people see such a thing,
they criticize the sacrificer.

With the Dhamma perishing in this way,
merchants are split from workers,
noble warriors are split far apart,
the wife despises the husband.
Noble warriors, kinsman of Brahmā,
and any others protected by clan,
repudiating the doctrine of their birth, fall
under sensuality's
sway.

When this was said, those brahmans of great means said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. We go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."

vv. 284–315

Notes

1. According to SnA, "Brahmā treasure" refers to such mind states as the development of goodwill. See Sn 1:8, note 1.

2. "Protecting their principles, protected by law": two possible meanings of *dhamma-rakkhitā.* SnA explains this term with reference to the Dhamma passage, "The Dhamma protects those who live by the Dhamma." (Thag 4:10)

3. I.e., in choosing their wives. See AN 5:191.

4. Three types of sacrifice defined by details in the equipment used.

5. Reading *sabbaso* with the Thai edition. The other editions read *bhāgaso,* "laid out."

See also: MN 60; MN 93; SN 3:9; AN 5:191

2:8 A Boat

Although often lost in translation, the overall structure of this poem is clearly articulated in the Pali. The first seven verses—coming under the "because" (yasmā)*—state reasons, while the last verse, under the "so"* (tasmā)*, draws the conclusion: Find a good teacher and practice the Dhamma.*

Because:
When you honor
—as the devas, Indra—
one from whom
you might learn the Dhamma,
he, learned, honored,
confident in you,
shows you the Dhamma.

You, enlightened, heedful,
befriending a teacher like that,
practicing the Dhamma
in line with the Dhamma,
pondering,
giving it priority,
become
knowledgeable,
clear-minded,
subtle.

But if you consort with a piddling fool
who's envious,
hasn't come to the goal,
you'll go to death
without
having cleared up
the Dhamma right here,
with
your doubts unresolved.

Like a man gone down to a river—
turbulent, flooding, swift-flowing—

and swept away in the current:
    How can he help others across?

Even so:
He who hasn't
    cleared up the Dhamma,
    attended to the meaning
        of what the learned say,
    crossed over his own doubts:
How can he get others
to comprehend?

But as one who's embarked
    on a sturdy boat,
    with rudder & oars,
would—thoughtful, skillful,
knowing the needed techniques—
    carry many others across,

even so
an attainer-of-knowledge, learned,
developed in mind,[1] unwavering
can get other people to comprehend—
    when the conditions have arisen
    for them to lend ear.

    So:
You should befriend
a person of integrity—
    learned, intelligent.
Practicing so
as to know the goal,
when you've experienced the Dhamma,

    you get bliss.

vv. 316–323

Note

1. According to MN 36, “developed in mind” means able to experience painful feelings without their invading and remaining in the mind.

See also: MN 22; SN 35:197; Sn 4:1

2:9 With What Virtue?

This sutta mentions the metaphorical notion of “heartwood” (sāra) *three times. Although sāra as a metaphor is often translated as “essence,” this misses some of the metaphor’s implications. When x is said to have y as its heartwood, that means that the proper development of x yields y, and that y is the most valuable part of x—just as a tree, as it matures, develops heartwood, and the heartwood is the most valuable part of the tree.*

“With what virtue,
what behavior,
nurturing what actions,
would a person become rightly based
and attain the ultimate goal?”

“One should be respectful
of one’s superiors[1]
& not envious;
should have a sense of the time
for seeing teachers;[2]
should value the opportunity
when a talk on Dhamma’s in progress;
should listen intently
to well-spoken words;
should go at the proper time,
humbly, casting off arrogance,
to one’s teacher’s presence;
should both recollect & follow
the Dhamma, its meaning,
restraint, & the holy life.

Delighting in Dhamma,
savoring Dhamma,
established in Dhamma,
with a sense of how
to investigate Dhamma,
one should not speak in ways
destructive of Dhamma,[3]
should guide oneself
with true, well-spoken words.

Shedding
laughter,chattering,
lamentation, hatred,
deception, deviousness,
greed, pride,
confrontation, roughness,
astringency, infatuation,
one should go about free
of intoxication,
with steadfast mind.

Understanding's the heartwood
of well-spoken words;
concentration, the heartwood
of learning & understanding.

When a person is hasty & heedless
his discernment & learning
don't grow.
While those who delight
in the Dhamma taught by the noble ones,
are unsurpassed
in word, action, & mind.
They, established in
calm,
composure, &
concentration,

have reached
what discernment & learning
have as their heartwood."[4]

vv. 324–330

Notes

1. According to SnA, one's superiors include those who have more wisdom than oneself, more skill in concentration and other aspects of the path than oneself, and those senior to oneself.

2. SnA says that the right time to see a teacher is when one is overcome with passion, aversion, and delusion, and cannot find a way out on one's own. This echoes a passage in AN 6:26, in which Ven. Mahā Kaccāna says that the right time to visit a "monk worthy of esteem" is when one needs help in overcoming any of the five hindrances or when one doesn't yet have an appropriate theme to focus on to put an end to the mind's effluents.

3. SnA equates "words destructive of the Dhamma" with "animal talk." See the discussion under Pācittiya 85 in *The Buddhist Monastic Code.*

4. The heartwood of learning & discernment is release. See MN 29 and 30.

See also: MN 29–30; AN 5:151; AN 5:202; AN 6:86; AN 8:53; AN 10:58; Thag 5:10

2:10 Initiative

Get up!
Sit up!
What's your need for sleep?
And what sleep is there for the afflicted,
pierced by the arrow,
oppressed?

Get up!
Sit up!
Train firmly for the sake of peace.
Don't let the king of death,

—seeing you heedless—
deceive you,
bring you under his sway.

Cross over the attachment
to which human & heavenly beings
remain, desiring,
tied.
Don't let the moment pass by.
Those for whom the moment is past
grieve, consigned to hell.

Heedlessness is
dust, dust
comes from heedlessness,
has heedlessness
on its heels.
Through heedfulness & clear knowing
you'd remove
your own arrow.

vv. 331–334

See also: Dhp 21–32; Dhp 315; SN 3:17; SN 36:6; AN 4:37; Thag 1:84; Thag 2:37

2:11 Rāhula

"From living with him often
do you not despise the wise man?
Is the one who holds up the torch
for human beings
honored by you?"

"From living with him often
I don't despise the wise man.
The one who holds up the torch

for human beings
is honored by me."

* * *

"Abandoning the five strings of sensuality,
  endearing, charming,
going forth from home
through conviction,
  be one who puts an end
  to suffering & stress.
Cultivate admirable friends
and an isolated dwelling,
secluded, with next-to-no noise.
Know moderation in eating.
Robe, alms-food,
requisites, dwellings:
  Don't create craving for these.
  Don't be one who returns to the world.
Restrained in the Pāṭimokkha
and the five faculties,
have mindfulness immersed in the body,
be one who's cultivated disenchantment.
Avoid the theme of beauty,
  connected with passion.
Develop the mind in the unattractive—
  gathered into one,[1] well-centered.
Develop the themeless.[2]
Give up obsession with conceit.
Then, from having broken through conceit,
you will go about,
          stilled."

In this way, the Blessed One often instructed Ven. Rāhula[3] with these verses.

vv. 335–342

Notes

1. *Ek'agga,* reading *agga* in the sense of "gathering place."

2. On the themeless concentration, see MN 121 and SN 41:7.

3. At AN 1:148 (1:209) the Buddha cites Ven. Rāhula, his son, as being foremost among the monks in his desire for training.

See also: MN 61; MN 62; MN 147; Thag 4:8

2:12 Vaṅgīsa

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavī at the Aggāḷava shrine. And on that occasion Ven. Vaṅgīsa's[1] preceptor, an elder named Nigrodha Kappa, had recently totally unbound at the Aggāḷava shrine. Then as Ven. Vaṅgīsa was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: "Has my preceptor totally unbound, or has he not totally unbound?"

Then, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, Ven. Vaṅgīsa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Just now, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'Has my preceptor totally unbound, or has he not totally unbound?'"

Then, arranging his robe over one shoulder and placing his hands palm-to-palm over his heart toward the Blessed One, Ven. Vaṅgīsa addressed the Blessed One in verses:

"We ask the Teacher of supreme discernment,
who has cut off uncertainty in the here-&-now:
A monk has died at the Aggāḷava shrine—
well-known, prestigious, with mind fully unbound.

Nigrodha Kappa was his name,
given by you, Blessed One, to that brahman.
He went about revering you—
who sees the firm Dhamma—
intent on release, with persistence aroused.

Sakyan, All-around Eye,[2]
we all, too, want to know of that disciple:
Ready to hear are our ears.
You, our teacher: You are unexcelled.

Cut through our uncertainty. Tell me this,
make known, One of discernment deep,
that he was totally unbound.
Like Thousand-eyed Sakka, in the midst of the devas,[3]
speak, All-around Eye, in ours.

Here, whatever snares there are, paths
of delusion, siding
with not-knowing, bases
of uncertainty:
On reaching the Tathāgata, they don't exist,
as that Eye is the foremost of men.

For if no man were ever to disperse defilements—
as the wind, a dark mass of clouds—
the whole world would be enveloped in darkness.
Even brilliant people wouldn't shine bright.

But the enlightened are makers of light.
Thus I think you're that, enlightened one.
We have come to one who knows through clear-seeing.
Make Kappa shine in our assembly.

Quickly, handsome one, stir your handsome voice.
Like a swan,[4] stretching out (its neck), call gently
with rounded tones, well-modulated.
We all listen to you, sitting upright.

Pleading, I shall get the pure one to speak,
he whose birth & death are abandoned.
For people run-of-the-mill haven't the power
to bring about what they desire,
but Tathāgatas do have the power
to bring about what they have pondered.

This, your consummate explanation,
is rightly-grasped, you of discernment
rightly straight.
This last salutation is offered:
Knowing, don't delude us,
one of discernment supreme.

Understanding the noble Dhamma
from high to low,
knowing, don't delude us,
hero supreme.
I long for the water of your speech
as if distressed in mind by the heat in the summer.
Rain down a torrent.[5]

Was the holy life, as led by Kappa
in line with his aim? Was it not in any way in vain?
Did he unbind with no fuel remaining?[6]
Let us hear how he was released."

"Here he cut off craving for name-&-form,
the current of the Dark One, the long-time obsession.
He has crossed over birth & death."
So spoke the Blessed One, excelling in five.[7]

"Hearing this, your word,
highest of seers,
I am brightened & calmed.
Surely, my question was not in vain,
nor was I deceived by the brahman.
As he spoke, so he acted:
He *was* a disciple
of the One Awakened.
He has cut through
    the tough, stretched-out net
    of deceitful Death.
He, Kappiya, saw, Blessed One,
    the beginning of clinging.

He, Kappayāna,[8] has gone beyond
the realm of Death
so very hard to cross."

vv. 343–358

Notes

1. Cited in AN 1:148 (1:212) as foremost among the monks in having extemporaneous inspiration. His verses are collected in SN 8 and in Thag 21. He appears in Sn both here and at Sn 3:3.

2. From Vedic times it was customary to believe that divine beings had total vision of reality because they could see with all parts of their bodies—thus they were "all-around eyes." At the same time, there was a belief that it was auspicious to gaze into a divine being's eye, which meant that worshippers were content to see any part of the divine being's body. Both of these beliefs carried over into Buddhist devotional practice. For more on this point, see DN 16, note 44. See also, Jan Gonda, *Eye and Gaze in the Veda.*

3. The word *majjhe*—"in the midst"—functions as a lamp here.

4. Reading *haṁso'va* with the Burmese edition.

5. Reading *sutaṁ pavassa,* interpreting the *"u"* as an *"o"* shortened to fit the meter.

6. The unbinding element of the arahant who has passed away. See Iti 44.

7. According to SnA, "five" here stands for the five faculties and other sets of five qualities that led to the Buddha's awakening.

8. *Kappiya, Kappayāna:* Honorific forms of *Kappa.*

See also: DN 16; AN 6:43

2:13 Right Wandering

"I ask the sage of abundant discernment,
crossed over to the far shore,
totally unbound, steadfast in mind:
Leaving home, rejecting sensuality,
how does one wander rightly in the world?"[1]

The Buddha:

"Whoever's omens are uprooted,
as are meteors, dreams, & marks,[2]
whose fault of omens is completely abandoned:
He would wander rightly in the world.

A monk should subdue passion
for sensualities human
& even divine.
Having gone past becoming,
and met with the Dhamma,
he would wander rightly in the world.

Putting behind him
divisive tale-bearing,
a monk should abandon anger & meanness.
With favoring & opposing
totally abandoned,
he would wander rightly in the world.

Having abandoned dear & undear,
independent—through no-clinging—of anything at all,
fully released from fetters,
he would wander rightly in the world.

He finds no essence in acquisitions,
having subdued passion-desire for graspings,
independent is he, by others unled:
He would wander rightly in the world.

Having rightly found the Dhamma,
he is unobstructed in speech, mind, & act.
Aspiring to unbinding,
he would wander rightly in the world.

A monk who'd not gloat, "He venerates me,"
or brood when insulted,
or be elated on receiving food from another:

He would wander rightly in the world.

Fully abandoning greed & becoming,
abstaining from cutting & binding (other beings),
he, having crossed over doubt, de-arrowed,
he would wander rightly in the world.

Having found what's appropriate for himself,
the monk wouldn't harm anyone in the world,
Having found the Dhamma as it actually is,
he would wander rightly in the world.

In whom there are no obsessions,
his unskillful roots uprooted,
with no longing, no
expectations:
He would wander rightly in the world.

His effluents ended, conceit abandoned,
beyond reach of every road to passion,
tamed, totally unbound, steadfast in mind:
He would wander rightly in the world.

Convinced, learned, having seen certainty,
not following factions among those who are factious,
enlightened; his greed, aversion, & irritation subdued:
He would wander rightly in the world.

Victorious, pure, his roof opened up,[3]
a master of dhammas, gone beyond
& unperturbed,
skilled in the knowledge of fabrication-cessation:
He would wander rightly in the world.

Gone beyond speculations
about futures & pasts,
and—having passed by—
purified in his discernment,
fully released from all sense-media[4]:
He would wander rightly in the world.

Knowing the state,
meeting the Dhamma,
seeing the opened-up
when his effluents
are abandoned
from the ending
of all acquisitions:
He would wander rightly in the world."

"Yes, Blessed One, that's just how it is.
Any monk dwelling thus,
tamed, gone totally beyond
all things
conducive for fetters[5]:
He would wander rightly in the world."

vv. 359–375

Notes

1. SnA maintains that this sutta took place on the same day as the Mahāsamaya Sutta (The Great Meeting, DN 20).

2. DN 2 lists various forms of fortune telling dealing with omens, meteors, dreams, and marks as types of wrong livelihood for a monk.

3. See Ud 5:5 and Thag 6:13:

> Rain soddens what's covered
> & doesn't sodden what's open.
> So open up what's covered up,
> so that it won't get soddened by the rain.

4. See SN 35:117 and AN 4:173.

5. Reading *sabba-saṁyojaniye vītivatto* with the Thai edition. The Burmese edition reads *sabba-saṁyojanayoga vīticatto,* "totally released from all yoking to fetters."

2:14 Dhammika

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Dhammika the lay follower, together with 500 other lay followers, approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he addressed the Blessed One in verses:

"I ask you, Gotama, Deeply Discerning:
How-acting does one become a good disciple—
either one gone from home into homelessness,
or a lay follower with a home?

For you discern the destination & future course
of the world along with its devas
—there is no one equal to you
in seeing the subtle goal;
for they call you foremost, awakened.

Understanding all knowledge
the whole Dhamma,[1]
you proclaim it to beings with sympathetic mind.
Your roof opened up,[2] All-around Eye,[3]
you, stainless, illumine the whole world.

He came to your presence—
Erāvaṇa, the nāga king,[4]
having heard, 'Conqueror.'
Having consulted with you, having heard,
he understood and, satisfied,
(thought,) 'Good.'

And King Vessavaṇa Kuvera[5]
came, inquiring about the Dhamma.
To him, too, you spoke when asked.
And he too, having heard, was satisfied.

And these sectarians, debaters by habit,
whether Ājīvakas or Nigaṇṭhas,
don't overtake you in terms of discernment,
as a person standing

doesn't catch up
with one going quickly.

And these brahmans, debaters by habit,
any elderly brahmans,
and any others who consider themselves debaters,
all depend on you for the meaning.

For this Dhamma is subtle & blissful.
This, Blessed One, well set-forth by you:
We all want to hear it.
Tell it to us, Excellent Awakened, when asked.

All these monks are sitting together—
and the lay followers, right there—to hear.
Let them listen to the Dhamma
awakened to by one who is stainless,
as the devas listen to Vasavant's[6] well-spoken word."

The Buddha:

"Listen to me, monks. I will let you hear
the Dhamma of polishing away. Live by it,[7] all of you.
May those who are thoughtful, seeing the purpose,
partake of the duties proper for one gone forth.

A monk should surely not wander
at the wrong time.
He should go for alms in the village
at the right time.
For attachments get attached to one going
at the wrong time.
That's why they don't wander at the wrong time,
the awakened.

Sights, sounds, tastes,
smells, & tactile sensations
intoxicate beings.
Subduing desire for these things,

one should, at the right time, enter for alms.

Having received alms in proper season,
a monk, returning alone, should sit down in solitude.
Pondering what's inside, his mind-state collected,
he should not let his heart wander outside.

If he should converse with a disciple,
a monk, or anyone else,
he should utter the exquisite Dhamma,
and not divisive speech or disparagement of others.

For some retaliate against arguments.
We don't praise those of limited discernment.
Attachments get attached on account of this & that,
for they send their minds far away from there.

Having heard the Dhamma taught by the One Well-Gone,
the disciple of foremost discernment, having considered it,
should resort to almsfood, a dwelling, a place to sit & lie down,
and water for washing dust from his robe.

So a monk should stay unsmeared by these things—
almsfood, a dwelling, a place to sit & lie down,
and water for washing dust from his robe—
like a water-drop on a lotus.

As for the householder protocol,
I will tell you how-acting
one becomes a good disciple,
since the entire monk-practice
can't be managed by those wealthy in property.

Laying aside violence toward all living creatures,
both the firm & unfirm in the world,
one should not kill a living being, nor have it killed,
nor condone killing by others.

Then the disciple should avoid
consciously (taking) what's not given,
—anything, anywhere—

should not have it taken
nor condone its taking.
He should avoid all (taking of) what's not given.

The observant person should avoid uncelibate behavior
like a pit of glowing embers.
But if he's incapable of celibate behavior,
he should not transgress with the wife of another.

When gone to an audience hall or assembly,
or one-on-one, he should not tell a lie,
nor have it told, nor condone it's being told.
He should avoid every untruth.

Any householder who approves of this Dhamma
should not take intoxicating drink,
nor have others drink it, nor condone its being drunk,
knowing that it ends in madness.

For from intoxication, fools do evil things
and get others, heedless, to do them.
One should avoid this opening to demerit—
madness, delusion—appealing to fools.

One should not kill a living being,
take what's not given, tell a lie, nor be a drinker.
One should abstain from uncelibate behavior—
sexual intercourse—should not eat at night,
a meal at the wrong time,
should not wear a garland or use scents,
should sleep on a bed, on the ground, or on a mat,
For this, they say, is the eightfold uposatha,
proclaimed by the Awakened One
who has gone to the end of suffering & stress.

Then, having kept, well-accomplished,
the eightfold uposatha
on the fourteenth, fifteenth, & eighth
of the fortnight,[8]

and on special days of the fortnight,
with clear & confident mind,
the observant person
at dawn after the uposatha,
confident, rejoicing,
should share food & drink, as is proper,
with the Saṅgha of monks.

One should righteously support mother & father,
should engage in righteous[9] trade,
One heedful in this householder protocol
goes to the devas called
Self-radiant."

vv. 376–404

Notes

1. "All… the whole": two meanings of the lamp-word, *sabba*.

2. See Sn 2:13, note 3.

3. See Sn 2:12, note 2.

4. According to SnA, Erāvaṇa was one of the devas dwelling in the heaven of the Thirty-three. An elephant in a previous life, he enjoyed taking on the form of a gigantic magical elephant (one of the meanings of *"nāga"),* displaying many powers, for the entertainment of the other devas in that heaven.

5. One of the four Great Kings, ruling over the yakkhas. See DN 20 and DN 32. Neither Erāvaṇa's nor Kuvera's visit to the Buddha is mentioned elsewhere in the Canon, although SnA insists that Kuvera's took place soon after the events reported in AN 7:53, in which he conversed with the lay woman, Nandamātā.

6. An epithet of Sakka, king of the devas in the heaven of the Thirty-three.

7. Reading *carātha* with the Thai edition. The PTS and Sinhalese edition have *dharātha,* remember.

8. The fourteen- or fifteen-day lunar cycle. The fourteenth/fifteenth days correspond to the days of the new and full moon. The eighth day, to the half-moon.

9. *Dhammika,* a reference to the interlocutor's name.

See also: MN 66; MN 70; AN 3:71; AN 10:46

III : The Great Chapter (Mahā Vagga)

3:1 The Going Forth

I will praise the Going Forth,
how he went forth, the One with Eyes,
how he reasoned and chose the Going Forth.
"Household life is confining,
a realm of dust,
while going forth
is the open air."
Seeing this, he went forth.

On going forth,
he avoided evil deeds in body.
Abandoning verbal misconduct,
he purified his livelihood.
Then he, the Buddha, went to Rājagaha,
the mountain fortress of the Magadhans,
and wandered for alms,
teeming with the foremost marks.
King Bimbisāra, standing in his palace, saw him,
and on seeing him, consummate in marks,
said this:
"Look at this one, sirs.
How handsome, stately, pure!
How consummate his demeanor!
Mindful, his eyes downcast,
looking only a plow-length before him.
This one's not like one
from a lowly lineage:

Have the royal messengers hurry
to see where this monk will go."

They—the messengers dispatched—
followed behind him.
"Where will this monk go?
Where will his dwelling place be?"
As he went from house to house—
well-restrained, his sense-doors guarded,
mindful, alert—
his bowl filled quickly.
Then he, the sage, completing his alms round,
left the city, headed for Mount Paṇḍava.
"That's where his dwelling will be."
Seeing him go to his dwelling place,
three messengers sat down,
while one returned to tell the king.
"That monk, your majesty,
on the flank of Paṇḍava,
sits like a tiger, a bull,
a lion in a mountain cleft."

Hearing the messenger's words,
the noble-warrior king
straight away set out by royal coach,
for Mount Paṇḍava.
Going as far as the coach would go,
the noble-warrior king
got down from the coach,
went up on foot,
and on arrival sat down.
Sitting there,
he exchanged courteous greetings,
and after giving friendly greetings,
said this:
"Young you are, and youthful,
in the first stage of youth,

consummate in stature & coloring
    like a noble-warrior by birth.
You would look glorious
    in the vanguard of an army,
    arrayed with an elephant squadron.
I offer you wealth : Enjoy it.
I ask your birth : Inform me."

"Straight ahead, your majesty,
by the foothills of the Himalayas,
is a country consummate
in energy & wealth,
inhabited by Kosalans:
    Solar by clan,
    Sakyans by birth.
From that lineage I have gone forth,
but not in hope of sensuality.
Seeing the danger in sensuality
—and renunciation as rest—
        I go to strive.

    That's where my heart delights."

vv. 405–424

See also: MN 26; MN 36; AN 3:39; AN 5:57

3:2 Exertion

To me—
    my mind resolute in exertion
    near the river Nerañjarā,
    making a great effort,
    doing jhāna
    to attain rest from the yoke—

Nāmuci[1] came,

speaking words of compassion:
“You are ashen, thin.
Death is in
your presence.
Death
has 1,000 parts of you.
Only one part
is your life.
Live, good sir!
Life is better.
Alive,
you can do
acts of merit.
Your living the holy life
and performing the fire sacrifice
will heap up much merit.
What use is exertion to you?
Hard to follow
—the path of exertion—
hard to do, hard
to sustain.”

Saying these verses,
Māra stood in the Awakened One’s presence.
And to that Māra, speaking thus,
the Blessed One
said this:

“Kinsman of the heedless,
Evil One,
come here for whatever purpose:
I haven’t, for merit,
even the least bit of need.
Those who have need of merit:
Those are the ones
Māra’s fit to address.

In me are

conviction
austerity,
persistence,
discernment.
Why, when my mind is resolute,
do you petition me
to live?
This wind could burn up
even river currents.
Why, when my mind is resolute,
shouldn't my blood dry away?
As my blood dries up,
gall & phlegm dry up,
as muscles waste away,
the mind grows clearer;
mindfulness, discernment,
concentration stand
more firm.
Staying in this way,
attaining the ultimate feeling,[2]
the mind has no interest
in sensuality.
See:
a being's
purity!

Sensual passions are your first army.
Your second is called Discontent.
Your third is Hunger & Thirst.
Your fourth is called Craving.
Fifth is Sloth & Torpor.
Sixth is called Cowardice.
Your seventh is Uncertainty.
Hypocrisy & Stubbornness, your eighth.
Gains, Offerings, Fame, & Status
wrongly gained,

and whoever would praise self
& disparage others:

That, Nāmuci, is your army,
the Dark One's commando force.
A coward can't defeat it,
but one having defeated it
    gains bliss.

Do I carry muñja grass?[3]
I spit on my life.
Death in battle would be better for me
    than that I, defeated,
            survive.[4]

Sinking here, they don't appear,
    some brahmans & contemplatives.
They don't know the path
by which those with good practices
            go.

Seeing the bannered force
    on all sides—
the troops, Māra
along with his mount—
I go into battle.
May they not budge me
    from
    my spot.
That army of yours,
that the world with its devas
    can't overcome,
I will smash   with discernment—
as an unfired pot   with a stone.

Making my   resolve mastered,
                mindfulness well-established,
I will go about, from kingdom to kingdom,
training many disciples.

They—heedful, resolute in mind,
doing my bidding—
despite your wishes, will go
    where, having gone,
    there's no grief."

Māra:

"For seven years, I've dogged
the Blessed One's steps,
but haven't gained an opening
in the One Self-Awakened
    & glorious.
A crow circled a stone
the color of fat
    —'Maybe I've found
    something tender here.
    Maybe there's something delicious'—
but not getting anything delicious there,
the crow went away.
Like the crow attacking the rock,
I weary myself with Gotama."

As he was overcome with sorrow,
his lute fell from under his arm.
Then he, the despondent spirit,
        right there
    disappeared.

vv. 425–449

Notes

1. Māra.

2. The highest equanimity that can be attained through jhāna.

3. Muñja grass was the ancient Indian equivalent of a white flag. A warrior expecting that he might have to surrender would take muñja grass into battle with him. If he did surrender, he would lie down with the muñja grass in his

mouth. The Buddha, in asking this rhetorical question, is indicating that he is not the type of warrior who would carry muñja grass. If defeated, he would rather die than surrender.

4. This line is repeated in Thag 2:37.

See also: MN 70; SN 4; AN 2:5; AN 5:53

3:3 Well-spoken

(This sutta is identical with SN 8:5.)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There he addressed the monks, "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: "Monks, speech endowed with four characteristics is well-spoken, not poorly spoken—faultless & not to be faulted by the observant. Which four? There is the case where a monk says only what is well-spoken, not what is poorly spoken; only what is just, not what is unjust; only what is endearing, not what is unendearing; only what is true, not what is false. Speech endowed with these four characteristics is well-spoken, not poorly spoken—faultless & not to be faulted by the observant."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

> The calm say that what is well-spoken is best;
> second, that one should say
> what is just, not unjust;
> third, what's endearing, not unendearing;
> fourth, what is true, not false.

Then Ven. Vaṅgīsa,[1] rising from his seat, arranging his robe over one shoulder, faced the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart and said, "An inspiration has come to me, Blessed One! An inspiration has come to me, One Well-Gone!"

"Let the inspiration come to you, Vaṅgīsa," the Blessed One said.

Then Ven. Vaṅgīsa praised the Blessed One to his face with these fitting verses:

> "Speak only the speech
> that neither torments self
> nor does harm to others.
> That speech is truly well-spoken.
>
> Speak only endearing speech,
> speech that is welcomed.
> Speech when it brings no evil
> to others
> is pleasant.
>
> Truth, indeed, is deathless speech:
> This is a primeval principle.
> The goal and the Dhamma
> —so say the calm—
> are firmly established on truth.
>
> The speech the Awakened One speaks,
> for attaining unbinding,
> rest,
> for making an end
> to the mass of stress:
> That is the speech unsurpassed."
>
> *vv. 450–454*

Note

1. See Sn 2:12, note 1.

See also: MN 21; MN 58; SN 11:5; AN 4:183; AN 5:198; AN 8:8; AN 10:165

3:4 Sundarika Bhāradvāja

Another version of this encounter is recorded in SN 7:9.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kosalans on the bank of the River Sundarika. And on that occasion, the brahman Sundarika Bhāradvāja was offering a fire sacrifice and performing a fire oblation on the bank of the River Sundarika. Then, having offered the fire sacrifice and performed the fire oblation, he got up from his seat and looked around to the four directions, (thinking,) "Who should eat the remains of the offering?" He saw the Blessed One sitting not far away at the root of a tree with his head covered. On seeing him, he took the remains of the offering in his left hand and his water-pot in his right, and went to the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One, at the sound of the brahman Sundarika Bhāradvāja's footsteps, uncovered his head. The brahman Sundarika Bhāradvāja (thinking,) "This venerable one is shaven. This venerable one is a shaveling," wanted to turn back. But then the thought occurred to him, "Still, there are some brahmans who are shaven. What if, having approached him, I were to ask his caste?"

So he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, asked: "What is the venerable one's birth-caste?"[1]

Then the Blessed One addressed the brahman Sundarika Bhāradvāja in verse:

"I'm not a brahman or king's son,
not a merchant, or anyone at all.[2]
Comprehending the clan
of the run-of-the-mill,[3]
  having nothing,
I wander by means of wisdom
  in the world.
Wearing my outer robe,
I wander without home,
  my hair shaven off,
  my mind entirely unbound,
not adhering to people here.
You ask me
an inappropriate question
about clan."

Sundarika:

“But, sir, brahmans surely inquire of brahmans,
‘Are you among the brahmans?’”

The Buddha:

“If you say you’re a brahman
and I’m not a brahman,
I ask you the three lines of the Sāvitti
and its twenty-four syllables.”[4]

Sundarika:

“Because of what
did seers, men, noble warriors, & brahmans
—many of them here in the world—
(first) arrange sacrifices to devas?”

The Buddha:

“Whoever has attained the end,
an attainer-of-knowledge,
should receive an oblation
at the time of a sacrifice,
his (sacrifice), I say, would succeed.”[5]

Sundarika:

“So yes, our sacrifice will succeed
for we have seen an attainer-of-knowledge like you.
It’s from not seeing those like you
that someone else eats the sacrificial cake.”

The Buddha:

“Therefore, brahman,
as you are seeking your benefit,
approach and ask.

Perhaps you may find here
one at peace, with no anger,
no desire, no affliction:
one with good wisdom."

Sundarika:

"I delight in sacrifice,
I desire to sacrifice,
but I don't understand
where a sacrifice succeeds.
Teach me, sir. Tell me that."

The Buddha:

"In that case, brahman, lend ear.
I will teach you the Dhamma.
Don't inquire about birth.[6]
Inquire about conduct.
As from wood, a fire is born,[7]
so a sage, even from lowly birth
—steadfast, restrained
through a sense of shame—
becomes a thoroughbred.

One tamed by truth,
endowed with self-control,
attained to the end of knowledge,
having fulfilled the holy life:
To him, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,[8]
to him a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.

Those with well-restrained minds,
straight as a shuttle:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,

to them a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.

Those devoid of passion,
their faculties well-centered,
released like the moon
from the grasp of an eclipse:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,
to them a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.

Unattached, they wander in the world,
always mindful,
abandoning possessiveness:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,
to them a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.

Who, abandoning sensuality,
wanders victorious,
who knows the end
of birth & death,
totally unbound, cool
as a pool of water:
The Tathāgata deserves[9]
the sacrificial cake.

Consonant among the consonant,
far from the discordant,
the Tathāgata of infinite discernment,
not smeared here or beyond:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

In whom no deceptiveness dwells,
no conceit,
devoid of greed, un-

possessive, un-
desiring,
his anger dispelled,
his mind entirely unbound,
a brahman who has abandoned
the stain of grief:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

He has abandoned the homes of the mind,
has
        no possessions at all,
        no clinging here or beyond:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Centered, he's crossed
over the flood,
he knows the Dhamma
through the highest view,
effluents ended, bearing his last body:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Whose effluent of becoming
and harsh speech
are destroyed, finished, do not exist—
he, an attainer-of-knowledge,
everywhere totally released[10]:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Gone beyond snares,
for whom there are no snares,
who, among those attached to conceit,
is unattached to conceit,
comprehending stress
along with its field & its site[11]:

The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Independent of desire,
seeing seclusion,[12]
gone beyond the views known by others,
who has
        no supports
        no mental objects[13]
    at all:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

In whom, having understood them,
phenomena from high to low
are destroyed, finished, do not exist[14]—
at peace, released in the ending of clinging:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Seeing the end & ending
of fetters & birth,
having dispelled the path of passion
without trace,
pure, faultless, stainless, clear:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Who doesn't contemplate
self by means of self,[15]
centered, straightened,
steadfast in mind,[16]
truly unperturbed,
free from rigidity, free
from doubt:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake.

Who has no conditions for delusion,
with knowledge & vision of all phenomena
he carries his last body,
having attained the unexcelled
self-awakening, auspicious—
to that extent is the purity of a spirit[17]:
The Tathāgata deserves
the sacrificial cake."

Sundarika:

"And may my offering
be a true offering
from having obtained
an attainer-of-knowledge like you.
As Brahmā is my witness,
may the Blessed One accept,
may the Blessed One eat,
my sacrificial cake."

The Buddha:

"What's been chanted over with verses[18]
shouldn't be eaten by me.
That's not the nature, brahman,
of one who's seen rightly.
What's been chanted over with verses
Awakened Ones reject.
That being their Dhamma, brahman,
this is their way of life.
Serve with other food & drink
a fully-perfected great seer,
his effluents ended,
his anxiety stilled,
for that is the field
for one looking for merit."

Sundarika:

"It's well, Blessed One, how I understand
who should eat the offering of one like me,
whom I should seek at the time of sacrifice
having received your advice."

The Buddha:

"Whose violence is fully gone,
whose mind is limpid,
whose sloth is dispelled
—fully released from sensuality—
one who has subdued boundaries,[19]
a master of birth & death,
a sage consummate in sagacity[20]:
When one like this has come to the sacrifice,
then, subduing scorn, with hands palm-to-palm
over the heart,
do homage.
Worship him with food & drink.
In this way the offerings will succeed."

Sundarika:

"Master, the Awakened One,
field of merit
unexcelled in all the world,
recipient for all the world[21]
deserves the sacrificial cake.
A gift given to you, master,
bears great fruit.

Then the brahman Sundarika Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One, "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes

could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in Master Gotama's presence, let me obtain Acceptance (into the Bhikkhu Saṅgha)."

Then the brahman Sundarika Bhāradvāja obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here-&-now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And so Ven. Sundarika Bhāradvāja became another one of the arahants.

vv. 456–486

Notes

1. The account in SN 7:9 goes immediately from this question to the Buddha's response marked by footnote 6.

2. See AN 4:36.

3. According to SnA, the "clan" of the run-of-the-mill is the five aggregates. However, the clan of run-of-the-mill people might also refer to the customs of all lineages that don't follow the customs of the noble lineage set out in AN 4:28.

4. This is apparently a reference to Ṛgveda iii, 62, 10, an invocation addressed to Sāvitrī, or the Sun:

> *tat savitur vareṇ(i)yaṁ*
> *bhargo devasya dhīmahi*
> *dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt*
>
> "Let us meditate on the glory
> of the excellent deva Sāvitrī,
> that he may inspire our thoughts."

This verse, in the Gāvitrī meter, is recited during the *upanayana* ceremony, when a young brahman is invested with the sacred thread that initiates him into

the status of a “twice-born” brahman and he begins his study of the Vedas. Although similar passages were recited when young men of other castes began their education, Ṛgveda iii, 62, 10 was reserved exclusively for brahmans. It was also the subject of many meditations on its esoteric meaning, some of which can be found in the major Upaniṣads: Bṛhad-āraṇyaka 6.3.6; śvetāśvatara 4.18; and Maitrī 6.7 and 6.34.

SnA suggests that the Buddha’s question about this verse surprises Sundarika, making him suspect that the Buddha knows more about brahmanical lore than he does, which is why he changes his tone with the following question. SnA also asserts that the Buddhist equivalent to the Sāvitti—three lines, 24 syllables—is the expression of homage to the Triple Gem: *Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.*

5. In other words, the original motivation for performing sacrifices was that the recipient of the oblation would be a pure person. The Buddha gives another answer to a very similar question in Sn 5:3.

6. In SN 7:9, the Buddha’s initial response to Sundarika begins here.

7. SnA explains this analogy by saying that it doesn’t matter what kind of wood is used to make a fire, for in each case the fire is equally hot and bright. See MN 93.

8. In SN 7:9, the initial exchange between the Buddha and Sundarika ends here. Sundarika then offers the sacrificial cake to the Buddha, who refuses it with the passage beginning with the line marked by footnote 18. Then, as in Sn 1:4, he tells Sundarika to throw away the offering, which sizzles in the water into which it is thrown. Shocked, Sundarika returns to the Buddha, who teaches him five more verses of Dhamma.

> Don’t, brahman, when lighting kindling,
> imagine that purity comes from that outside,
> for the skilled say that purity doesn’t come through that:
> whoever searches outside for purity.
> Having abandoned the lighting of kindling, I,
> brahman, ignite just the inner fire.
> Constantly afire,
> constantly centered in mind,
> I am a worthy one, living the holy life.

Conceit, brahman, is the burden on your shoulder,
anger your smoke, false speech your ashes.
    The tongue is the ladle;
    the heart, the fire-altar;
    the well-tamed self
    is the fire of a man.
The Dhamma is a lake
whose ford is virtue
    —limpid, praised by the good
    to the good—
where attainers-of-knowledge, having bathed
    cross, dry-limbed,
    to the further shore.
Truth, Dhamma, restraint, the holy life,
attainment of Brahmā dependent on the middle:
Pay homage to those who've become
    truly straightened:
That, I call a man
in the flow of the Dhamma.

After hearing these verses, Sundarika asks for Acceptance into the Saṅgha, and the sutta concludes in the same way as the account given here.

9. This is a play on words: *arahati,* "deserves," is related to *arahant.*

10. On the implications of being "everywhere released," see *The Paradox of Becoming,* chapter 7.

11. According to SnA, the field and site of stress is a reference to defilements. It could also be a reference to the objects of clinging that can form a basis for stress: such things as the aggregates, sense media, and properties *(dhātu).*

12. According to SnA, "seclusion" here means unbinding. See SN 21:10 and SN 35:63.

13. Supports/mental objects = *ārammaṇā.* See Ud 8:1, SN 12:64, and SN 22:53.

14. On unbinding as the end of phenomena, see AN 10:58 and Sn 5:6.

15. For examples of seeing self by means of self (or self by means of not-self, or not-self by means of self), see MN 2.

16. This verse contains a play on words, in that *attā* can mean both "self" and "mind," and it is used in both senses here.

17. Spirit = *yakkha.* According to SnA, the word *yakkha* in this context means "person." See Sn 4:11, note 4.

18. See Sn 1:4.

19. Boundaries = *sīmantā.* According to SnA, this is an epithet for defilement, in that the territory *(sīmā)* stands for good manners, and the end of the territory, or boundary, *(sīmanta)* stands for the defilements that lie outside of the realm of good manners. For a very different meaning for "territory," see Sn 4:4, note 12.

20. See AN 3:123 and Sn 1:12.

21. The word, *sabba-lokasmiṁ*—"in all the world," "with regard to all the world"—apparently functions as a lamp in this verse.

See also: SN 3:24; AN 6:37; AN 9:20

3:5 Māgha

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain. Then the young brahman Māgha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, I am generous, a master of giving, magnanimous, responsive to requests. I search for wealth righteously. Having searched for wealth righteously, then—with wealth righteously gained, righteously acquired—I give to one, I give to two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, and to more. Thus giving, thus sacrificing, do I produce much merit?"

"Certainly, young man, thus giving, thus sacrificing, you produce much merit. Anyone who is generous, a master of giving, magnanimous, responsive to requests, who searches for wealth righteously and, having searched for wealth righteously, then—with wealth righteously gained, righteously acquired—gives to one, to two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,

nine, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, and to more, produces much merit."

Then the young brahman Māgha addressed the Blessed One in verse:

"I ask the magnanimous Gotama,
wearing ochre robes, wandering without home:
When a householder responsive to requests,
a master of giving,
makes a sacrifice in hopes of merit,
looking for merit,
giving food & drink to others here,
how is the offering purified
for the one making the sacrifice?"

The Buddha:

"When a householder responsive to requests,
a master of giving,
makes a sacrifice in hopes of merit,
looking for merit,
giving food & drink to others here:
Such a person achieves his aim
in terms of the recipient."

Māgha:

"When a householder responsive to requests,
a master of giving,
makes a sacrifice in hopes of merit,
looking for merit,
giving food & drink to others here:
Point out to me the recipient."

The Buddha:

"Those who, unadhering,[1]
wander in the world, having nothing,
fully accomplished, their minds restrained:

To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,
to them a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.

Those who have cut all fetters & bonds,
tamed, released, with
    no afflictions,
    no desires:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,
to them a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.

Those released from all fetters & bonds,
tamed, released, with
    no afflictions,
    no desires:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Having abandoned
passion, aversion, & delusion,
their holy life fulfilled,
their effluents ended:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Those in whom no deceptiveness dwells,
            no conceit,
their holy life fulfilled,
their effluents ended:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Those devoid of greed,
unpossessive, undesiring,
their holy life fulfilled,
their effluents ended:

To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Those who aren't prey to cravings,
who wander without possessiveness,
having crossed over the flood:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Those who, having abandoned sensuality,
wander without home,
their minds well-restrained,
straight as a shuttle:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Those devoid of passion,
their faculties well-centered,
released like the moon
from the grasp of an eclipse:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Having calmed themselves,
those devoid of passion, unprovoked,
who have no (future) destinations,
having abandoned them here:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

Having abandoned birth & death
    without trace,
they have escaped all perplexity:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

They who, with themselves as refuge,
wander in the world,
having nothing, everywhere released:
To them, at the right time,

you should bestow an offering.

They who know here, as it really is—
‘This is the last birth,
there is no further becoming’:
To them, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering.

An attainer-of-knowledge,[2]
delighting in jhāna, mindful,
attained to self-awakening,
the refuge of many:
To him, at the right time,
you should bestow an offering,
to him a brahman aiming at merit
should sacrifice.”

Māgha:

“Yes, my question was not in vain.
You, Blessed One, have pointed out the recipient.
You know this here, as it really is,
because this Dhamma has been experienced by you.
When a householder responsive to requests,
a master of giving,
makes a sacrifice in hopes of merit,
looking for merit,
giving food & drink to others here:
Point out to me, Blessed One,
the consummation of the sacrifice.”

The Buddha:

“Sacrifice, and while sacrificing, Māgha,
said the Blessed One,
make your mind clear everywhere.
For one sacrificing, the sacrifice is the object,
the support.[3]

Taking a stand there, he abandons faults.[4]
He—devoid of passion, subduing aversion,
developing a mind of goodwill
    immeasurable,
day & night, continually heedful—
should pervade all the directions
    immeasurably."

Māgha:

"Who is purified? Released? Bound?
By means of what mind does one go
to the Brahmā world?
Say this, sage, when asked
    by me who doesn't know.
As the Blessed One is my witness,
I have seen Brahmā today,
for you are equal to Brahmā for us—it's true!
How, shining one, does one reappear
in the Brahmā world?"

The Buddha:

"Whoever sacrifices
with the threefold sacrifice consummation,[5]
such a one would achieve his aim
in terms of the recipient.
Having thus sacrificed rightly,
one responsive to requests
reappears, I say, in the Brahmā world."[5]

When this was said, the young brahman Māgha said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to

the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."

vv. 487–509

Notes

1. Reading *alaggā* with the Thai edition. The Burmese and PTS editions read *asattā,* "without attachment."

2. In this verse, the Buddha is referring to himself.

3. Support/object = *ārammaṇaṁ*.

4. *Dosa*. There is apparently a play on words in this verse, with *dosa* meaning "fault" here, and "aversion" in the next line.

5. According to SnA, the threefold consummation of the sacrifice refers to the three qualities of the donor mentioned in AN 6:37: "The donor, before giving, is glad; while giving, his/her mind is bright & clear; and after giving, is gratified." However, because these qualities are not mentioned in this sutta, this explanation is unlikely. It's more likely that the Buddha here is referring to the three points he made just above: that the donor should make his/her mind clear; should abandon the faults of passion and aversion; and should develop immeasurable thoughts of goodwill. For more on the development of immeasurable goodwill and its benefits, see MN 97, AN 4:125–126, AN 10:196, and AN 11:16.

See also: SN 3:24; SN 20:4; AN 5:53; AN 6:37; AN 8:54; AN 9:20; Iti 22; Iti 27; Iti 100

3:6 Sabhiya

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. Now on that occasion, questions had been assigned to Sabhiya the wanderer by a devatā who was a former relative of his: "Sabhiya, if any contemplative or brahman, when asked these questions, answers them, live the holy life in his presence." Then Sabhiya the wanderer, having learned these questions in the presence of that devatā, went to those who had communities & groups, who were the teachers of groups, well-known, prestigious, founders of sects,

well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta, & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta—and asked them the questions. But they, being asked the questions by Sabhiya the wanderer, were unable to answer. Unable to answer, they showed anger, aversion, & displeasure, and even turned the questions back on Sabhiya the wanderer.

The thought occurred to Sabhiya the wanderer, "These venerable contemplatives & brahmans with communities & groups, who are the teachers of groups, well-known, prestigious, founders of sects, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa … & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta—when asked these questions by me are unable to answer. Unable to answer, they show anger, aversion, & displeasure, and even turn the questions back on me. What if I were to revert to the lower life and partake of sensual pleasures?"

But then the thought occurred to him, "There is still this Gotama the contemplative. He has a community & group, he is the teacher of a group, well-known, prestigious, founder of a sect, well-regarded by people at large. What if I, having gone to him, were to ask *him* these questions?"

Then the thought occurred to Sabhiya the wanderer, "Now, those venerable contemplatives & brahmans—Pūraṇa Kassapa … & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta—are old, elderly, aged, along in their years, at an advanced stage of life, elders, senior, long gone-forth, with communities & groups, teachers of groups, well-known, prestigious, founders of sects, well-regarded by people at large: Even they, when asked these questions by me, were unable to answer. Unable to answer, they showed anger, aversion, & displeasure, and even turned the questions back on me. So how could this Gotama the contemplative answer when asked these questions? He is both young in age and newly gone-forth."

But then the thought occurred to him, "Gotama the contemplative is not to be despised as 'young' or treated with contempt. Even though young, he is of great power & great might.[1] What if I, having gone to him, were to ask him these questions?"

So Sabhiya the wanderer set out, headed for Rājagaha. Wandering by stages, he arrived at where the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. On arrival, he exchanged

courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he addressed the Blessed One in verse:

"Doubtful & uncertain, I have come
desiring to ask questions.
Put an end to them,
when asked them by me.
Answer me one-by-one,
in line with the Dhamma."

"Sabhiya," said the Blessed One,
"you have come from afar,
desiring to ask questions.
I will put an end to them,
when asked them by you.
I will answer you one-by-one,
in line with the Dhamma."

Then the thought occurred to Sabhiya the wanderer, "Isn't is amazing? Isn't it astounding?—how even the leave, of which I didn't receive even a little bit from other contemplatives & brahmans, has been granted to me by Gotama the contemplative." Gratified, joyful, exultant, enraptured, & happy, he asked the Blessed One a question:

"Having attained what
is one said to be a monk?
In what way is one composed?
And how is one said to be tamed?
How is one called 'awakened'?
Answer, Blessed One, when I've asked you."

The Buddha:

"Having gone to total unbinding,
having crossed over doubt,
by means of the path accomplished by himself,
having abandoned becoming & non-becoming,

having fulfilled [the task],
further-becoming ended:
He is a monk.[2]

Everywhere equanimous, mindful,
he harms no one in all the world.
A contemplative crossed over, limpid,
he has no swellings[3]: He is composed.

Whose faculties are developed,
within & without,
with regard to all the world,[4]
disenchanted with this world & the next,
he awaits his time,[5] developed: He's tamed.

Having evaluated all theories,
the wandering-on,
dying & reappearing,
having done away with dust & blemish
—pure—
he has attained the ending of birth:
He is called awakened."[6]

Then Sabhiya the wanderer—delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words—gratified, joyful, exultant, enraptured & happy, asked the Blessed One a further question:

"Having attained what
is one said to be a brahman?
In what way is one a contemplative,
and how is one 'washed'?
How is one called a nāga?
Answer, Blessed One, when I've asked you."

The Buddha:

"Having banished all evils,[7]
well-centered, stainless,

firm in mind,
gone entirely beyond
the wandering-on,
independent, Such:
He's called a brahman.

Calmed, having abandoned
good & evil,
dustless, having known
this world & the next,
gone beyond birth & death,
he is truly called a contemplative[8]—
Such.

Having washed off all evils
within & without, in all the world,
with regard to the theories
of beings human & divine,
he goes to no theory:
He's said to be 'washed.'[9]

He does no misdeed[10]
at all in the world.
Having escaped all fetters & bonds,
freed, he's everywhere un-
attached,
truly he's called a nāga—
Such."

Then Sabhiya the wanderer—delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words—gratified, joyful, exultant, enraptured, & happy, asked the Blessed One a further question:

"Whom do the awakened
call a field-victor?
In what way is one skilled
and how is one wise?
And how is one called

by the name of ‘sage’?
Answer, Blessed One, when I’ve asked you.”

The Buddha:

“Having examined all fields[11]—
heavenly, human, and fields of the Brahmās—
freed from the root bonds of all fields,
he’s truly called a field-victor—
Such.

Having examined all storehouses[12]—
heavenly, human, storehouses of Brahmās—
freed from the root bonds of all storehouses,
he’s truly called skillful—
Such.

Having examined all white flowers[13]
within & without,
one of pure discernment
gone beyond dark & bright,
he’s truly called wise—
Such.

Knowing false & true Dhamma
within & without, in all the world,
he is worshipped by beings
human & divine.
Having transcended snares & nets,
he is a sage.”

Then Sabhiya the wanderer—delighting in and approving of the Blessed One’s words—gratified, joyful, exultant, enraptured & happy, asked the Blessed One a further question:

“Having attained what
is one said to be
an attainer-of-knowledge?

In what way is one well-tested,
and how is one persistent?
Why is one named a thoroughbred?
Answer, Blessed One, when I've asked you."

The Buddha:

"Having examined all knowledges—
those of brahmans, those of contemplatives—
devoid of passion for all feelings,[14]
gone beyond knowledge:
He's an attainer-of-knowledge.

Having tested objectification[15]
& name-&-form,
within & without, the root of disease,
freed from the root bond of disease,
he's truly called well-tested—
Such.

Abstaining from all evils,
gone beyond the suffering of hell,
he's one with persistence.
He, with persistence, exertion,
is rightly called a hero[16]—
Such.

One truly whose bonds are cut
within & without,
freed from all the root bonds of snares,
truly he's called a thoroughbred—
Such."

Then Sabhiya the wanderer—delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words—gratified, joyful, exultant, enraptured & happy, asked the Blessed One a further question:

"Having attained what

is one said to be learned?
In what way is one noble,
and how is one a person of good conduct?
Why is one named a wanderer?
Answer, Blessed One, when I've asked you."

The Buddha:

"Having heard, having directly known
every Dhamma
for the sake of direct knowing[17]
in the world,
whatever is blameworthy or blameless,
having conquered, free of doubt,
released
everywhere, everywhere
without trouble,
one is said to be learned.[18]

Having cut attachments & effluents,
knowing, he does not come to lie in the womb,
dispelling mud
and the three types of perception,[19]
he goes to no theory:
He is called noble.

Whoever here has attained attainment
with regard to good conduct,
all-skillful, who has learned the Dhamma,
unattached
everywhere,
everywhere his mind released,
he has no irritation:
He is one of good conduct.

Avoiding whatever action there is
that ripens in suffering & stress
—above, below, and even all around

in the middle—
one who goes about, comprehending,
he has put an all-around end to
deceptiveness, conceit,
greed, anger,
name-&-form:
He's called a wanderer,
attained to attainment."[20]

Then Sabhiya the wanderer—delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words—gratified, joyful, exultant, enraptured & happy—got up from his seat and, arranging his upper robe over his shoulder and placing his hands palm-to-palm over his heart toward the Blessed One, praised the Blessed One face-to-face with fitting verses:

"One Deeply Discerning,
you have crossed over the flood of darkness
of the three & sixty views leading downward,[21]
dependent on the teachings of contemplatives,
dependent on perceptions
& words of perceptions.
You have gone to the end,
you have gone to the further shore
of suffering & stress.
You are a noble one,
rightly self-awakened.
I would imagine that you
have ended the effluents.
Brilliant, thoughtful,
of abundant discernment,
ender of suffering,
you have brought me across.

When you learned of my doubt,
you brought me across my uncertainty.
Homage to you, sage attained
to the attainment of sagacity's ways.

Free from rigidity, Kinsman of the Sun,
you're composed.

The doubt I had before,
you have answered, One with Eyes.
Yes, you are a sage, rightly
self-awakened. You have
no hindrances. Your despairs
are fallen down, cut from the stem.
Cooled, attained to self-control,
steadfast, enduring in truth:
In your words, Nāga of nāgas, great hero,
all devas—including Nāradas and Pabbatas[22]—
delight.
Homage to you, O thoroughbred man,
Homage to you, O superlative man,[23]
in the world with its devas
there's no one to compare with you.[24]
You : Awakened.
You : Teacher.
You : Sage who has conquered Māra.
You : Having cut obsessions,
having crossed over,
bring this generation across.
Your acquisitions transcended,
your effluents torn apart,
you are a lion
free of clinging,
your fear & terror abandoned.
As a lovely lotus
is not smeared by water,
you are not smeared
by good or evil.

Extend your feet, hero:
Sabhiya venerates them,

the feet of the Teacher.[25]

Then Sabhiya the wanderer, bending his head to the Blessed One's feet, said, "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to set out a lamp in the darkness so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, let me obtain Acceptance."

"Anyone, Sabhiya, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the Going-forth & Acceptance into this Dhamma & Vinaya, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks feel so moved, they give him the Going-forth & accept him into the monk's state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter."

"Lord, if that is so, I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks feel so moved, let them give me the Going-forth & accept me into the monk's state."

Then Sabhiya the wanderer obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance —dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here-&-now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And so Ven. Sabhiya became another one of the arahants.

vv. 510–547

Notes

1. Reading *Daharo'pi c'esa samaṇo Gotamo mahiddhiko hoti mahānbhavo,* with the Burmese edition.

2. Many of the Buddha's answers to Sabhiya's questions involve verbal effects such as alliteration and rhyme. This verse contains a play on words, relating *bhikkhu* (monk) to *bhavaṁ* (becoming) and *khīṇa-* (ended).

3. *Ussada:* According to SnA, this means such forms of defilement as passion, aversion, delusion, pride, and conceit. See Sn 4:14.

4. In other words, one who is dispassionate to the sense faculties and their objects. See SN 35:153.

5. This is a reference to an image more fully elaborated in Thag 11 and Thag 14:1:

> I don't delight in death,
> don't delight in living.
> I await my time
> as a worker his wage.
> I don't delight in death,
> don't delight in living.
> I await my time,
> mindful, alert.

6. This verse contains an end-rhyme—*visuddhaṁ/Buddhaṁ*—which is rare in Pali poetry.

7. Here there is alliteration between *bāhetvā* (banished) and *brahmā* (brahman, shortened to fit the meter). A similar alliteration is found in Dhp 388 and Ud 1:4–5.

8. Here there is alliteration between *samitāvi* (calmed) and *samaṇo* (contemplative).

9. Here there is alliteration between *n'eti,* "doesn't come/go" and *nhātako,* "washed." This verse also contains a play on words. Normally, one would say that a person is washed of dirt *(uklāpa);* here the arahant is said to be washed of theory *(kappa).*

10. The Pali phrase here is *āguṁ na karoti,* which could be rephrased as *na āguṁ karoti,* yielding a play on the word *nāga.* The same play on words is found in AN 6:43. Given that one of the meanings of nāga is "large elephant," the verse here further elaborates on the image evoked by the word by depicting the nāga as freed from all fetters and bonds.

11. SnA cites this passage from AN 3:77 to identify "field," here, with kamma: "Kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture." In the context of that sutta, this analogy is used to explain the way different levels of becoming are produced.

12. As with "field," SnA identifies "storehouses" as storehouses of kamma. Here there is alliteration between *kosāni* (storehouses) and *kusalo* (skillful).

13. *Paṇḍara = Pāṇḍura* (Skt.): *Anogeissus Latifolia.* According to SnA, "white flowers" stands for the six sense media, in that they are normally pure and yet can grow (see SN 22:54). An alternative possibility is that "white flowers" stands for states of mind marked by a perception of whiteness—such as the white-totality, and the mastery described in AN 10:29 as follows:

> "One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Just as the morning star is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow, in the same way one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Mastering them, he is percipient of 'I know; I see.'"

As AN 10:29 further notes, this is the highest state of mastery, "yet even in the beings who are percipient in this way there is still aberration, there is change. Seeing this, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with that. Being disenchanted with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is supreme, and even more so toward what is inferior." As the verse here notes, a person going beyond this state would have to go beyond all states of darkness and brightness to attain release.

This verse contains an alliteration that can, without force, be replicated in English: white flowers *(paṇḍarāni)* and wise *(paṇḍito).*

14. Here there is a play on words with *vedāni* (knowledges) and *vedanā* (feelings).

15. See MN 18, introduction.

16. Reading *vīro* with GD, rather than *dhīro,* which is found in the printed editions but doesn't seem to fit the context. (See the note in GD to verse 44 in Sn 1:3, which comments on the tendency of the textual tradition to confuse these two words.) This reading would give the verse three alliterated words: *virato* (abstaining), *viriyavā* (one with persistence), and *vīro* (hero).

17. "Having directly known, for the sake of direct knowing": Two meanings of the word *abhiññāya.*

18. Here there is an alliteration between *sutavā* (having heard) and *sottiyo* (learned).

19. SnA identifies "mud" as the strings of sensuality, and the three types of perception as the three beginning with the perception of sensuality. These could be either the perceptions of sensuality, ill-will, and harmfulness, or the perceptions of sensuality, form, and formlessness.

The alliteration in this verse is between *ālayāni* (attachments) and *ariyo* (noble).

20. This verse contains an alliteration between *paribbājayitvā* (avoiding) and *paribbājaka* (wanderer).

21. According to SnA, the 63 wrong views comprise the 62 wrong views mentioned in DN 1 along with the wrong view of self-identity *(sakkāya-diṭṭhi).*

22. According to SnA, these are classes of devas noted for their discernment.

23. See AN 11:10.

24. See Iti 112.

25. The word "feet"—*pāde*—functions as a lamp here.

See also: DN 2; Ud 1:9; Thag 6:9

3:7 Sela

(This sutta is identical with MN 92. Part of it also appears in Mv VI.35.1–8.)

I have heard that on one occasion, while the Blessed One was wandering on a tour among the Aṅguttarāpans with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all, he arrived at an Aṅguttarāpan town named Āpaṇa. Keṇiya the coiled hair ascetic heard it said, "Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan—on a wandering tour among the Aṅguttarāpans with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all—has arrived at Āpaṇa. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed. He

makes known—having realized it through direct knowledge—this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its rulers & commonfolk; he explains the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; he expounds the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure. It is good to see such a worthy one.'"

So Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side.[1] As he was sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with a talk on Dhamma. Then Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with the Blessed One's talk on Dhamma—said to him, "Master Gotama, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him, "The Saṅgha of monks is large, Keṇiya, approximately 1,250 monks in all, and you are strongly confident in brahmans."

A second time… A third time, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, even though the Saṅgha of monks is large, approximately 1,250 monks in all, and I am strongly confident in brahmans, may Master Gotama acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, understanding the Blessed One's acquiescence, got up from his seat and returned to his own ashram. On arrival, he addressed his friends & companions, his relatives & kinsmen: "Listen to me, venerable friends & companions, relatives & kinsmen: I have invited Gotama the contemplative together with a Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all, for the meal tomorrow. Give me bodily assistance for that."

"As you say, master," his friends & companions, relatives & kinsmen responded to him. Some of them dug out ovens, some split wood, some washed dishes, some set out a water pot, some arranged seats, while Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic arranged a pavilion of garlands himself.

Now on that occasion Sela the brahman was staying at Āpaṇa. He was a master of the Three Vedas with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, etymology, & histories as a fifth; skilled in philology & grammar, he was fully versed in cosmology and in the marks of a Great Man. He was instructing 300 young brahmans in the (Vedic) mantras. Then, as he—surrounded by 300 young brahmans—was walking and wandering about to exercise his legs, he arrived at the ashram of Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic. He saw that some of the people in the ashram were digging out ovens, some were splitting wood… while Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic was arranging a pavilion of garlands himself. On seeing this, he said to Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, "Could it be that Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic is giving a son or daughter in marriage, or is he setting up a great sacrifice, or is Seniya Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, invited for tomorrow together with his army?"

"No, Sela, it's not that I'm giving a son or daughter in marriage, nor that Seniya Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, is invited for tomorrow together with his army. But I *am* setting up a great sacrifice. There is Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan—who, on a wandering tour among the Aṅguttarāpans with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all, has arrived at Āpaṇa. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.' He has been invited by me for the meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

"Did you say, 'Awakened,' master Keṇiya?"

"I said, 'Awakened,' master Sela."

"Did you say, 'Awakened,' master Keṇiya?"

"I said, 'Awakened,' master Sela."

Then the thought occurred to Sela the brahman, "Even just this word is hard to come by in the world: 'Awakened.' Now, these 32 marks of a Great Man have come down in our mantras. For a Great Man endowed with them, two future courses, and no other, exist. If he inhabits a home, he will become a wheel-turning king, righteous, a king through righteousness, a

conqueror of the four quarters, a stabilizer of his countryside endowed with the seven treasures. The seven treasures are these: the wheel-treasure, the elephant-treasure, the horse-treasure, the jewel-treasure, the woman-treasure, the householder-treasure, and the adviser-treasure as the seventh. He will have a thousand sons, valiant, heroic in body, crushers of enemy armies. He will dwell, having conquered the earth to the edge of the sea, by means of Dhamma, without rod, without sword. But if he goes forth from the home life into homelessness, he will become a worthy one, rightly self-awakened, with his roof opened in the world."[2]

"Master Keṇiya, where is he staying now, that Master Gotama, worthy & rightly self-awakened?"

When this was said, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic lifted his right arm and said to Sela the brahman, "There, by the dark green line of the forest."

Then Sela the brahman, together with the 300 young brahmans, headed toward the Blessed One. Then he addressed the young brahmans, "Come noiselessly, masters, placing a footstep in a footstep. These Blessed Ones are hard to approach, like a lion wandering alone. And when I engage Gotama the contemplative in counsel, don't break into the middle of my talk. Wait until the end of my talk."

Then Sela the brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he looked for the 32 marks of a Great Man in the Blessed One's body. He saw most of the 32 marks of a Great Man in the Blessed One's body, except for two. About the two marks he was doubtful, uncertain, undecided, and wasn't reassured: about the male organ being in a sheath, and about the size of the tongue.

The thought occurred to the Blessed One, "Sela the brahman sees most of my marks of a Great Man, except for two. About the two marks he is doubtful, uncertain, undecided, and isn't reassured: about the male organ being in a sheath, and about the size of the tongue." So the Blessed One willed a willing of power such that Sela the brahman saw that the Blessed One's male organ was in a sheath. And then, extending his tongue, the Blessed One licked both ear-holes and nostrils back and forth, and covered his whole forehead with his tongue.

The thought occurred to Sela the brahman, “Gotama the contemplative’s 32 marks of a Great Man are complete and not incomplete. But I don’t know whether he is awakened or not. Still, I have heard the aged line of teachers, along in their years, say that Blessed Ones, worthy & rightly self-awakened, reveal themselves when their praise is spoken. What if I were to praise Gotama the contemplative face-to-face with fitting verses?”

So Sela the brahman praised the Blessed One face-to-face with fitting verses:

> “Perfect your body, shining well,
> well-born, lovely to look at,
> Blessed One, you have a golden complexion,
> you have white teeth, you’re vigorous.
> The characteristics of a well-born man,
> the marks of a Great Man,
> are all present in your body.
> Clear your eyes, good your face,
> imposing, splendid, straight upright:
> In the midst
> of a community of contemplatives
> you shine like the sun.
> A monk with skin resembling gold
> is admirable to look at,
> but what use is the contemplative state
> for you, so superlative in appearance?
> You deserve to be a king,
> a wheel-turner,[3] lord of charioteers,
> conqueror of the four quarters,
> sovereign lord of the Jambu grove.[4]
> Noble warriors, feudal lords, & kings
> are your devotees.
> King of kings, monarch of human beings:
> Rule, Gotama!”
>
> *The Buddha:*

“I *am* a king, Sela:
a Dhamma king unexcelled.
I turn the wheel with Dhamma—
the wheel whose turning
can’t be stopped.”

Sela:

“You claim to be rightly self-awakened,
a Dhamma king unexcelled.
But who, master, is your general,
the disciple right below the teacher?
Who keeps rolling
the Dhamma-wheel set rolling by you?”

The Buddha:

“The wheel set rolling by me
the unexcelled Dhamma-wheel:
Sāriputta keeps it rolling
taking after the Tathāgata.[5]
What should be directly known
has been directly known,
what should be developed, developed,
what should be abandoned, abandoned[6]:
Therefore, I’m awakened, brahman.
Subdue your doubt about me.
Be decided, brahman.
It’s hard often to gain
sight of the Rightly Self-Awakened.
I am one
whose appearance in the world
is hard often to gain:
Rightly Self-Awakened,
an arrow-remover unexcelled.
Brahmā-become, without compare,
crusher of Māra’s armies,

having overmastered all enemies,
    I rejoice, with no fear
    from anywhere."

Sela (to his following):

"Observe carefully, masters,
how he speaks, this One with Eyes,
arrow-remover, great hero:
He roars like a lion in the forest.
Brahmā-become, without compare,
crusher of Māra's armies:
    Who,
even one of a dark birth,[7]
on seeing him,
    would not have confidence?
Whoever wants to may follow me.
Whoever doesn't may go.
I will here go forth
in the presence of the one
of foremost discernment."

Sela's following:

"If, master, you thus delight
in the message
of the Rightly Self-Awakened One,
we, too, will here go forth
in the presence of the one
of foremost discernment."

Sela:

"These three hundred brahmans
request, with hands palm-to-palm
over the heart:
We will follow the holy-life,

Blessed One, in your presence."

The Buddha:

"The holy-life is well-expounded,
to be seen here-&-now, timeless,
where the Going-forth is not in vain
for a heedful person who trains."

Then Sela the brahman, together with his following, obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained Acceptance.

Then, as the night was ending, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, having had choice staple & non-staple foods prepared in his own ashram, announced the time to the Blessed One, "It is time, master Gotama. The meal is ready."

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—after adjusting his lower robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with a Saṅgha of monks to Keṇiya's ashram. On arrival, he sat down on an arranged seat. Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, with his own hand, served & satisfied the Blessed One & the Saṅgha of monks with choice staple & non-staple foods. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic took a lower seat and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One expressed approval of him with these verses:

"The fire oblation is the chief of sacrifices,
the Sāvitti, the chief of Vedic hymns,[8]
a king, chief among human beings,
the ocean, chief among rivers,
the moon, chief of the zodiac stars,
the sun, chief of things that burn,[9]
and for those who sacrifice, wishing for merit,
the Saṅgha, truly,
is chief.

Then, having expressed approval of Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic with these verses, the Blessed One got up from his seat and left.

Then Ven. Sela, together with his following—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here-&-now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And so Ven. Sela, together with his following, became another one of the arahants.

Then Ven. Sela, together with his following, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, arranging his upper robe over one shoulder and extending his hands palm-to-palm over the heart toward the Blessed One, addressed him in verse:

> "This is the eighth day
> since coming for refuge,
> One with Eyes.
> Blessed One,
> for seven nights,
> we have tamed ourselves
> with your message.
> You : Awakened.
> You : Teacher.
> You : Sage who has conquered Māra.
> You : Having cut obsessions,
> having crossed over,
> bring this generation across.
> Your acquisitions transcended,
> your effluents torn apart,
> you are a lion
> free of clinging,
> your fear & terror abandoned.
> These three hundred monks
> stand with hands palm-to-palm
> over the heart.
> Extend your feet, hero:
> The nāgas venerate them,
> the feet of the Teacher."[10]

Notes

1. According to Mv VI.35.3, at this point in the narrative Keṇiya offered a juice drink to the Buddha, who told him also to offer the drink to the Saṅgha. This became the occasion for the allowance for monks to consume juice drinks after noon.

2. See Sn 1:2, note 3.

3. To be a wheel-turner meant, in ancient Indian parlance, to establish rule over the entire "wheel" of the eight directions. The sutta containing the Buddha's first sermon (SN 56:11), in stating that the sermon set the Dhamma-wheel rolling, thus borrowed this image to make the point that the Buddha's Dhamma ruled in all directions.

The Dhamma-wheel is also a wheel in another sense. In ancient Indian texts, a "wheel" was a list of a permutations of two or more variables. The Dhamma-wheel in the Buddha's first sermon lists all twelve permutations of two variables: the four noble truths—stress, its origination, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation—and the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each truth: knowledge of the truth, knowledge of the task appropriate to the truth, and knowledge that the task has been completed.

4. An epithet for the Indian subcontinent.

5. See MN 141. MLDB, in its translation of this verse in MN 92, mistakenly says that Sāriputta *will* keep the Dhamma wheel rolling; GD mistakenly identifies him as the Buddha's successor, rather than as the disciple right below him. Translations of this sort have led at least one scholar to cite this verse as a late addition to the Canon, in conflict with MN 108, which clearly states that the Buddha left no successor, and with SN 47:13, which notes that Sāriputta passed away before the Buddha. However, when the verse is correctly translated, there is no conflict.

6. Three of the four duties with regard to the four noble truths. See SN 56:11 and MN 149.

7. Sela, despite his newfound confidence in the Buddha, has not yet abandoned his racism. In AN 4:85, however, the Buddha redefines the brahmanical concept of dark birth in such a way that is based on kamma rather than race.

8. *Chandas.* This term normally means "meter," but it also means Vedic hymn. See the discussion in *The Buddhist Monastic Code,* volume II, chapter 8. On the Sāvitti as the chief Vedic hymn, see Sn 3:4, note 4.

9. See Dhp 387.

10. See Sn 3:6, note 25.

See also: SN 4:20

3:8 The Arrow

Without sign,
unknown
—the life here of mortals—
difficult,
short,
tied up with pain.
For there's no way
by which those who are born
will not die.
Beings are subject
to death
even when they attain
old age.

Like ripe fruits
whose downfall, whose danger
is falling,
so for mortals, once born,
the constant danger
is death.

As clay vessels made by a potter
all end up broken,
so too life
heads to death.[1]
Young & old

wise & foolish:
        All
    come under the sway of death;
        all
    have death as their end.

For those overcome by death,
    gone to the other world,
    father cannot shelter son,
    nor relatives a relative.
See: Even while relatives are looking on,
        wailing heavily,
mortals are
one
    by
        one
led away
        like cows to the slaughter.
In this way is the world afflicted
    with aging & death,
and so the enlightened don't grieve,
    knowing the way of the world.

"You don't know the path
of his coming or going:
seeing neither end,
you lament in vain."[2]

If, by lamenting,
    —confused,
    harming yourself—
any use could be gained
the prudent would do it as well.
But not by weeping & grief
do you gain peace of awareness.
        Pain
arises all the more. Your body

is harmed.
You grow thin,
pale,
harming yourself
by yourself.
Not in that way
are the dead protected.
Lamentation's in vain.
Not abandoning grief, a person
suffers all the more pain.
Bewailing one whose time is done,
you fall under the sway of grief.

Look at others
going along,
people arriving
in line with their actions:
falling under the sway of death,
beings simply
shivering here.

For however they imagine it,
it always turns out
other than that.
That's the type of (their) separation.
See the way of the world.

Even if a person lives a century
—or more—
he's parted
from his community of relatives,
he abandons his life
right here.

So, having heard the arahant,
subduing lamentation,
seeing the dead one whose time is done,
[think,] "I can't fetch him back."[3]

Just as one would put out
    a burning refuge
    with water,
so does the enlightened one—
    discerning,
    skillful,
    & wise—
blow away any arisen grief,
like the wind, a bit of cotton fluff.

Seeking your own happiness,
you should pull out your own arrow:
    your own
                lamentation,
                longing,
                & sorrow.[4]
With arrow pulled out,
        independent,
attaining peace of awareness,
all grief transcended,
    griefless you are
        unbound.

vv. 574–593

Notes

1. See the verse at the end of DN 16, part III.
2. See Thig 6:1.
3. These lines can also be translated as follows:

    So, having heard the arahant,
    subdue lamentation,
    seeing the dead one whose time is done,
        [and thinking,] "I can't fetch him back."

4. These lines can also be translated as follows:

    Just as one would put out

a burning refuge
with water,
so does the enlightened one—
discerning,
skillful,
& wise—
blow away any arisen grief,
his own lamentation, longing, & sorrow,
like the wind, a bit of cotton fluff.
Seeking your own happiness,
you should pull out your own arrow.

See also: MN 82; MN 87; SN 21:2; SN 36:6; SN 47:13; AN 5:49; Ud 8:8; Thig 3:5; Thig 6:1

3:9 Vāseṭṭha

(This sutta is identical with MN 98.)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Icchānaṅgala in the Icchānaṅgala forest grove. And on that occasion many well-known wealthy brahmans were dwelling in Icchānaṅgala, i.e., Caṅkī the brahman, Tārukkha the brahman, Pokkharasāti the brahman, Jānusoṇin the brahman, Todeyya the brahman, and many other well-known wealthy brahmans.

Then, while the young brahmans Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja were walking and wandering about to exercise their legs, this conversation arose between them: "How is one a brahman?"

The young brahman Bhāradvāja said, "When one is well-born on both sides, the mother's & the father's, is of pure descent for seven generations of fathers—uncriticized & irreproachable in the telling of one's birth: It's to that extent that one is a brahman."

The young brahman Vāseṭṭha said, "When one is virtuous & consummate in one's practices, it's to that extent that one is a brahman."

But neither was the young brahman Bhāradvāja able to win over the young brahman Vāseṭṭha, nor was the young brahman Vāseṭṭha able to win over the young brahman Bhāradvāja.

Then the young brahman Vāseṭṭha said to the young brahman Bhāradvāja, "Bhāradvāja, this Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan—is staying at Icchānaṅgala in the Icchānaṅgala forest grove. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.' Come, let's go to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, ask him about this matter. However he answers, that's how we'll hold it."

"As you say, master," the young brahman Bhāradvāja responded to the young brahman Vāseṭṭha. So the young brahmans Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the young brahman Vāseṭṭha addressed the Blessed One in verses:

> Master, we're acknowledged & self-proclaimed
> as masters of the three knowledges[1]:
> I, a student of Pokkharasāti,
> this one, of Tārukka.
> Whatever is taught
> by masters of the three knowledges,
> in that we are adept—
> grammarians & philologists,
> on a par with our teachers in recitation.
>
> We have a dispute, Gotama,
> on the topic of birth.
> Bhāradvāja says that one is a brahman
> through birth,
> I say through action.[2]
> Know this, One with Eyes.

Neither of us can win over the other.
We come, asking the master
reputed to be self-awakened.
As people going
with hands palm-to-palm over the heart
pay homage, venerating
the moon when it's just past new,
in the same way in the world, Gotama,
we ask Gotama, the Eye arisen in the world:
    Is one a brahman through birth
    or is it through action?
Tell us, who don't know,
how we might know a brahman."

The Buddha:

"I will answer you step-by-step
as it really is.
Animals are divided by nature,
    for their species differ, one from another.[3]
You know grasses & trees,
even though they don't proclaim themselves:
Their distinguishing markings are made by nature,
    for their species differ, one from another.
Then beetles & moths, down to white ants:
Their distinguishing markings are made by nature,
    for their species differ, one from another.
You know four-footed beasts,
        small & large:
Their distinguishing markings are made by nature,
    for their species differ, one from another.
You know belly-footed, long-backed snakes:
Their distinguishing markings are made by nature,
    for their species differ, one from another.
Then you know fish in the water, with water their range:
Their distinguishing markings are made by nature,

for their species differ, one from another.
Then you know birds, with wings as their vehicles,
coursing through the sky:
Their distinguishing markings are made by nature,
for their species differ, one from another.

While these species
have many distinguishing marks
made by nature,
human beings don't
have many distinguishing marks
made by nature:
not through hair or head
not through ears or eyes,
not through face or nose,
not through mouth or lips,
not through neck or shoulders,
not through belly or back,
not through buttocks or chest,
not through groin or intercourse,
not through hands or feet,
not through fingers or nails,
not through calves or thighs,
not through complexion or voice.
Their distinguishing mark is not made by nature
as it is for other species.
In human beings that's not found
individually in their bodies,
but their identification is described
in terms of convention:
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living by guarding cows,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
as a farmer, not as a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living through various crafts,

you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
  as a craftsman, not as a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living through trade,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
  as a merchant, not as a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living by serving others,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
  as a servant, not as a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living through stealing,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha:
  This is a thief, not a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living through arrow & sword,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
  as a soldier, not as a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living through priesthood,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
  as a sacrificer, not as a brahman.
Whoever, among human beings,
makes a living partaking of city & state,
you know him thus, Vāseṭṭha,
  as a king, not as a brahman.

> I don't call one a brahman
> for being born of a mother
> or sprung from a womb.
> He's called a 'bho-sayer'
> if he has anything at all.
> But someone with nothing,
> who clings to no thing:
> He's what I call
> a brahman.[4]

Having cut every fetter,
he doesn't get ruffled.
Beyond attachment,
unshackled:
  He's what I call
  a brahman.
Having cut the strap & thong,
  cord & bridle,
having thrown off the bar,[5]
  awakened:
  He's what I call
  a brahman.
He endures—unangered—
insult, assault, & imprisonment.
His army is strength;
his strength, forbearance:
  He's what I call
  a brahman.
Free from anger,
duties observed,
principled, with no overbearing pride,
trained, a 'last-body':
  He's what I call
  a brahman.[6]
Like water on a lotus leaf,
a mustard seed on the tip of an awl,
he doesn't adhere to sensual pleasures:
  He's what I call
  a brahman.
He discerns right here,
  for himself,
  on his own,
  his own
  ending of stress.[7]
Unshackled, his burden laid down:

He's what I call
a brahman.
Wise, deeply
discerning, astute
as to what is the path
& what's not;
his ultimate goal attained:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Uncontaminated
by householders
& houseless ones alike;
living with no home,
with next to no wants:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Having put aside violence
against beings fearful or firm,
he neither kills nor
gets others to kill:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Unopposing among opposition,
unbound among the armed,
unclinging among those who cling:
He's what I call
a brahman.
His passion, aversion,
conceit, & contempt,
have fallen away—
like a mustard seed
from the tip of an awl:
He's what I call
a brahman.
He would say
what's

non-grating,
instructive,
true—
abusing no one:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Here in the world
he takes nothing not-given
—long, short,
large, small,
attractive, not:
He's what I call
a brahman.
His longing for this
& for the next world
can't be found;
free from longing, unshackled:
He's what I call
a brahman.
His attachments,
his homes,
can't be found.
He, through knowing,[8]
is unperplexed,
has reached a footing
in the deathless[9]:
He's what I call
a brahman.
He has gone
beyond attachment here
for both merit & evil—
sorrowless, dustless, & pure:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Spotless, pure like the moon

—limpid & calm—
his delights, his becomings,
totally gone:
He's what I call
a brahman.
He has made his way past
this hard-going path:
delusion, wandering-on.
He's crossed over,
has gone beyond,
is free from want,
from perplexity,
absorbed in jhāna,
through no-clinging
unbound:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Whoever, abandoning sensual passions here,
would go forth from home—
his sensual passions, becomings,
totally gone:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Whoever, abandoning craving here,
would go forth from home—
his cravings, becomings,
totally gone:
He's what I call
a brahman.
Having left behind
the human bond,
having made his way past
the divine,
from all bonds unshackled:
He's what I call
a brahman.

Having left behind
delight & displeasure,
cooled, with no acquisitions—
a hero who has conquered
        all the world,
        every world:
   He's what I call
   a brahman.
He knows in every way
beings' passing away,
and their re-
arising;
unattached, awakened,
well-gone:
   He's what I call
   a brahman.
He whose course they don't know
—devas, gandhabbas, & human beings[10]—
his effluents ended, an arahant:
   He's what I call
   a brahman.
He who has nothing
—in front, behind, in between—
the one with nothing
who clings to no thing:
   He's what I call
   a brahman.
A splendid bull, conqueror,
hero, great seer—
        free from want,
        awakened, washed:
   He's what I call
   a brahman.
He knows   his former lives.
He sees   heavens & states of woe,

has attained the ending of birth[11]:

He's what I call
a brahman.

For this is a convention in the world:
the name & clan determined,
come into being from common consent,
here & there determined.
Taking a position unknowingly
for a long time obsessively,
those who don't know
say that one is a brahman by birth.
Not by birth is one a brahman,
not by birth a non-brahman.
By action is one a brahman.
By action one is a non-brahman.
By action is one a farmer.
By action one is a craftsman.
By action is one a merchant.
By action one is a servant.
By action is one a thief.
By action one is a soldier.
By action is one a sacrificer.
By action one is a king.
The wise see action in this way
as it has come to be,
seeing dependent co-arising,
cognizant of action's results.
Through action the world rolls on.
People roll on through action.
In action are beings held bound together,
as in a linchpin,
a chariot traveling along.

Through austerity, the holy life,
through restraint & self-control:

That's how one is a brahman.
That's a brahman
unexcelled.

Consummate in the three knowledges,[12]
further-becoming ended, at peace:
Know, Vāseṭṭha: That's Brahmā, that's Sakka,[13]
for those who directly know."

When this was said, the young brahmans Vāseṭṭha & Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. We go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."

vv. 594–656

Notes

1. In the Brahmanical tradition, this means the three Vedas. Later in this poem, the Buddha will give "three knowledges" a Buddhist definition.

2. In this context, Vāseṭṭha is referring to action in this lifetime, rather than action in previous lifetimes.

3. In this and the following verses, the Buddha is playing with three meanings of the word *jāti:* birth, species, and nature. This point becomes clear when he later contrasts these natural distinctions in the animal world with the conventional distinctions in the human world.

4. This verse begins a section where the verses are identical with Dhp 396–423, except that the last verse in the series is missing a line present in Dhp 423: "He is a sage who has mastered full-knowing, his mastery totally mastered."

This section redefines "brahman" to mean an arahant (although see note 9, below).

As for *"bho*-sayer": Brahmans, when surprised or amazed, tended to use the word *bho,* or master, as an exclamation. "If he has anything" (reading *sa ce* with

the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions) = if he/she lays claim to anything as his/her own.

5. The three commentaries explaining this verse—SnA, MA, and DhpA—treat these symbols in slightly different ways. They all agree that the strap = hatred and the thong = craving. As for the remaining symbols, MA simply states that cord = views, bridle = view-obsession, and bar = ignorance.

SnA and DhpA, however, try to make more of the image by exploring the interconnections of the chariot parts. In their explanation, cord = 62 wrong views (listed in the *Brahmajāla Sutta,* DN 1) and bridle = obsessions (sensuality, becoming, anger, conceit, views, uncertainty, ignorance (AN 7:11-12)). They note the connection between the 62 wrong views and the obsessions (one of which is views), which is apparently similar to the way the cord and bridle are connected. They go on to note that when one has cut all these things, the bar, which equals ignorance, has been lifted. The fact that the cutting of these chariot parts automatically accomplishes the lifting of the bar is apparently symbolic of the fact that ignorance is one of the obsessions.

6. "With no overbearing pride": reading *anussadaṁ* with the Thai, Burmese, and Sri Lankan editions. "Last-body": Because an arahant will not be reborn, this present body is his/her last.

7. *"For himself, on his own, his own* ending of stress": three different ways that the one word *attano* functions in this verse.

8. According to SnA, "attachments/homes *(ālaya)"* = cravings. "Knowing": the knowledge of full Awakening *(aññā).*

9. "A footing in the deathless": The image here derives from a standard analogy comparing the practice to the act of crossing a river. According to AN 7:15, the point where the meditator gains footing on the river bottom, but before getting up on the bank, corresponds to the third stage of awakening, the attainment of non-return. To reach the fourth stage, becoming an arahant, is to go beyond the river and stand on firm ground. Either this verse is using the image differently, equating the gaining of a footing with arahantship, or else it is the only verse in this set to apply the term "brahman" to a non-returner.

10. On the fact that even devas and brahmās cannot know the course of the arahant, see MN 49, SN 23:2, AN 11:10, and Dhp 92–93.

11. The forms of mastery listed in this verse correspond to the three knowledges that comprised the Buddha's Awakening: knowledge of previous lives, knowledge of how beings pass away and are reborn in the various levels

of being, and knowledge of the ending of the effluents that maintain the process of birth (see MN 4). It's in this verse that the Buddha redefines the three knowledges claimed by Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, showing that they don't qualify as masters of the three knowledges that constitute the knowledge of a genuine brahman in his eyes.

12. Here, of course, the Buddha is referring to the three knowledges as defined by him, not as earlier defined by Vāseṭṭha.

13. Sakka is the chief of the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three.

3:10 Kokālika

SN 6:10 contains a shorter, less graphic version of this sutta.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then the monk Kokālika[1] went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Sāriputta & Moggallāna have evil desires. They have fallen under the sway of evil desires."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him, "Don't say that, Kokālika. Don't say that, Kolālika. Make your mind confident in Sāriputta & Moggallāna. They are admirable people."

A second time… A third time, the monk Kokālika said to the Blessed One, "Even though the lord Blessed One[2] inspires conviction and faith in me, Sāriputta & Moggallāna have evil desires. They have fallen under the sway of evil desires."

A third time, the Blessed One said to him, "Don't say that, Kokālika. Don't say that, Kolālika. Make your mind confident in Sāriputta & Moggallāna. They are admirable people."

Then the monk Kokālika, getting up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and departed.

Then not long after he had departed, Kokālika's whole body became covered with boils the size of mustard seeds. From the size of mustard seeds, they became the size of green gram. From the size of green gram,

they became the size of black beans. From the size of black beans, they became the size of jujube pits. From the size of jujube pits, they became the size of jujube fruits. From the size of jujube fruits, they became the size of myrobalans. From the size of myrobalans, they became the size of unripe vilva fruits. From the size of unripe vilva fruits, they became the size of small jackfruits. When they were the size of small jackfruits, they burst. Blood and pus flowed out. Then the monk Kokālika died of that disease and, having died, he reappeared in the Paduma hell for engendering hatred in his heart against Sāriputta & Moggallāna.

Then Brahmā Sahampati,[3] in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, the monk Kokālika has died and, having died, has reappeared in the Paduma hell for engendering hatred in his heart against Sāriputta & Moggallāna." That is what Brahmā Sahampati said. Having said that, having bowed down, he circumambulated the Blessed One, keeping him to his right, and disappeared right there.

Then when the night had passed, the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks, last night Brahmā Sahampati, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, came to me. On arrival, having bowed down to me, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to me, 'Lord, the monk Kokālika has died and, having died, has reappeared in the Paduma hell for engendering hatred in his heart against Sāriputta & Moggallāna.' That is what Brahmā Sahampati said. Having said that, having bowed down, he circumambulated me, keeping me to his right, and disappeared right there."

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, "Lord, how long is the measure of the lifespan in the Paduma hell?"

"Long, monk, is the measure of the lifespan in the Paduma hell. It's not easy to calculate 'this many years' or 'this many hundreds of years' or 'this many thousands of years' or 'this many hundreds of thousands of years.'"

"But, lord, can a simile be made?"

"It can, monk," said the Blessed One. "Suppose that there were a twenty-measure Kosalan cartload of sesame seeds. From that, a man would remove

a sesame seed every hundred years.[4] That twenty-measure Kosalan cartload of sesame seeds would come to an end in this manner more quickly than a single Abbuda [Swelling] hell. Like twenty Abbuda hells is one Nirabbuda [Free from Swelling] hell. Like twenty Nirabbuda hells is one Ababa [Alas!] hell. Like twenty Ababa hells is one Ahaha hell. Like twenty Ahaha hells is one Aṭaṭa hell. Like twenty Aṭaṭa hells is one Kumuda [White Water Lily] hell. Like twenty Kumuda hells is one Sogandhika [Fragrant White Water Lily] hell. Like twenty Sogandhika hells is one Uppalaka [Blue Lotus] hell. Like twenty Uppalaka hells is one Puṇḍarīka [White Lotus] hell. Like twenty Puṇḍarīka hells is one Paduma [Red Lotus] hell.[5]

"The monk Kokālika has reappeared in the Paduma hell, for engendering hatred in his heart against Sāriputta & Moggallāna."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Surely, when a person is born,
an axe is born in his mouth,
with which he cuts himself—
    the fool saying a bad statement.
Whoever praises one deserving censure
or censures one deserving praise,
accumulates wickedness[6] with his mouth,
    and in that wickedness
    finds no ease.
Next to nothing is the bad throw
when one loses money at dice.
But great is the bad throw
when one gets angered
at those well-gone.
For one hundred thousand Nirabbudas
and thirty-six and five Abbudas,
one who maligns noble ones,
directing his words & heart toward evil,
    goes to hell.[7]

He goes to hell,

the one who asserts
what didn't take place,
as does the one
who, having done,
says, 'I didn't.'
Both—low-acting people—
there become equal:
after death, in the place beyond.[8]

Whoever harasses
an innocent man,
    a man pure, without blemish:
The evil comes right back to the fool
like fine dust
    thrown against the wind.[9]

One devoted to the strings of greed
slanders others with his words:
faithless, stingy, miserly, mean,
devoted to divisive tales.

You with your hard road of a mouth,
untrue, ignoble,
destroyer of progress,
evil, doer of wrong,
lowest of men, wicked, degenerate:
    Don't speak a lot here.
You are headed to hell.
You scatter dust
to your harm.
You, an offender,
malign the good,
and, having engaged
in many sorts of bad conduct
are going for a long time
to the pit.
For no one's action is annihilated.

Surely its owner gets it back.
An offender, the fool,
sees suffering for himself
in the next world.

He goes to the place set with iron spikes,
the sharp-bladed iron stake,
where the food, as is fitting,
resembles a ball of heated iron.
When they [the hell-wardens]
speak, they don't speak lovingly.
    They [the hell beings] can't run away.
    They're not going to shelter.
    They lie on ashes strewn about.
    They enter a blazing mass of fire.
Tying them up with nets,
they [the hell-wardens] strike them
with hammers made of iron.
Truly, they go to a blind darkness
that spreads out like a fog.
Then they enter a copper pot,
a blazing mass of fire,
in which they cook for a long, long time,
bobbing up & down in a mass of fire.
There the offender then cooks
in a mixture of blood & pus.
In whatever direction he leans to rest
he festers at the touch.
There the offender then cooks
in an ooze where worms live,
and there is no shore to which he can go,
for the cooking pots all around
    are all the same.
Then they enter
the sharp sword-leaf forest
where their limbs are cut off.

Seizing them by the tongue with a hook,
they [the hell-wardens] strike them,
dragging them back & forth.
Then they come to the Vettaraṇin,[10]
    hard to cross,
with sharp blades, razor blades,
and there they fall in,
    the fools,
evil-doers having done
evil deeds.
There, while they wail,
voracious black & spotted dogs,
jackals, & flocks of ravens chew on them.
Vultures & crows pick at them.

How hard, indeed, is this way of life there
that offending people come to see.[11]
So, for the remainder of life here,
a person, heedful, should do his duty.

Those loads of sesame seeds
compared to the Paduma hell
have been calculated by those who know
as five times ten thousand crores,[12]
plus twelve times one hundred more.

The length of the hells of suffering
described here
is how long [the hell-beings]
will have to dwell there.
So when in the company of those
who are pure, admirable, excellent,
    one should constantly guard
    one's words & heart.

vv. 657–678

Notes

1. Kokālika is a *bhikkhu,* or Buddhist monk. Normally, the texts refer to Buddhist monks as Ven. So-and-so, but in this case, the following story will show why posterity did not accord this honor to Kokālika. According to SnA, this Kokālika was not the same Kokālika who was one of Devadatta's followers. If that is so, it's remarkable that both Kokālikas expressed mistrust of Ven. Sāriputta and Moggallāna in exactly the same words (see Cv VII.4.2). An alternative possibility is that the two Kokālikas were actually the same person, and that he participated in Devadatta's schism during the "not long" period mentioned in this sutta separating his denunciation of Sāriputta and Moggallāna from the onset of his resulting disease.

2. This is an exaggerated form of address. See Ud 8:7, note 1.

3. See SN 6:1.

4. Reading *vassa-satassa vassa-satassa* with the Burmese edition. The Sri Lankan version reads, "every hundred years, every thousand years." The Thai edition reads, "every hundred years, every thousand years, every hundred thousand years."

5. Perhaps it goes without saying that the names of some of worst hells are ironic. SnA asserts that these are not separate hells, but simply different periods of time in the single Avīci hell, but it gives no explanation or justification for its assertion.

6. The word for wickedness, *kali,* is the same as the word for a bad throw at dice, which becomes the image in the following verse.

7. The version of this sutta at SN 6:10 ends here.

8. This verse = Dhp 306 and is also found in Iti 48.

9. This verse = Dhp 125.

10. *Vettaraṇin:* Literally, "having a battle of twigs/canes." SnA identifies this as the river of lye-water mentioned in MN 130, which contains a similarly graphic description of hell.

11. Reading *passati* with the Thai and Sri Lankan editions. The Burmese edition has *phusati,* "touch."

12. A crore is a large number that SNA calculates as equal to ten million.

See also: MN 45; MN 97; MN 130; MN 135; MN 136; SN 35:135; SN 42:8; AN 3:101; AN 4:111; AN 5:129; AN 8:7–8; AN 8:40; Dhp 306–319; Iti 18; Iti 20; Iti 30; Iti 32; Iti 64; Iti 70; Iti 81

3:11 Nālaka

Asita the seer, in his mid-day meditation,
saw the Group of Thirty—
Sakka[1] the king, and devas dressed in pure white
    exultant, ecstatic—
holding up banners, cheering wildly,
& on seeing the devas so joyful & happy,
having paid his respects, he said:

"Why is the deva community
    so wildly elated?
Why are they holding up banners
& waving them around?
Even after the war with the Asuras
    —when victory was the devas',
    the Asuras defeated—
even then there was nothing hair-raising like this.
Seeing what marvel
are the devas so joyful?
    They whistle,
    they sing,
    play music,
    clap their hands,
    dance.
So I ask you, who live on Mount Meru's summit.
Please dispel my doubt quickly, dear sirs."

"The Bodhisatta, the foremost jewel,
    unequaled,
has been born for welfare & happiness
    in the human world,
in a town in the Sakyan countryside,
    Lumbini.
That's why we're contented, so wildly elated.
He, the highest of all beings,
the ultimate person,

a bull among men, highest of all people,
will set turning the Wheel [of Dhamma]
in the forest named after the seers,
like a strong, roaring lion,
the conqueror of beasts."

Hearing these words,
Asita quickly descended [from heaven]
and went to Suddhodana's dwelling.
There, taking a seat, he said to the Sakyans:
"Where is the prince?
I, too, want to see him."
The Sakyans then showed
to the seer named Asita
their son, the prince,
like gold aglow,
burnished by a most skillful smith
in the mouth of the furnace,
blazing with glory, flawless in color.
On seeing the prince blazing like flame,
pure like the bull of the stars
going across the sky
—the burning sun,
released from the clouds of autumn—
he was exultant, filled with abundant rapture.
The devas held in the sky
a many-spoked sunshade
of a thousand circles.
Gold-handled whisks
waved up & down,
but those holding the whisks & the sunshade
couldn't be seen.

The coiled-haired seer
named Dark Splendor,
seeing the boy, like an ornament of gold
on the red woolen blanket,

a white sunshade held over his head,
received him, joyful in mind & pleased.
And on receiving the bull of the Sakyans,
longingly, the master of mantras & signs
exclaimed with a confident mind:
"This one is unsurpassed,
the highest of the biped race."

Then, foreseeing his own imminent departure,
he, dejected, shed tears.
On seeing him weeping,
the Sakyans asked:
"But surely there will be
no danger for the prince?"
On seeing the Sakyans' concern
he replied, "I foresee for the prince
no harm.
Nor will there be any danger for him.
This one's not insignificant: Be assured.
This prince will touch
the ultimate self-awakening.
He, seeing the utmost purity,
will set rolling the Wheel of Dhamma
through sympathy for the welfare of many.
His holy life will spread far & wide.

But as for me,
my life here has no long remainder.
My death will take place before then.
I won't get to hear
the Dhamma of this one with the peerless role.
That's why I'm stricken,
afflicted, & pained."

He, having brought the Sakyans
abundant rapture,
the follower of the holy life
left the inner chamber and,

out of sympathy for his nephew,
urged him on toward the Dhamma
of the one with the peerless role:
“When you hear from another the word,
    ‘Awakened One,’
or ‘Attaining self-awakening,
he lays open the path of the Dhamma,’
go there and, asking him yourself,
    follow the holy life
under that Blessed One.”

Instructed by the one
whose mind was set on his benefit,
            Such,
seeing in the future the utmost purity,
Nālaka, who had laid up a store of merit,
awaited the Victor expectantly,
guarding his senses.
On hearing word of the Victor’s
turning of the foremost wheel,
    he went, he saw
the bull among seers. Confident,
he asked the foremost sage
about the utmost sagacity,
now that Asita’s forecast
had come to pass.

    Nālaka:

“Now that I know
Asita’s words to be true,
I ask you, Gotama,
you who have gone
to the beyond of all dhammas.
I’m intent on the homeless life;
I long for the almsround.
Tell me sage, when asked,

the highest state of sagacity."

The Buddha:

"I'll teach you
a sagacity hard to do,
hard to master.
Come now, I'll tell you.
Be steadfast. Be firm.
Practice even-mindedness,
for in a village
there's praise & abuse.
Ward off any flaw in the heart.
Go about calmed & not haughty.
High & low things will come up
like fire-flames in a forest.
Women seduce a sage.
May they not seduce you.[2]
Abstaining from sexual intercourse,
abandoning various sensual pleasures,
be unopposed, unattached,
to beings moving & still.
'As I am, so are these.
As are these, so am I.'
Drawing the parallel to
yourself,
neither kill nor get others to kill.
Abandoning the wants & greed
where people run-of-the-mill are stuck,
practice with vision,
cross over this hell.

Stomach not full,
moderate in food,
modest,
not being greedy,
always not hungering for wants:

One without hunger
is one who's unbound.

Having gone on his almsround, the sage
should then go to the forest,
approaching the root of a tree,
taking a seat.
The enlightened one, intent on jhāna,
should find delight in the forest,
should practice jhāna at the foot of a tree,
attaining his own satisfaction.
Then, at the end of the night,
he should go to the village,
not delighting in an invitation
or gift from the village.
Having gone to the village,
the sage should not go
forcing his way among families.
Cutting off chatter,
he shouldn't utter a scheming word.
'I got something,
that's fine.
I got nothing,
that, too, is good.'
Being such with regard to both,
he returns to the very same tree.
Wandering with his bowl in hand
—not dumb,
but seemingly dumb—
he shouldn't despise a piddling gift
nor disparage the giver.
High & low are the practices
proclaimed by the contemplative.
They don't go twice to the further shore.
This [unbinding] isn't sensed only once.[3]
In one who has no attachment—

the monk who has cut the stream,[4]
abandoning what is
& isn't a duty—
    no fever is found.

I'll teach you
sagacity:Be like a razor's edge.
Pressing tongue against palate,
    restrain your stomach.
Neither be lazy in mind,
nor have many thoughts.

Be free of raw stench,[5]
    independent,
having the holy life as your aim.
Train in   solitude
            & the contemplative's task,
    Solitude
    is called
    sagacity.
Alone, you truly delight
    & shine in the ten directions.

On hearing the fame of the enlightened
    —those who practice jhāna,
    relinquishing sensuality—
my disciple should foster
    all the more
    shame & conviction.

Know from the rivers
in clefts & in crevices:
Those in small channels flow
                noisily,
    the great
    flow silent.

Whatever's deficient
    makes noise.

Whatever is full
    is quiet.
The fool is like a half-empty pot;
one who is wise, a full lake.[6]

A contemplative who speaks a great deal
    endowed with meaning:
    Knowing, he teaches the Dhamma;
    knowing, he speaks a great deal.
But he who,
    knowing, is restrained,
    knowing, doesn't speak a great deal:
He is a sage
    worthy of sagehood.
He is a sage,
    his sagehood attained."

vv. 679–723

Notes

1. Reading *Sakkañca* with the Thai edition.

2. For an instance of a woman who tried to seduce a monk, see the origin story to Pācittiya 5 in *The Buddhist Monastic Code,* volume 1. For an instance of a man who tried to seduce a nun, see Thig 14.

3. According to SnA, the high and low practices taught by the Buddha are, respectively, the practice-mode of pleasant practice and quick intuition, and the practice-mode of painful practice and slow intuition (see AN 4:162). These modes of practice don't go twice to the further shore in the sense that each of the four paths—to stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship—abandons whatever defilements it is capable of abandoning once and for all. There is no need to repeat that particular path. Unbinding is not attained only once in the sense that it is touched as the result of each of the four paths.

4. SnA: the stream of defilements. However, the stream here could also be the stream of becoming mentioned in Sn 3:12.

5. See Sn 2:2.

6. This verse is quoted in the Milinda Pañhā.

See also: AN 3:123; Dhp 268–269; Iti 66–67; Sn 1:12

3:12 The Contemplation of Dualities

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. Now on that occasion—the uposatha day of the fifteenth, a perfect full-moon night—the Blessed One was sitting in the open air surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks. Surveying the silent Saṅgha of monks, he addressed them: "Monks, if there are any who ask, 'Your listening to teachings that are skillful, noble, leading onward, going to self-awakening is a prerequisite for what?' they should be told, 'For the sake of knowing qualities of dualities as they actually are.' Which duality are you speaking about? 'This is stress. This is the origination of stress': This is one contemplation. 'This is the cessation of stress. This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

> "Those who don't discern stress,
> what brings stress into play,
> & where it totally stops,
> without trace;
> who don't know the path,
> the way to the stilling of stress:
> lowly
> in their awareness-release
> & discernment-release,
> incapable
> of making an end,
> they're headed
> to birth & aging.

But those who discern stress,
what brings stress into play,
& where it totally stops,
    without trace;
who discern the path,
the way to the stilling of stress:
    consummate
in their awareness-release
& discernment-release,
    capable
of making an end,
    they aren't headed
    to birth & aging.[1]

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from acquisition[2] as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very acquisition, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"From acquisition as cause
the many forms of stress
come into being in the world.
Whoever, unknowing,
makes acquisitions
    —the dullard—
comes to stress
    again & again.

Therefore, discerning,

you shouldn't create acquisitions
as you stay focused on
the birth & origin of stress."

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from ignorance as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Those who journey the wandering-on
through birth & death, again & again,
in this state here
or anywhere else,
that destination is simply through ignorance.
This ignorance is a great delusion
whereby they have wandered-on
a long, long time.
While beings immersed in clear knowing
don't go to further becoming.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from fabrication as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very fabrication, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play
is all from fabrication
    as a requisite
    condition.
With the cessation of fabrication,
    there is no stress
    coming into play.
Knowing this drawback—
that stress comes from fabrication
    as a requisite
    condition—
with the tranquilizing of all fabrication,
with the stopping of perception:
    That's how there is
    the ending of stress.
Knowing this as it actually is,
an attainer-of-knowledge
    sees rightly.
    Seeing rightly,
    the wise—
conquering the fetter of Māra—
go to no further becoming.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from consciousness as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very consciousness, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play
is all from consciousness
    as a requisite
    condition.
With the cessation of consciousness,
    there is no stress
    coming into play.
Knowing this drawback—
that stress comes from consciousness
    as a requisite
    condition—
with the stilling of consciousness, the monk
    free from hunger
    is totally unbound.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from contact as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very contact, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"For those overcome by contact,
flowing along in the stream of becoming,
following a miserable path,
    the ending of fetters
    is far away.
While those who comprehend contact,

delighting in stilling through discernment,
    they, by breaking through contact,
    free from hunger,
    are totally unbound.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from feeling as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very feeling, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Knowing that
whatever is felt—
pleasure, pain,
neither pleasure nor pain,
within or without—
is stressful;
seeing
        its deceptive nature,
        its dissolving,
        its passing away
at each contact,
            each
    contact,
he knows it right there:
    With just the ending of feeling,
    there is no stress
    coming into play.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from craving as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very craving, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

> "With craving his companion, a man
> wanders on a long, long time.
> Neither in this state here
> nor anywhere else
> does he go beyond
> the wandering- on.
> Knowing this drawback—
> that craving brings stress into play—
> free from craving,
> devoid of clinging,
> mindful, the monk
> lives the mendicant life."[3]

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from clinging as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very clinging, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"From clinging as a requisite condition
comes becoming.
One who has come into being
goes
to stress.
There is death
for one who is born.
This is the coming into play
of stress.
Thus, with the ending of clinging, the wise
seeing rightly,
directly knowing
the ending of birth,
go to no further becoming.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from arousal[4] as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very arousal, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play
is all from arousal
as a requisite
condition.
With the cessation of arousal,
there is no stress
coming into play.
Knowing this drawback—
that stress comes from arousal

as a requisite
condition—
with the relinquishing
of all arousal,
a monk released in non-arousal,
his craving for becoming crushed,
his mind at peace,
his wandering-on in birth totally ended:
He has no further becoming.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from nutriment[5] as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very nutriment, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play
is all from nutriment
as a requisite
condition.
With the cessation of nutriment,
there is no stress
coming into play.
Knowing this drawback—
that stress comes from nutriment
as a requisite
condition—
comprehending all nutriment,
independent of all nutriment,[6]
rightly seeing

freedom from disease
through the total ending
of effluents,
    judiciously associating,
    a judge,
he, an attainer-of-knowledge,
goes beyond judgment,
    beyond classification.[7]

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from what is perturbed as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of what is perturbed, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play
is all from what is perturbed
    as a requisite
    condition.
With the cessation of what is perturbed,
    there is no stress
    coming into play.
Knowing this drawback—
that stress comes from what is perturbed
    as a requisite
    condition—
the monk thus renouncing perturbance,
putting a stop to fabrications,
free from perturbance, free
    from clinging,

mindful he lives
the mendicant life.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'For one who is dependent, there is wavering': This is one contemplation. 'One who is independent doesn't waver': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"One independent
doesn't
    waver.
One dependent,
clinging
    to this state here
    or anywhere else,
doesn't go beyond
the wandering-on.
Knowing this drawback—
    the great danger in
    dependencies—
in-
dependent,
free from clinging,
mindful the monk
lives the mendicant life.[8]

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Formless phenomena are more peaceful than forms': This is one contemplation. 'Cessation is more peaceful than formless phenomena':

This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

> Those beings headed to forms,
> and those standing in the formless,
> with no knowledge of cessation,
> return to further becoming.
>
> But, comprehending form,
> not taking a stance in formless things,
> those released in cessation
> are people who've left death behind.[9]

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever is considered as "This is true" by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as "This is false"': This is one contemplation. 'Whatever is considered as "This is false" by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as "This is true"': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

> "See the world, together with its devas,
> supposing not-self to be self.
> Entrenched in name-&-form,

they suppose that ‘This is true.’
In whatever terms they suppose it
it turns into something other than that,[10]
    and that’s what’s false about it:
    Changing,
it’s deceptive by nature.
Undeceptive by nature
is unbinding[11]:
That the noble ones know
    as true.
They, through breaking through
    to the truth,
hunger-free,
are totally unbound.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever is considered as “This is bliss” by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as “This is stressful”’: This is one contemplation. ‘Whatever is considered as “This is stressful” by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as “This is bliss”’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“All sights, sounds, smells, tastes,
tactile sensations, & ideas
that are welcome,
    appealing,

agreeable—
as long as they're said
    to exist,
are supposed by the world
together with its devas
    to be bliss.
But when they cease,
that's supposed by them
    to be stress.
The stopping of self-identity
is viewed by the noble ones
            as bliss.
This, when seen,
runs counter
to the whole world.

What others say   is blissful,
the noble ones say   is stress.
What others say   is stressful,
the noble know   as bliss.
See the Dhamma, hard to understand!
    Here those who don't know
    are confused.
For those who are veiled,
    it's   darkness,
    blindness
    for those who don't see.
But for the good it is blatant,
like light for those who see.

Though in its very presence,
they don't understand it—
dumb animals, unadept in the Dhamma.
It's not easy
for those overcome
    by passion for becoming,
flowing along

in the stream of becoming,
falling under Māra's sway,[12]
to wake up
to this Dhamma.

Who, apart from the noble,
is worthy to wake up
to this state?—
the state that,
through rightly knowing it,
they totally unbind,
effluent-free."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of 60 monks, through lack of clinging, were released from effluents.

vv. 724–765

Notes

1. See SN 56:22.

2. The term 'acquisition' *(upadhi),* in its everyday sense, denotes the possessions, baggage, and other paraphernalia that a nomadic family might carry around with it in its wanderings. On the psychological level, it denotes anything for which one might have a sense of 'I' or 'mine' and which, consequently, one would carry around as a kind of mental baggage. The verse following this prose passage is identical with the Buddha's first answer to Mettagū in Sn 5:4.

3. See Iti 15.

4. Arousal = *ārambha,* a word with many possible alternative meanings. Among them: disruption; seizure of an object; inception of action (often with violent connotations).

5. "There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth." — SN 12:63. For more on this topic, see SN 12:63–64.

6. See Dhp 92–93.

7. See Iti 63, SN 1:20, and SN 22:85–86.

8. See Ud 8:4.

9. See Iti 72–73.

10. See MN 113, note 3.

11. “His release, being founded on truth, does not fluctuate, for whatever is deceptive is false; unbinding—the undeceptive—is true. Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for truth, for this—unbinding, the undeceptive—is the highest noble truth.” — MN 140

12. On Māra’s sway, see SN 4:19, SN 35:115, SN 35:189, and SN 35:199.

See also: DN 15; MN 9; MN 140; SN 12:1; SN 12:15; SN 22:94; SN 35:93; AN 4:5; AN 4:24; Iti 51; Iti 103

IV : The Octet Chapter (Aṭṭhaka Vagga)

Introduction

The Aṭṭhaka Vagga[1] is a set of sixteen poems on the theme of non-clinging. The poems cover all four types of clinging—clinging to sensuality, to views, to habits and practices, and to doctrines of the self (MN 44)—with a special emphasis on the first three. They touch the issues of what constitutes the nature of the clinging in each particular case, the drawbacks of the clinging, the advantages of abandoning clinging, ways to abandon clinging, and the subtle paradoxes of what it means not to cling.

This last point is discussed in many suttas in the Pali Canon, as the Buddha's teachings on non-clinging all contain a central paradox: Some of the objects of clinging that must ultimately be abandoned nevertheless form part of the path to their abandoning. A certain amount of sensual pleasure in terms of adequate food and shelter is needed to follow the path to go beyond sensuality; right view is needed to overcome attachment to views; a regimen of precepts and practices is needed to overcome attachment to habits and practices; a strong sense of self-responsibility is needed to overcome attachment to doctrines of the self.[2]

Other passages in the Pali Canon offer clear analogies to explain these paradoxes, often in terms of movement toward a goal—taking a raft across a river, walking to a park, taking a series of relay coaches from one city to another[3]—in which the motive and means of transport are abandoned on reaching the goal. AN 4:194 states explicitly that release occurs only when, after having endowed oneself with right virtue, right concentration, and right discernment, one makes the mind dispassionate toward phenomena that are conducive to passion, and liberates the mind from phenomena that are conducive to liberation.

The Canon also contains passages that state in fairly specific language how the views and habits of the path are right not only because they are true, but also—and especially—because they allow for their own transcendence. AN 10:93 is particularly enlightening on this point. In it, Anāthapiṇḍika visits a group of sectarians who ask him what views the Buddha has. Anāthapiṇḍika—who was a stream-enterer at the time—states that he doesn't know the full extent of the Buddha's views. This reflects the fact that the Buddha's awakening was not defined by his views, so that even a stream-enterer, who is consummate in view *(diṭṭhi-sampanna)* needed for the path, would still not know the full extent of what views a fully awakened person might have.

At Anāthapiṇḍika's request, the sectarians tell him their views, after which he criticizes them for clinging to views that are "brought into being, fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen," and therefore inconstant and stressful. In clinging to those views, he says, they are thus clinging to stress.

The sectarians then ask Anāthapiṇḍika his view, and he states it in these terms: "Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not me, is not what I am, is not my self. This is the sort of view I have." The sectarians then accuse Anāthapiṇḍika of clinging to this view, and thus clinging to stress, but he responds that in seeing this view well with right discernment he also discerns the escape from it. In other words, right view teaches him not only the way things are, but also encourages him to develop dispassion to all things fabricated, including right view itself. This answer leaves the sectarians speechless. Anāthapiṇḍika then goes to report this conversation to the Buddha, who approves of what he said.

In simple terms, the message of Anāthapiṇḍika's statement is that right view includes a correct understanding of what to do with right view. This point is conveyed by the simile of the water-snake in MN 22: There are right and wrong ways of grasping the Dhamma, but before letting it go, one must grasp it correctly in order to get the best use out of it. One of the wrong ways of grasping right view is to engage in formal debates with those who want to argue in defense of wrong view. MN 60 and AN 4:24 show why these kinds of debates are best avoided both by people on the path to

awakening and by those who are fully awakened. MN 60 points out that one of the implications of the four noble truths is that there exists cessation of becoming. This is in direct opposition to the wrong view that there is no cessation of becoming. But as long as one has not seen and known for oneself that there is cessation of becoming, it would not be fitting to argue that there is cessation of becoming, saying, "Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless." One is not yet fully qualified to make that statement. But even when one has verified the truth that there is cessation of becoming, AN 4:24 points out one would no longer be defined by or "fastened to" a view about that fact, in which case one feel no personal need to enter into debate on the topic.

The Aṭṭhaka contains many passages that agree with MN 60 and AN 2:24 on these points. However, its primary argument for avoiding debates is that they give rise to conceit, and that conceit in turn leads to becoming and non-becoming. In fact, this is the Aṭṭhaka's main strategy for avoiding clinging to all aspects of the path: Follow the path, it says in essence, but don't develop conceit around it. Renounce sexual intercourse, but don't suppose yourself to be better than others because you do (4:7). Don't boast of your habits and practices (4:3), and don't despise others for theirs (4:14). These points are in line with the passage in MN 78 that defines the "cessation of skillful habits" as the case where one is virtuous but not fashioned of virtue—i.e., one does not define oneself in terms of one's virtue.

Similarly with views: 4:9 states that an attainer-of-knowledge isn't fashioned of views, and so isn't measured or made proud by them. For a person still on the path, it's easy to get entrenched in one's views (4:3), so it's best not to get involved in debates. Even winning a debate doesn't establish the truth, and one risks falling into the trap of regarding oneself as inferior, equal, or superior on the basis of view (4:8).

These teachings on the first three forms of clinging are summed up in the Aṭṭhaka's simple statements about avoiding the fourth form of clinging, to doctrines of the self: Don't theorize about self (4:14), don't display "self" in any realm (4:6), and remove all sense of "mine-ness" or "mine" (4:2, 4:6, 4:11, 4:14–15).

So the Aṭṭhaka's teachings on these points fall in line with those in the rest of the Canon in resolving the paradox around the topic of clinging. Nevertheless, the poems in the Aṭṭhaka also contains a handful of passages that present these paradoxes in a mystifying way. In fact, some of the paradoxes—particularly in the discussions of abandoning clinging to views and habits and practices—are stated in terms so stark that, on the surface, they are hard to reconcile with teachings in other Pali suttas or with other passages in the Aṭṭhaka itself. Taken out of context, they seem to say that the path consists of no views, that it is a practice of no fixed practices and no goals, and that it is not even aimed at knowledge.

The question is thus whether these paradoxes should be taken at face value or further interpreted. Or, to put the question in terms used by the Buddha himself (AN 2:25): Is their meaning, as stated, already fully drawn out or does it have to be inferred? Readers of the poems have offered arguments for both sides.

The argument for taking the paradoxes at face value is based on two major assumptions: that the Aṭṭhaka is historically prior to the rest of the Pali Canon and that it contains a complete statement of the Buddha's early teachings. From these assumptions, the argument goes on to conclude that if these poems conflict with other passages in the Canon, that is simply because those other passages are less true to the Buddha's original message.

Both of the assumptions on which this argument is based, however, contain several weaknesses.

• To begin with the assumption about the age of the poems: Five pieces of evidence are offered as proof that they predate the rest of the Canon—

1) The Aṭṭhaka Vagga, as a set, is mentioned at three other points in the Canon, at Ud 5:6, Mv V, and SN 22:3.[4]

2) Another book in the Canon, the Mahāniddesa (Nd I), is devoted to offering detailed commentaries on each of the poems, an honor that is extended to only two other sections in the Canon: the Pārāyana Vagga (Sn 5) and the Rhinoceros Sutta (Sn 1:3).

3) Although poems in different parts of the Canon borrow passages from one another without mentioning the fact, no other passage in the

Canon borrows any of the verses in the Aṭṭhaka without mentioning their source.

4) The language of the poems is more archaic than that used in other suttas.

5) A complete version of the Aṭṭhaka, along with several additions, is found in the Chinese Canon. No other book of the Pali Canon has such a direct correspondence in the Chinese Canon.

However, none of these pieces of evidence can carry the weight of what they are supposed to prove.

1) The first piece shows simply that *an* Aṭṭhaka Vagga predates the three passages in question, not necessarily that *the* Aṭṭhaka Vagga as we have it is identical to the one they mention or that it predates the entire remainder of the Canon. In the three passages in question, only one verse from the Aṭṭhaka Vagga is actually quoted, which is not enough to establish the identity of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga as a whole.

It's not even possible to determine with any certainty which poems in the vagga (chapter) were composed before the others. Because four of the poems in the vagga—4:2–5—have "Aṭṭhaka" in their Pali names, it has been argued that they may have formed the original core of the vagga. But a common feature of the Pali Canon is that a vagga will often be named after the most prominent suttas or rules in the vagga, but that these are not necessarily placed first in the vagga. Nor were they necessarily composed first. The poems in the first half of the Aṭṭhaka are arranged in order of increasing length, and the vagga may have taken its name from the simple fact that, given this arrangement, the "Octets" became prominent.

2) The existence of Nd I shows simply that the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, from early on, was regarded as a difficult text, one that required thorough explanation. It's no proof that the Aṭṭhaka predated everything else in the Canon. In fact, there's always the possibility that Nd I—and its partner, the Cullaniddesa (Nd II), the text explaining 1:1 and 5—were part of a planned effort to explain the entire Sutta Nipāta, an effort that, for one reason or another, was never completed.

3) The fact that none of the passages of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga were borrowed by other poems in the Canon without mentioning the source may simply be due to the fact that its most striking passages carried a meaning strongly shaped by context, and the Buddha or the compilers of the Canon realized that if they were taken out of context they could have been easily misunderstood.

4) The version of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga in the Chinese Canon was translated many centuries after the Buddha passed away. So its existence proves nothing about what may have predated the Pali Canon.

5) As for the archaic nature of the language, that is common to a great deal of the poetry throughout the Pali Canon. Just as Tennyson's poetry contains more archaisms than Dryden's prose, the fact that a Pali poem uses archaic language is no proof of its actual age. It's easy for a poet writing at a later age to affect the language and poetic styles of an earlier age to give an air of venerability to the message of a poem. And considering that the audience to whom these poems were addressed included brahmans, and—as we noted in the Introduction—brahmans may have preferred archaic modes of expression, there is good reason to believe that the Buddha may have deliberately adopted archaic forms in order to appeal to that segment of his audience.

• However, even if the Aṭṭhaka Vagga actually was composed early in the Buddha's teaching career, that does not mean that it contains a complete statement of his early teachings. In fact, internal evidence in the Aṭṭhaka strongly suggests otherwise.

To begin with, the discussions on clinging throughout the Aṭṭhaka state that clinging is caused by craving, and that it should be abandoned so as to avoid becoming and not-becoming. Anyone familiar with dependent co-arising will notice that these three factors, in this order, form a part of that larger teaching. However, nowhere in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga is there any explanation about what kind of becoming and non-becoming the Buddha is talking about, or what their drawbacks are. Only in suttas that provide the larger context of dependent co-arising—which shows how becoming leads to repeated birth, and so to suffering and stress; and how even the desire for

non-becoming leads to becoming—are these points explained. (See, for instance, SN 12:2 and MN 49.) Anyone listening to the Aṭṭhaka without any knowledge of that larger context would naturally question why becoming and non-becoming should be avoided, and why clinging is thus inherently bad.

Similarly, the Aṭṭhaka states that inner peace cannot be found except through views, learning, and knowledge (4:9), and that one should train for the path of knowledge (4:11), but nowhere does it state clearly what kind of views, learning, and knowledge it's talking about. Again, anyone unaware of the Buddha's teachings elsewhere on these topics would surely ask for clarification on these points.

In addition, the Aṭṭhaka recommends avoiding objectification (4:11, 4:14), being mindful (4:1, 4:10, 4:14, 4:16), practicing jhāna (4:14, 4:16), and aiming for unbinding (4:7, 4:14–15), but never explains what these terms mean.

It's hard to believe that, in delivering the teachings in the Aṭṭhaka, the Buddha would not be asked these questions on these topics. And it's harder to believe that he would not answer them. Yet that's what we're asked to assume if we are to believe that the Aṭṭhaka was a complete statement of his early teachings.

In AN 2:46, the Buddha divides assemblies into two sorts: those trained in bombast, and those trained in cross-questioning. An assembly trained in bombast is eager to hear teachings that are elegant in their terms and expression, but they are not encouraged to ask the meaning of the terms or how the terms are to be applied in practice. An assembly trained in cross-questioning, however, is trained to ask these questions and to expect clear and practical answers. To believe that the Aṭṭhaka is a complete statement of the Buddha's early teachings is to assume that he was training his followers in bombast—an assumption that is hard to accept.

• Finally, there is the issue of consistency. As we have noted, the starker expressions of the paradoxes in the Aṭṭhaka have been interpreted to teach a view of no views, and a practice of no fixed practices and no goals, not even aimed at knowledge. Yet these interpretations are inconsistent with other passages in the Aṭṭhaka itself, such as the clear-cut view explaining the sources of conflict, presented in 4:11, the long descriptions of how a monk

should and shouldn't practice (such as those in 4:14 and 4:16), the statement that one should train for the path of knowledge (4:11), and the frequent references to unbinding *(nibbāna/nibbuti)* as the goal of the practice. So even if the Aṭṭhaka is appreciably older than the other Pali suttas, we would have to assume gross inconsistencies in its message if we were to take its paradoxes at face value.

The argument that the meaning of the Aṭṭhaka's paradoxes must be inferred—that they were intentionally stated in obscure terms—is based on firmer ground. First is the simple fact that they make better sense, when taken as a whole, if the paradoxes are explored for meanings not obvious on the surface. A prime example is the passage toward the beginning of 4:9, in which the Buddha in one sentence seems to be saying that an awakened person would regard purity as not being found by means of views, habits and practices, etc., and then in the next sentence says that it is not found through lack of views, habits and practices, etc. Māgandiya, the Buddha's listener, responds understandably that such a teaching is confused.

Readers who have acquired a taste for Mahāyāna non-dualities, and who would take the Buddha's statement at face value, might scoff at Māgandiya's narrow-mindedness. But, if the words are taken at face value, Māgandiya would be right. The words on the surface are very unhelpful, for they give no idea of what one should do.

It turns out, however, that there is a grammatical pun at stake. The terms in the Buddha's initial statement are put in the instrumental case—which can be interpreted literally as "through" or "by means of," but idiomatically as "in terms of" or "in connection with." The second sentence puts the words for lack of view, etc., in the ablative case, which carries the meaning "because of" or "from." If we interpret the instrumental in the first sentence in its idiomatic sense, the two sentences make sense in and of themselves, and fit with the rest of the Aṭṭhaka—and the Canon as a whole: An awakened person would not define purity in terms of views, habits and practices, etc., but would also realize that purity cannot be attained through a lack of these things. This fits with the position taken throughout the suttas, that the goal is unfabricated, but the path to the goal must of necessity be fabricated. Therefore the path requires developing qualities that are not

contained in the goal and that will have to be abandoned when the goal is reached (see, for example, MN 22, MN 24, and Iti 90).

This case shows that there is a lot to be gained by looking under the surface of paradoxes so that, unlike Māgandiya, we won't be confused by them.

A second reason for regarding the paradoxes as requiring interpretation is one that we have already noted in the Introduction. In their use of puns and grammatical wordplay, they follow an ancient Indian genre—the philosophical enigma—that by its very nature called for extensive interpretation. Evidence in the Ṛgveda shows that ancient Vedic ritual included contests in which elder brahmans used puns and other wordplay to express philosophical teachings as riddles that contestants were then challenged to solve.[5] The purpose of these contests was to teach the contestants to use their powers of ingenuity in thinking "outside the box," in the justified belief that the process of searching for inspiration and being illuminated by the answer would transform the mind in a much deeper way than would be achieved simply by absorbing information.[6]

Although the Aṭṭhaka poems advise against engaging in intellectual contests, they occasionally imitate the Vedic enigmas in the way they use language to challenge the reader. Individual words—sometimes whole lines and verses—in the poems can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and it's up to the reader to explore and consider all the various meanings to decide which are most helpful. Although our culture at present associates wordplay with jokes, the Aṭṭhaka stands at the head of a long line of Buddhist texts—both Theravādin and not—that use wordplay with a serious purpose: to teach the reader to think independently, to see through the uncertainties of language, and so to help loosen any clinging to the structures that language imposes on the mind.[7] This type of rhetoric also rewards anyone who takes the text seriously enough to re-read and re-think what it has to say.

These points suggest that the obscurity of some of the Aṭṭhaka's language can be regarded as a function, not of the poems' age, but of the genre to which they belong. The proper reading of a text like this requires that you question your assumptions about its message and clarify the intention behind your efforts at reaching an understanding. In this way, the

act of reading is meant not only to inform but also to transform. The more you give to it, the more it opens up new possibilities in the mind.

Translating wordplay of this sort presents enormous challenges; even when those challenges are surmounted, the act of reading such word games in translation can never be quite the same as reading them in the original language and cultural setting. Fortunately, aside from the more controversial passages, much of the Aṭṭhaka is perfectly straightforward—although Ven. Mahā Kaccāna's commentary in SN 22:3 on one of the simpler verses in 4:9 should serve as warning that even the straightforward passages can contain hidden meanings. In passages where I have detected multiple meanings, I've included all the detected meanings in the translation—although I'm sure that there are instances of double meanings that I may have missed. Wherever the Pali seems ambiguous, I've tried to use English equivalents that convey the same ambiguity. Wherever this has proven beyond my abilities, I've resorted to explanatory notes. I have also used the notes to cite interpretations from Nd I and other passages from earlier parts of the Canon that help explain paradoxes, puns, and other obscure points—both as an aid to the serious reader and as a way of showing that the gulf assumed to separate the Aṭṭhaka from the rest of the sutta collection is more imagined than real.

Two final notes on reading the Aṭṭhaka:

• Although these poems were originally composed for an audience of wandering, homeless monks, they offer valuable lessons for lay people as well. Even the passages referring directly to the homeless life can be read as symbolic of a state of mind. Ven. Mahā Kaccāna's commentary, mentioned above, shows that this has been done ever since canonical times. Addressing a lay person, and commenting on a verse describing the behavior of a sage who has abandoned home and society, he interprets "home" as the aggregates, and "society" as sense impressions. Thus in his hands the verse develops an internal meaning that lay people can apply to their lives without necessarily leaving their external home and society. Other verses in the poems can be interpreted in similar ways.

• The poems center on descriptions of sages *(muni)* and enlightened people *(dhīra),* but these words don't have fixed meanings from verse to verse. In some contexts, they denote arahants; in others, nothing more than

intelligent run-of-the-mill people. So be alert to context when reading descriptions about sages and enlightened people, to see whether they're describing people following the path or those who have already reached the goal.

Notes

1. The name of the Aṭṭhaka (Octets) appears to derive from the fact that four of its poems—4:2–5, all of which contain the word *aṭṭhaka* in their titles—are composed of eight verses.

2. On the skillful uses of "self," see AN 3:40 and AN 4:159. See also *Selves & Not-self.* For a discussion of the four types of clinging, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* chapter 3, and *The Paradox of Becoming,* chapter 4.

3. See MN 22, SN 51:15, and MN 24.

4. Ven. Mahā Kaccāna—cited by the Buddha at AN 1:146 (1:197) as foremost among the monks in his ability to analyze in detail meaning of what was stated in brief—is mentioned in connection with the Aṭṭhaka in all three locations. As a well-educated brahman, he would have been trained in detecting and resolving philosophical enigmas. His personal reputation indicates that he enjoyed doing so.

5. On this point, see Willard Johnson's, *Poetry and Speculation of the Rig Veda,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

6. By the Buddha's time, these contests had left the ritual arena and had become public philosophical debates much closer to our current notion of a formal debate. However, they were driven by an assumption—derived from the belief in the spiritual transformation that accompanied the correct solution of the philosophical enigma—that holding a winning view was, in and of itself, the measure of a person's high spiritual attainment. The paradoxes in the Aṭṭhaka attack this assumption by, paradoxically, making use of the genre of philosophical enigma from which it originally derived.

7. Other examples of such wordplay in the Pali Canon include SN 1:1 and Dhp 97. For more modern examples of Buddhist texts using word play with a serious purpose, see *A Heart Released* and *The Ballad of Liberation from the Khandhas,* both by Phra Ajaan Mun Bhūridatto.

* * *

4:1 Sensual Pleasure

If one, longing for sensual pleasure,
    achieves it, yes,
he's enraptured at heart.
The mortal gets what he wants.
    But if for that person
    —longing, desiring—
the pleasures diminish,
    he's afflicted,
as if shot with an arrow.

Whoever avoids sensual desires
—as he would, with his foot,
the head of a snake—
goes beyond, mindful,
this attachment in the world.

A man who is greedy
    for fields, land, gold,
    cattle, horses,
    servants, employees,
    women, relatives,
    many sensual pleasures,
is overpowered with weakness
and trampled by trouble,
for pain invades him
as water, a cracked boat.[1]

So one, always mindful,
should avoid sensual desires.
    Letting them go,
he'd cross over the flood
like one who, having bailed out the boat,
    has reached the far shore.[2]

vv. 766–771

Notes

1. Asaṅga, in the *Yogācārabhūmi,* quotes a Sanskrit version of this poem whose verses correspond to the Pali up to this point, but then ends with another verse that has no direct Pali parallel.

2. The Chinese version of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga adds, at this point, the verses on grieving and separation found in AN 5:49.

See also: MN 13–14; MN 22; MN 54; SN 1:20; SN 35:63; SN 35:115; SN 35:197; AN 6:63; Sn 2:8; Thag 5:1; Thag 7:1; Thag 10:5; Thig 5:4; Thig 13:5

4:2 The Cave Octet

Staying attached to the cave,
covered heavily over,[1]
a person sunk in confusion
is far from seclusion—
for sensual pleasures
sensual desires[2]
in the world
are not lightly let go.

Those chained by desire,
bound by becoming's allure,
aren't easily released
for there's no liberation by others.
Intent, in front or behind,[3]
on hunger for sensual pleasures
here or before—
greedy
for sensual pleasures,
busy, deluded, ungenerous,
entrenched in the discordant way,[4]
they—impelled into pain—lament:
"What will we be
when we pass on from here?"

So a person should train
    right here-&-now.
Whatever you know
as discordant in the world,
don't, for its sake, act discordantly,
for that life, the enlightened say,
    is short.

    I see them,
in the world, floundering around,
people immersed in craving
for states of becoming.
Base people moan in the mouth of death,
their craving, for states of becoming & not-,[5]
    unallayed.

    See them,
floundering in their sense of *mine,*
like fish in the puddles
of a dried-up stream—
and, seeing this,
live with no *mine,*
not forming attachment
for states of becoming.
    Subdue desire
for both sides,[6]
comprehending[7] sensory contact,
    with no greed.

Doing nothing for which
he himself
would rebuke himself,
the enlightened person doesn't adhere
    to what's seen,
    to what's heard.
Comprehending perception,
he'd cross over the flood—

the sage not stuck
on possessions.
Then, with arrow removed,
living heedfully, he longs for neither—
    this world,
    the next.

vv. 772–779

Notes

1. Nd I: "Cave" = the body. "Covered heavily over" = having defilements and unskillful mental qualities.

2. "Sensual desires/sensual pleasures": two possible meanings of *kāma*. According to Nd I, both meanings are intended here.

3. Nd I: "In front" means experienced in the past (as does "before" two lines down); "behind" means to-be-experienced in the future.

4. Nd I: "The discordant *(visama)* way" means the ten types of unskillful action (see MN 41, MN 97, and AN 10:176). See also Sn 1:12, note 11.

5. States of not-becoming are oblivious states of becoming that people can get themselves into through a desire for annihilation, either after death or as a goal of their religious striving (see Iti 49 and MN 49). As with all states of becoming, these states are impermanent and stressful.

6. According to Nd I, "both sides" here has several possible meanings: sensory contact and the origination of sensory contact; past and future; name and form; internal and external sense media; self-identity and the origination of self-identity. It also might mean states of becoming and not-becoming, mentioned in the previous verse and below, in Sn 4:5.

7. Nd I: Comprehending sensory contact has three aspects: being able to identity and distinguish types of sensory contact; contemplating the true nature of sensory contact (e.g., inconstant, stressful, and not-self); and abandoning attachment to sensory contact. The same three aspects would apply to comprehending perception, as mentioned in the following verse.

See also: SN 35:189; Thag 16:4; Sn 4:15

4:3 The Corrupted Octet

There are some who dispute
    corrupted at heart,
and those who dispute
    their hearts set on truth,
but a sage doesn't enter
a dispute that's arisen,
which is why he has no rigidity
        anywhere at all.

Now, how would one
    led on by desire,
    entrenched in his likes,
    forming his own conclusions,
overcome his own views?
He'd dispute in line
with the way that he knows.

Whoever boasts to others, unasked,
of his practices, habits,
is, say the skilled,
ignoble by nature—
    he who speaks of himself
    of his own accord.

But a monk at peace,
    fully unbound in himself,
    not boasting of his habits
    —"That's how I am"—
he, say the skilled,
is noble by nature—
    he with no vanity
    anywhere in the world.

One whose doctrines aren't clean—
fabricated, formed, given preference
when he sees it to his own advantage—
    relies on a peace
    dependent

on the provoked.[1]

Because entrenchments[2] in views
aren't easily overcome
when considering what's grasped
among doctrines,
that's why
a person embraces or rejects a doctrine—
in light of these very
entrenchments.

Now, one who is cleansed[3]
has no theorized view
about states of becoming
or not-
anywhere in the world.

Having abandoned conceit[4] & illusion,
by what means would he go?[5]
He isn't involved,
for one who's involved
enters into disputes
over doctrines.

But how—in connection with what[6]—
would you argue
with one uninvolved?
He has nothing
embraced or rejected,[7]
has sloughed off every view
right here—every one.

vv. 780–787

Notes

1. *Kuppa-paṭicca*. Underlying many of the Canon's explanations of physical and mental phenomena is the theory of *dhātu*—element or property—in which phenomena are said to happen because an underlying dhātu, which normally exists in a potential form, is provoked into being actualized. Fires, for instance,

come from the provocation of the fire dhātu that is everywhere present. When the provocation ends, the dhātu returns to its potential state, and the phenomenon ends. Thus any phenomenon that depends on provocation is by nature inconstant and unreliable. This is one of the reasons why the experience of full release is said to be unprovoked, because it does not depend on the provocation of a dhātu, and so is free from the potential for change. For more on this point, see MN 29, note 3.

2. Entrenchments: a rendering of the Pali term, *nivesana,* which can also be translated as dwelling (see Sn 1:12, note 5), abode, situation, home, or establishment.

Nd II illustrates the meaning of "entrenchments in views" with these ten views (found, in various forms, in DN 9, MN 72, and AN 10:93): "The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless." "The cosmos is not eternal…" "The cosmos is finite…" "The cosmos is infinite…" "The soul & the body are the same…" "The soul is one thing & the body another…" "After death a Tathāgata exists…" "After death a Tathāgata does not exist…" "After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist…" "After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

3. Nd I: Cleansed through discernment. See also the explanation of "washed" in Sn 3:6.

4. Nd I explains a variety of ways of understanding the word "conceit," the most comprehensive being a list of nine kinds of conceit: viewing people better than oneself as worse than oneself, on a par with oneself, or better than oneself; viewing people on a par with oneself as worse than oneself, on a par with oneself, or better than oneself; viewing people worse than oneself as worse than oneself, on a par with oneself, or better than oneself. In other words, the truth of the view is not the issue here; the issue is the tendency to compare oneself with others. See AN 6:49. See also AN 4:159.

5. Nd I: "By what means would he go" to any destination in any state of becoming.

6. "In connection with what": a rendering of the instrumental case that attempts to cover several of its meanings, in particular "by what means" and "in terms of what." For a discussion of the use of the instrumental case in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, see Sn 4:9, note 4.

7. This reading follows the Thai, Sri Lankan, and PTS editions: *attaṁ nirattaṁ*. The Burmese edition reads, *attā nirattā:* "He has no self, nor what's opposed to self." As GD points out in its notes to the translation of this verse, the first reading is probably the correct one, as it relates to the poem's earlier reference to a person embracing or rejecting a doctrine. The fact that an awakened person is free from both embracing and rejecting is a recurring theme in this vagga and the next; the confusion at present in the various recensions as to whether similar lines should read *attaṁ/nirattaṁ* or *attā/nirattā* is a recurring textual theme as well. (See Sn 4:4, note 4; Sn 4:10, note 7; Sn 4:14, note 2.)

For a discussion of the conditions under which the Buddha *would* enter into a debate, see *Skill in Questions,* chapter 5.

See also: MN 18; MN 22; MN 58; MN 72; AN 2:36

4:4 The Pure Octet

"I see the pure, the supreme,
free from disease.
It's in connection
with what's seen
that a person's purity
is."[1]
Understanding thus,
having known the "supreme,"
& remaining focused
on purity,
one falls back on that knowledge.
If it's in connection
with what is seen
that a person's purity is,
or if stress is abandoned
in connection with knowledge,
then a person with acquisitions
is purified

in connection with something else,[2]
    for his view betrays that
    in the way he asserts it.

No brahman[3]
says purity
comes in connection
with anything else.
Unsmeared with regard
to what's seen, heard, sensed,
        habits or practices,
        merit or evil,
not creating
anything here,
he's let go
    of what he'd embraced.[4]

Abandoning what's first,
they depend on what's next.[5]
Following perturbation,[6]
they don't cross over the bond.
They embrace & reject
    —like a monkey releasing a branch
        to seize at another[7]—
a person undertaking practices on his own,
goes high & low,
latched onto perception.
But having clearly known
through vedas,[8] having encountered
    the Dhamma,
one deeply discerning
    doesn't go
    high & low.

He's enemy-free[9]
with regard to all things
seen, heard, or sensed.

By whom, with what,[10]
should he
be pigeonholed
here in the world?
—one who has seen in this way,
who goes around
open.[11]

They don't theorize, don't yearn,
don't proclaim "utter purity."
Untying the tied-up knot of grasping,
they don't form a desire
anywhere in the world.

The brahman
gone beyond territories,[12]
has nothing that
—on knowing or seeing—
he's grasped.
Unimpassionate for passion,
not impassioned for dis-,[13]
he has nothing here
that he's grasped as supreme.

vv. 788–795

Notes

1. An ancient Indian belief, dating back to the Vedas, was that the sight of certain things or beings was believed to purify. Thus "in connection with what's seen" here means both that purity is brought about by means of seeing such a sight, and that one's purity is measured in terms of having such a sight. This belief survives today in the practice of *darshan.* See DN 16, note 44.

2. In other words, if purity were simply a matter of seeing or knowing something, a person could be pure in this sense and yet still have acquisitions (= defilements), which would not be true purity. On the use of the phrase, "in connection with," here, see Sn 4:9, note 4.

3. “Brahman” in the Buddhist sense, i.e., a person born in any caste who has become an arahant.

4. Lines such as this may have been the source of the confusion in the different recensions of the Canon—and in Nd I—as to whether the poems in this vagga are concerned with letting go of views that have been embraced *(atta)* or of self *(attā).* The compound here, *attañjaho,* read on its own, could be read either as “he’s let go of what has been embraced” or “he’s let go of self.” However, the following image of a monkey seizing and releasing branches as it moves from tree to tree reinforces the conclusion that the first interpretation is the correct one.

5. Nd I: Leaving one teacher and going to another; leaving one teaching and going to another. This phrase may also refer to the mind’s tendency to leave one craving to go to another.

6. For a discussion of unperturbed states of concentration, see MN 106.

7. “Like a monkey releasing a branch to seize at another”—an interesting example of a whole phrase that functions as a lamp, i.e., modifying both the phrase before it and the phrase after it.

8. “Vedas”—Just as the word “brahman” is used in a Buddhist sense above, here the word *veda* is given a Buddhist sense. According to SnA, in this context it means the knowledge accompanying four transcendent paths: the paths to stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship.

9. Nd I: The enemies here are the armies of Māra—all unskillful mental qualities. For a detailed inventory of Māra’s armies, see Sn 3:2.

10. “By whom, with what”—two meanings of the one Pali word, *kena.*

11. Nd I: “Open” means having a mind not covered or concealed by craving, defilement, or ignorance. This relates to the many references in Sn to the idea of having one’s roof opened up (see Sn 2:13, note 3). This is in contrast to the image discussed Sn 4:2, note 1.

12. Nd I: “Territories” = the ten fetters *(saṁyojana)* and seven obsessions *(anusaya).*

13. Nd I: “Passion” = sensuality; “dispassion” = the jhāna states that bring about dispassion for sensuality. However, this may also be a reference to the fact that dispassion is the highest dhamma, whether fabricated or unfabricated (Iti 90), and yet the arahant is described in Sn 5:6 as having transcended all phenomena. See AN 3:137, note 1 and Sn 4:6, note 2.

See also: MN 61; AN 5:170

4:5 The Supreme Octet

When dwelling on views
    as "supreme,"
a person makes them
the utmost thing in the world,
&, from that, calls
all others inferior
and so he's not gone beyond disputes.
When he sees his own advantage
in what's seen, heard, sensed,
or in habits & practices,
seizing it there
he sees all else, all others,
                as inferior.

That, too, say the skilled,
is a binding knot: that
in dependence on which
you regard another
    as inferior.
So a monk shouldn't be dependent
    on what's seen, heard, or sensed,
    or on habits & practices;
nor should he theorize a view in the world
    in connection with knowledge
    or habits & practices;
shouldn't take himself
    to be "equal";
shouldn't think himself
    inferior or superlative.

Abandoning what he'd embraced,
    not clinging,

he doesn't make himself dependent
even in connection with knowledge;
doesn't follow a faction
among those who are split;
doesn't fall back
on any view whatsoever.

One who isn't inclined
toward either side
    —becoming or not-,
    here or beyond—
who has no entrenchment
when considering what's grasped among doctrines,
hasn't the least
theorized perception
with regard to what's seen, heard, or sensed.
By whom, with what,
should he be pigeonholed
here in the world?
    —this brahman
    who hasn't adopted views.

They don't theorize, don't yearn,
don't adhere even to doctrines.

A brahman not led
by habits or practices,
gone to the beyond
    —Such—
    doesn't fall back.

vv. 796–803

See also: AN 4:199; AN 6:49

4:6 Old Age

How short this life!
You die this side of a century,
but even if you live past,
    you die of old age.

People grieve
for what they see as *mine,*
for   nothing possessed is constant,
    nothing is constantly possessed.[1]
Seeing this separation
    simply as it is,
one shouldn't follow the household life.

At death a person abandons
what he supposes as *mine.*
Realizing this, the wise
shouldn't incline
to be devoted to *mine-ness.*

Just as a man doesn't see
    on awakening
what he met in a dream,
even so he doesn't see,
when they are dead
    —their time done—
those he held dear.

When they are seen & heard,
people are called by this name or that,
but only the name remains
to be pointed to
    when they are dead.

Grief, lamentation, & selfishness
    are not let go
    by those greedy for *mine,*
so sages
    letting go of possessions,
go about

seeing the Secure.

A monk, living withdrawn,
enjoying a dwelling secluded:
They say it's congenial for him,
he who wouldn't, in any realm,
display self.

Everywhere
the sage
independent
makes nothing dear or undear.

In him
lamentation & selfishness,
like water on a white lotus,
do not adhere.

As a water bead on a lotus leaf,
as water on a red lily,
doesn't adhere,

so the sage
doesn't adhere
to the seen, the heard, or the sensed;

for, cleansed,
he doesn't suppose
in connection
with the seen, the heard, or the sensed.

In no other way
does he wish for purity,
for he neither takes on passion
nor puts it away.[2]

vv. 804–813

Notes

1. "Nothing possessed is constant, nothing is constantly possessed"—two readings of the phrase, *na hi santi niccā pariggahā.*

2. Nd I: An arahant has put passion totally away once and for all, and so has no need to do it ever again.

See also: SN 21:2; AN 4:184; Dhp 21; Sn 5:16

4:7 To Tissa-metteyya

Tissa-metteyya:

"Tell the damage, dear sir,
for one given over
to sexual intercourse.
Having heard your teaching,
we'll train in seclusion."

The Buddha:

"In one given over
to sexual intercourse,
the teaching is muddled
and he practices wrongly:
    This is ignoble
    in him.
Whoever once went alone,
but then resorts
to sexual intercourse
    —like a carriage out of control—
is called vile in the world,
a person run-of-the-mill.
His earlier honor & dignity:
        lost.
Seeing this,
he should train himself
to abandon sexual intercourse.

Overcome by resolves,
    he broods

like a miserable wretch.
Hearing the scorn of others,
    he's chagrined.
He makes weapons,
attacked by the words of others.
This, for him, is a great entanglement.
    He
    sinks
    into lies.

    They thought him wise
when he committed himself
to the life alone,
but now that he's given
to sexual intercourse
    they declare him a dullard.

Knowing these drawbacks, the sage
    here—before & after—
stays firm in the life alone;
doesn't resort to sexual intercourse;
would train himself
in seclusion—
            this, for the noble,
            is highest.
He wouldn't, because of that,
suppose himself
to be better than others:
        He's on the verge
    of unbinding.

People enmeshed
in sensual pleasures,
envy him:
    a sage remote,
leading his life
unconcerned for sensual pleasures
    —one who's crossed over the flood."

See also: MN 22; SN 1:20; AN 4:159; AN 5:75–76; AN 7:48; Ud 3:2

4:8 To Pasūra

"'Only here is there purity'
—that's what they say—
'No other doctrines are pure'
—so they say.
Insisting that what they depend on is good,
they are deeply entrenched
in idiosyncratic truths.[1]

Seeking controversy, they plunge into an assembly,
regarding one another as fools.
Relying on others' authority,
they speak in debate.
Desiring praise, they claim to be skilled.

Engaged in disputes in the midst of the assembly,
—anxious, desiring praise—
the one defeated is
chagrined.
Shaken with criticism, he seeks for an opening.

He whose doctrine is [judged as] demolished,
defeated, by those judging the issue:
He laments, he grieves—the inferior exponent.
'He beat me,' he mourns.

These disputes have arisen among contemplatives.
In them are
elation,
dejection.
Seeing this, one should abstain from disputes,
for they have no other goal
than the gaining of praise.

While he who is praised there
for expounding his doctrine
in the midst of the assembly,
laughs on that account & grows haughty,
attaining his heart's desire.

That haughtiness will be grounds for his damage,
for he'll speak in pride & conceit.
Seeing this, one should abstain from debates.
No purity is attained by them, say the skilled.

Like a strong man nourished on royal food,
you prowl about, roaring, searching out an opponent.
Wherever the battle is,
go there, strong man.
As before, there's none here.

Those who dispute, taking hold of a view,
saying, "This, and this only, is true,"
those you can talk to.
Here there is nothing—
no confrontation
at the birth of disputes.[2]

Whom would you gain as opponent, Pasūra,
among those who live above confrontation—
not pitting view against view—
who have nothing here grasped as supreme?

So here you come,
conjecturing,
your mind thinking up
viewpoints.
You're paired off with a pure one
and so cannot proceed."

vv. 824–834

Notes

1. *Pacceka-sacca.* The word *pacceka* can also mean singular, personal, or individual. AN 10:20 lists the following views as idiosyncratic truths. "The cosmos is eternal," "The cosmos is not eternal," "The cosmos is finite," "The cosmos is infinite," "The soul & the body are the same," "The soul is one thing & the body another," "After death a Tathāgata exists," "After death a Tathāgata does not exist," "After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist," "After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist." These truths are distinct from noble truths, in that the word for "noble"—*ariya*—can also mean "universal."

2. See AN 10:93.

On the Buddha as a debater, see *Skill in Questions,* chapter 5.

See also: MN 18; MN 36; MN 58; MN 101; SN 42:8; AN 2:36; AN 3:62; AN 3:68; AN 3:73

4:9 To Māgandiya

[Māgandiya, a brahman, offers his daughter to the Buddha, who replies:][1]

"On seeing [the daughters of Māra]
—Discontent, Craving, & Passion—
there wasn't even the desire for sex.
So what would I want with this,
filled with urine & excrement?
I wouldn't want to touch it
even with my foot."[2]

Māgandiya:

"If you don't want
this gem of a woman, coveted
by many kings,
then for what sort of viewpoint,
habit, practice, life,
attainment of [further] becoming

do you argue?”

The Buddha:

“‘I argue for this’
doesn’t occur to one
when considering what’s grasped
among doctrines.
Looking for what is ungrasped
with regard to views,[3]
and detecting inner peace,
I saw.”

Māgandiya:

“Sage, you speak
of not grasping
at any theorized judgments.
This ‘inner peace’:
What does it mean?
How is it,
by the enlightened,
proclaimed?”

The Buddha:

“He doesn’t speak of purity
in connection with view,
learning,
knowledge,
habit or practice.
Nor is it found by a person
through lack of view,
of learning,
of knowledge,
of habit or practice.[4]
Letting these go, without grasping,

at peace,
independent,
one wouldn't long for becoming."

Māgandiya:

"Well, if he doesn't speak of purity
in connection with view,
learning,
knowledge,
habit or practice.
and it isn't found by a person
through lack of view,
of learning,
of knowledge,
of habit or practice,[5]
it seems to me that this teaching's
simply confused,
for some assume a purity
in terms of
—by means of[6]—
a view."

The Buddha:

"Asking questions
dependent on view,
you're confused
by the things you have grasped.
And so you don't glimpse
even
the slightest
notion
[of what I am saying].
That's why you think
it's confused.

Whoever supposes
    ‘equal,’
    ‘superior,’ or
    ‘inferior,’
by that he’d dispute;
whereas to one unaffected
by these three,
    ‘equal,’
    ‘superior,’
do not occur.

Of what would the brahman say ‘true’
                or ‘false,’
with whom would he dispute?
With whom would he join in dispute,
he in whom ‘equal,’ ‘unequal’ are not?

Having abandoned home,
living free from society,
    the sage
in villages
creates no intimacies.
Remote from sensuality, not
preferring,
he wouldn’t engage with people
in quarrelsome debate.[7]

Those things
aloof from which
he should go about in the world:
The Nāga
wouldn’t take them up
& argue for them.

As the prickly lotus
is unsmeared by water & mud,
so the sage,
    an exponent of peace,

without greed,
is unsmeared by sensuality &
the world.

An attainer-of-knowledge isn't measured
made proud[8]
by views or what's thought,
for he isn't fashioned[9] of them.
He wouldn't be led
by action,[10] learning;
doesn't reach a conclusion
in any entrenchments.

For one dispassionate toward perception
there are no snares;
for one released by discernment,
no
delusions.
Those who grasp at perceptions & views
go about clashing in the world."

vv. 835–847

Notes

1. This information is taken from SnA. The Sanskrit version of this sutta found in the Divyāvadāna provides the same basic information in a narrative much more elaborate than that in SnA. The Sanskrit translation of this sutta found in East Turkestan includes a short prose introduction that agrees in some details with the Divyāvadāna narrative, and in others with the SnA narrative.

2. Unfortunately, the sutta does not say what Māgandiya's daughter had done or thought to deserve such a sharp rebuke. See MN 58.

3. See AN 10:93.

4. Putting the first two sentences of this verse together and making sense of them is the major challenge for anyone trying to translate this poem. The reading given here is based on considerations of both grammar and context.

a) First, *grammar:* The Pali of the first sentence puts the words for "view, learning, knowledge, habit, & practice" in the instrumental case. This case

stands for the relationship "by means of" or "because of" but it also has an idiomatic meaning: "in terms of." (To keep the translation neutral on this point, I have translated with the idiom, "in connection with," which can carry both possibilities.) The second sentence puts the words for lack of view, etc., in the ablative case, which carries the meaning "because of" or "from."

If we assume that the instrumental case in the first sentence is meant in the sense of "by means of," then we are dealing—as Māgandiya asserts—with plain nonsense: The first sentence would say that a person cannot achieve purity by means of views, etc., while the second sentence would be saying that he cannot achieve purity by means of no view, etc.

The fact that the two sentences place the relevant terms in different grammatical cases, though, suggests that they are talking about two different kinds of relationships. If we take the instrumental in the first sentence idiomatically in the sense of "in terms of," then the verse not only makes sense but also fits in with teachings of the rest of the Pali suttas: A person cannot be said to be pure simply because he/she holds to a particular view, body of learning, etc. Purity is not defined in those terms. The second sentence goes on to say that a person doesn't arrive at purity from a lack of view, etc. Putting the two sentences together with the third, the message is this: One uses right views, learning, knowledge, habits, & practices as a path, a means for arriving at purity. Once one arrives, one lets go of the path, because the purity of inner peace, in its ultimate sense, is something transcending the means by which it is reached.

b) The immediate *context* of this verse supports this interpretation. The Buddha's initial statement here is an answer, not to the question of how the goal is attained, but to Māgandiya's question of how an enlightened person would describe the goal. The Buddha responds by contradicting the general views current in his time as to how such a state would be defined, and so in this context the meaning of "in terms of" makes the most immediate sense. Then, having shown that description isn't helpful, the Buddha goes on to discuss the most useful thing that *can* be said about such a state: how to get there.

However, in the verse immediately following this one, it's obvious that Māgandiya has not caught this distinction and so misses the Buddha's point.

For further illustrations of the role of right view in taking one to a dimension beyond all views, see AN 10:93, AN 10:96, MN 22 (in particular, the simile of the raft), and MN 24. (The analogy of the relay coaches in MN 24

actually seems more tailored to the issues raised by the Buddha's remarks in this sutta than it does to the question it addresses in that one.) See also sections III/H and III/H/i in *The Wings to Awakening.*

Nd I, without explaining the grammatical word play at work in this verse, offers an interpretation in line with the one offered in this note: On the one hand, it says, one doesn't describe purity or release in terms of view, etc. On the other, one cannot attain inner peace without using a measure of right view, learning, knowledge, habit (virtue), and practice. It defines right *view* in terms of mundane right view, described in MN 117; *learning* in terms of the voice of another (AN 2:124) and the nine traditional divisions of Dhamma in the Canon: dialogues, narratives of mixed prose and verse, explanations, verses, spontaneous exclamations, quotations, birth stories, amazing events, question & answer sessions (AN 7:64); *knowledge* in terms of knowledge of what has been done by action, knowledge in line with the four noble truths, the knowledge of the six forms of direct knowing (AN 5:28), and knowledge of the nine concentration attainments (AN 9:33); *habit* (virtue) in terms of restraint in the Pāṭimokkha (AN 10:17); and *practice* in terms of eight of the dhutaṅga practices: living in the wilderness, going for alms, wearing cast-off cloth, wearing only one triple set of robes, bypassing no donors on one's alms round, refusing food brought afterwards, not lying down, and accepting whatever lodging one is assigned (see Thag 16:7 and SN 16:5). It is important to note that Nd I does not insist that all these practices and forms of knowledge, etc., must be completely mastered to attain inner peace. Instead, it insists that a "measure" *(matta*) be mastered, without defining how large that measure must be.

5. The lines of this verse up to this point are clearly missing in the text of the Sanskrit version found in East Turkestan. Hoernle, the scholar who first studied the text, concluded that the lines in the Pali here must have been a later interpolation, but it's also possible that the Sanskrit was either a faulty translation or an accurate translation based on a faulty transmission of the text.

6. "In terms of—by means of": Two ways of interpreting the instrumental case in this sentence.

7. A long explanation of this verse, attributed to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, is contained in SN 22:3. The main points are these:

"The property of form, householder, is the home of consciousness. When consciousness is in bondage through passion to the property of form, it is said

to be living at home. The property of feeling… perception… fabrication is the home of consciousness. When consciousness is in bondage through passion to the property of fabrication, it is said to be dwelling at home.

"And how does one not live at home? Any desire, passion, delight, craving, any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions with regard to the property of form: These the Tathāgata has abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore the Tathāgata is said to be not dwelling at home.

[Similarly with the remaining aggregates.] …

"And how does one live free from society? The Tathāgata has abandoned bondage to the distraction of the society of form-impressions, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore the Tathāgata is said to be living free from society.

[Similarly with the society of sound-impressions, aroma-impressions, flavor-impressions, tactile-sensation-impressions, and idea-impressions.]

"And how is one not intimate in villages? There is the case where a monk lives unentangled with householders. Not delighting together with them, not sorrowing together with them, not happy when they are happy, not pained when they are pained, he does not take on any of their arisen business affairs as his own duty. This is how one is not intimate in villages.…

"And how is one remote from sensuality? There is the case where a certain person is free of passion for sensuality, free of desire, free of love, free of thirst, free of fever, free of craving for sensuality. This is how one is remote from sensuality.…

"And how is one free from preferences? There is the case where a certain person does not think, 'May form be like this in the future. May feeling.… May perception.… May fabrication.… May consciousness be like this in the future.' This is how one is free from preferences.…

"And how does one not engage with people in quarrelsome debate? There is the case where a certain person is not a fomenter of this kind of debate: *'You* understand this doctrine & discipline? *I'm* the one who understands this doctrine & discipline. How could you understand this doctrine & discipline? You're practicing wrongly. I'm practicing rightly. What should be said first you said last. What should be said last you said first. I'm being consistent. You're

not. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You're defeated. Go and try to salvage your doctrine, or extricate yourself if you can!' This is how one does not engage with people in quarrelsome debate."

8. "Measured … made proud"—two meanings of the Pali word *mānameti*.

9. To be fashioned by something is to define oneself around it. See MN 78, note 2; and MN 113. For discussions of the role of non-fashioning in the practice, see *The Wings to Awakening,* II/B and III/G, and *The Paradox of Becoming,* chapter 6.

10. "Action" here can mean either kamma in a restricted sense, as ritual action, or in its general sense, meaning that the attainer-of-knowledge has gone beyond creating seeds of kamma that will lead to further becoming (see AN 3:34). According to Nd I, "action" here denotes the three types of fabrication *(abhisaṅkhāra):* meritorious (ripening in pleasure), demeritorious (ripening in pain), and imperturbable (the formless attainments)—see DN 33.

See also: DN 9; MN 63; MN 72; AN 4:194

4:10 Before the Break-up (of the Body)

"Seeing how,
behaving how,
is one said to be
    at peace?
Gotama, tell me about
    —when asked about—
    the ultimate person."

The Buddha:

"Free from craving
before the break-up
[of the body],
independent
    of *before*
    & *the end,* [1]

not classified *in between,* [2]
no preference is his.

Un- angered,
un- startled,
un- boastful,
un- anxious,
giving counsel unruffled,
he is a sage,
his speech
under control.

Free from attachment
with regard to the future,
not sorrowing
over the past,
he sees seclusion
in the midst of sensory contacts.[3]
He can't be led
in terms of views.[4]

Withdrawn, un-
deceitful, not
stingy, not
miserly, not
insolent, in-
offensive,
he doesn't engage in
divisive speech.

Not drunk on enticements,
nor given to pride,
he's gentle, quick-witted,
beyond conviction & dispassion.[5]

Not in hopes of material gain
does he take on the training;
when without material gain

he isn't upset.

Unobstructed by craving,
he doesn't through craving[6]
hunger for flavors.

Equanimous—always—mindful,
he doesn't suppose himself
equal,
superior,
inferior,
in the world.
No swellings of pride
are his.

Whose dependencies
don't exist
when, on knowing the Dhamma,
he's in-
dependent;
in whom no craving is found
for becoming or not-:
He is said
to be at peace,
un-intent
on sensual pleasures,
with nothing at all
to tie him down:
one who's crossed over attachment.

He has no
children
cattle,
fields,
land.
In him you can't pin down
what's embraced
or rejected.[7]

He has no preference
for that which people run-of-the-mill
or brahmans & contemplatives
might blame—
    which is why
he is unperturbed
with regard to their words.

His greed gone,
not miserly,
    the sage
doesn't speak of himself
as among those who are higher,
    equal,
or lower.

    He,
theory-free,
goes to no theory.
For whom
nothing in the world
is his own,
    who doesn't grieve
    over what is not,
        who doesn't enter into
            doctrines
    phenomena[8]:
    He is said
    to be
    at peace."

vv. 848–861

Notes

1. Nd I: "Independent of before & the end" = no craving or view with regard to past or future.

2. For discussions of how the awakened one cannot be classified even in the present, see MN 72 and SN 22:85–86.

3. Nd I: "He sees seclusion in the midst of sensory contacts" = he sees contact as empty of self. This passage may also refer to the fact that the awakened person experiences sensory contact as if disjoined from it. On this point, see MN 140 and MN 146, quoted in *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* chapter 4.

4. See AN 10:93.

5. Beyond conviction & dispassion—The Pali here can also mean, "A person of no conviction, he does not put away passion." This is an example of the kind of pun occasionally used in Pali poetry for its shock value. Other examples are at Dhp 97 and the end of Sn 4:13. For examples of what is meant by being beyond conviction, see SN 12:68 and SN 48:44. For an explanation of what is meant by being beyond dispassion, see Sn 4:6, note 2. An alternate explanation is that, as Sn 5:6 indicates, the arahant is beyond all dhammas, dispassion included.

6. The Pali word *taṇhāya*—by/through craving—functions here as a lamp.

7. This reading follows the Thai and PTS editions: *attaṁ vā-pi nirattaṁ vā.* The Burmese and Sri Lankan editions read, *attā vā-pi nirattā vā:* "self or what's opposed to self." The first reading seems preferable for two reasons: First, it follows the theme established in Sn 4:3 and Sn 4:4 (and also followed in Sn 4:15 and Sn 5:11) that the awakened person has gone beyond embracing or rejecting views. Second, the word *nirattā* is found nowhere else in the Canon aside from the two other verses in Sn (4:3 and 4:14) where it is offered as a possible alternative reading for *niratta* (released, rejected). As *niratta* is clearly the preferable alternative in Sn 4:3, I have adopted it here and in Sn 4:14 as well.

8. "Doctrines, phenomena"—two meanings of the Pali word, *dhamma*.

4:11 Quarrels & Disputes

"From where have there arisen
quarrels, disputes,
lamentation, sorrows, along with stinginess,
conceit & pride, along with divisiveness?

From where have they arisen?
Please tell me."

"From what is dear
there have arisen
quarrels, disputes,
lamentation, sorrows, along with stinginess,
conceit & pride, along with divisiveness.
Tied up with stinginess
are quarrels & disputes.
In the arising of disputes
is divisiveness."

"Where is the cause
of things dear in the world,
along with the greeds that go about in the world?
And where is the cause
of the hopes & aims
for the sake of a person's next life?"

"Desires are the cause
of things dear in the world,
along with the greeds that go about in the world.
And here too is the cause
of the hopes & aims
for the sake of a person's next life."

"Now where is the cause
of desire in the world?
And from where have there arisen
decisions, anger, lies, & perplexity,
and all the qualities
described by the Contemplative?"

"What they call
'appealing' &
'unappealing'
in the world:
In dependence on that,

desire arises.
Having seen becoming & not-
with regard to forms,
a person gives rise to decisions in the world;
anger, lies, & perplexity:
these qualities, too,
when there exists
that very pair.
A person perplexed
should train for the path of knowledge,
for it's in having known
that the Contemplative has spoken
of qualities/dhammas."[1]

"Where is the cause
of appealing & un-?
When what isn't
do they not exist?
And whatever is meant
by becoming & not- :
Tell me,
Where is their cause?"

"Contact is the cause
of appealing & un-.
When contact isn't,
they do not exist,
along with what's meant
by becoming & not- :
I tell you,
from here is their cause."

"Now where is the cause
of contact in the world,
and from where have graspings,
possessions, arisen?
When what isn't

does there not exist *mine-ness?*
When what has disappeared
do contacts not touch?"

"Conditioned by name-&-form
is contact.
In longing do graspings,
possessions have their cause.
When longing isn't,
mine-ness doesn't exist.
When forms have disappeared
contacts don't touch."

"For one how-arriving
does form disappear?
How do pleasure & pain disappear?
Tell me this.
My heart is set
on knowing how
they disappear."

"One not percipient of perceptions
not percipient of aberrant perceptions,
not unpercipient,
nor percipient of what's disappeared[2]:
For one thus-arriving,
form disappears[3]—
for objectification-classifications[4]
have their cause in perception."

"What we have asked,
you've expounded to us.
We ask one thing more.
Please tell it.
Do some of the wise
say that just this much is the utmost,
that purity of spirit[5] is here?
Or do they say

that it's other than this?"

"Some of the wise
say that just this much is the utmost,
that purity of spirit is here.
But some of them,
who say they are skilled,
say it's the moment
with no clinging remaining.

But knowing,
'Having known, they still are dependent,'[6]
the sage ponders dependencies.
On knowing them, released,
he doesn't get into disputes,
doesn't meet with becoming & not-
: He's enlightened."

vv. 862–877

Notes

1. As other passages in this poem indicate (see note 6, below), the goal is not measured in terms of knowledge, but as this passage points out, knowledge is a necessary part of the path to the goal.

2. According to Nd I, "percipient of perceptions" means having ordinary perceptions. "Percipient of aberrant perceptions" means being insane. "Unpercipient" means either having entered the cessation of perception and feeling (see AN 9:33) or the dimension of beings without perception (DN 1 and DN 15). "Percipient of what's disappeared" (or: having perceptions that have disappeared) means having entered any of the four formless states. Of these four explanations, the last is the least likely, for as the next lines show, this passage is describing the stage of concentration practice in which one is transcending the fourth jhāna and entering the formless attainment of the infinitude of space. A more likely explanation of "percipient of what's disappeared" would be the act of holding to perceptions of the breath and of pleasure and pain, even though these phenomena have all disappeared in the fourth jhāna (see SN 36:11, AN 9:31, AN 10:20, and AN 10:72).

3. This is the point where the meditator leaves the fourth jhāna and enters the perception of the infinitude of space.

4. Objectification-classifications *(papañca-saṅkhā)*: Nd I defines *papañca* simply as craving, views, and conceit. A survey of how the term *papañca* is actually used in the suttas, however, shows that it denotes the mind's tendency to objectify itself as a being. Then, from that objectification, it searches for nourishment to keep that being in existence, classifying experience in terms conducive to that search and thus giving rise to conflict. As Sn 4:14 points out, the root of the objectification-classifications is the perception, "I am the thinker." For further discussion of this point, see note 1 to that sutta and the introduction to MN 18.

5. "Spirit" is the usual rendering of the Pali word, *yakkha*. According to Nd I, however, in this context the word *yakkha* means person, individual, human being, or living being.

6. In other words, the sage knows that both groups in the previous verse fall back on their knowledge as a measure of the goal, without comprehending the dependency still latent in their knowledge. The sages in the first group are mistaking the experience of neither perception nor non-perception as the goal, and so they are still dependent on that state of concentration. The sages in the second group, by the fact that they claim to be skilled, show that there is still a latent conceit in their experience of not-clinging, and thus it is not totally independent of clinging. (For more on this point, see MN 102.) Both groups still maintain the concept of a "spirit" that is purified in the realization of purity. Once these dependencies are comprehended, one gains release from disputes and from states of becoming and not-becoming. It is in this way that knowledge is a means to the goal, but the goal itself is not measured or defined in terms of knowledge.

See also: DN 21; Ud 2:4

4:12 The Lesser Array

"Dwelling on
their own views,
quarreling,

different skilled people say:
‘Whoever knows this, understands Dhamma.
Whoever rejects this, is
imperfect.’
Thus quarreling, they dispute:
‘My opponent’s a fool & unskilled.’
Which of these statements is true
when all of them say they are skilled?”

“If, in not accepting
an opponent’s doctrine,
one’s a fool, a beast of inferior discernment,
then *all* are fools of inferior discernment—
all of these
who dwell on their views.
But if, in siding with a view,
one’s cleansed,
with discernment made pure,
sensible, skilled,
then none of them
are of inferior discernment,
for all of them
have their own views.

I don’t say, ‘That’s how it is,’
the way fools tell one another.
They each make out their views to be true
and so regard their opponents as fools.”

“What some say is true
—’That’s how it is’—
others say is ‘falsehood, a lie.’
Thus quarreling, they dispute.
Why can’t contemplatives
say one thing & the same?”

“The truth is one,[1]
there is no second

about which a person who knows it
would argue with one who knows.
Contemplatives promote
their various own truths,
that's why they don't say
one thing & the same."

"But why do they say
various truths,
those who say they are skilled?
Have they learned many various truths
or do they follow conjecture?"

"Apart from their perception
there are no
    many
    various
    constant truths
    in the world.[2]
Theorizing conjectures
with regard to views,
they speak of a pair: true
    & false.
Dependent on what's seen,
                heard,
                & sensed,
dependent on habits & practices,
one shows disdain [for others].
Taking a stance on his decisions,
praising himself, he says,
'My opponent's a fool & unskilled.'
    That by which
he regards his opponents as fools
    is that by which
            he says he is skilled.
Calling himself skilled,
he despises another

who speaks the same way.

Agreeing on a view gone out of bounds,
drunk with conceit, imagining himself perfect,
he has consecrated, with his own mind,
    himself
    as well as his view.

If, by an opponent's word,
one's inferior,
            the opponent's
of inferior discernment as well.
But if, by one's own word
one's an attainer-of-knowledge, enlightened,
    no one
among contemplatives
    is a fool.

'Those who approve of a doctrine other than this
are lacking in purity,
    imperfect.'
That's what the many sectarians say,
for they're smitten with passion
for their own views.
    'Only here is there purity,'
    that's what they say.
    'In no other doctrine
    is purity,' they say.
That's how the many sectarians
are entrenched,
speaking firmly there
concerning their own path.
Speaking firmly concerning your own path,
what opponent here would you take as a fool?
You'd simply bring strife on yourself
if you said your opponent's a fool
with an impure doctrine.

Taking a stance on your decisions,
  & yourself as your measure,
you dispute further down
into the world.

But a person who's abandoned
  all decisions
creates no strife
in the world."

vv. 878–894

Notes

1. "The truth is one": This statement should be kept in mind throughout the following verses, as it forms the background to the discussion of how people who theorize their conjectures speak of the pair, true and false. The Buddha is not denying that there is such a thing as true and false, or that some statements correspond more truly to reality than others. He avoids defending his own teachings in debates, not because there are many different truths, but because—as he says in Sn 4:8, the purpose of debates is not to arrive at truth but to gain praise. In this way, it encourages the debater to get entrenched in his views. All entrenched views, regardless of how true or false their content might be, behave in line with the truth of conditioned phenomena as explained in the preceding sutta. They lead to conceit, conflict, and states of becoming. When they are viewed in this way—as events in a causal chain rather than as true or false depictions of other events (or as events rather than signs)—the tendency to hold to or become entrenched in them is diminished. This allows for a practitioner to hold to the truths of right view for the sake of putting an end to suffering and stress, and then to put aside any attachment to those truths once they have performed their duty. On this point, see MN 22 and AN 10:93, and the essay, "Truths with Consequences."

2. On the role of perception in leading to conflicting views, see the preceding sutta.

4:13 The Great Array

“Those who, dwelling on views,
dispute, saying, ‘Only this is true’:
    Do they all incur blame,
    or also earn praise there?”

“[The praise:] It’s such a small thing,
not at all appeasing.[1]
I speak of two fruits of dispute;
and seeing this, you shouldn’t dispute—
    seeing the state
    where there’s no dispute
    as secure.

One who knows
doesn’t enter into
    any conventions
born of the run-of-the mill
    at all.
One who’s uninvolved:
When he’s forming no predilection
for what’s seen, for what’s heard,
why would he get
involved?[2]

Those for whom habits
are ultimate
say that purity’s
a matter of self-restraint.
Undertaking a practice,
they devote themselves to it:
    ‘Let’s train just in this,
    and then there would be purity.’
Those who say they are skilled
are [thus] led on to becoming.
But if one of them falls
from his habits or practice,
    he trembles,

having failed in his actions.
He hopes for, longs for, purity,
like a caravan leader lost
  far from home.

But one who's abandoned
  habits & practices[3]
    —all—
things that are blamable, blameless,[4]
not hoping for 'pure' or 'impure,'[5]
would live in kindness & peace,
    without taking up peace,[6]
detached.

Dependent
on taboos, austerities,
or what's seen, heard, or sensed,
they speak of purity
through wandering further on
through becoming & not-,
their craving not gone
for becoming & not-.[7]
For one who aspires has longings
& trembling with regard to theorizings.
But one who here
has no passing away & arising:
Why would he tremble?
For what would he long?"

"The teaching some say is 'supreme,'
is the very one others call 'lowly.'
Which statement is true
when all of these claim to be skilled?"

"They say their own teaching is perfect
while the doctrine of others is lowly.
Thus quarreling, they dispute,
each saying his agreed-on opinion

is true.
If something, because of an opponent's say-so,
were lowly,
then none among teachings would be
superlative,
for many say
that another's teaching's inferior
when firmly asserting their own.
If their worship of their teaching were true,
in line with the way they praise their own path,
then *all* doctrines
would be true—
for purity's theirs, according to each.

The brahman has nothing
led by another,
when considering what's grasped
among doctrines.
Thus he has gone
beyond disputes,
for he doesn't regard as best
the knowledge of a doctrine,
any other doctrine.[8]

'I know. I see. That's just how it is!'—
Some believe purity's in terms of view.
But even if a person has seen,
what good does it do him?
Having slipped past,
they speak of purity
in connection with something
or somebody else.
A person, in seeing,
sees name-&-form.
Having seen, he'll know
only these things.
No matter if he's seen little, a lot,

the skilled don't say purity's
in connection with that.

A person entrenched in his teachings,
preferring a theorized view,
isn't easy to discipline.
Whatever he depends on
he describes it as lovely,
says that it's purity,
that there he saw truth.

The brahman, evaluating,
doesn't enter into a theory,
doesn't follow views,
isn't tied even to knowledge.[9]
And on knowing
whatever's conventional, commonplace,
he remains equanimous:
'That's what others hold onto.'

Having untied the knots
here in the world,
the sage here in the world[10]
doesn't follow a faction
when disputes have arisen.
At peace among those not at peace,
he's equanimous, doesn't hold on:
'That's what others hold onto.'

Giving up old effluents,
not forming new,
neither pursuing desire,
nor entrenched in his teachings,
he's totally released
from viewpoints,
enlightened.

He doesn't adhere to the world,
is without self-rebuke;

is enemy-free[11]
with regard to all things
seen, heard, or sensed.

His burden laid down,
the sage totally released

is improper :: is theory-free
hasn't stopped :: isn't impassioned
isn't worth wanting :: doesn't
desire,"[12]

the Blessed One said.

vv. 895–914

Notes

1. Or: Not enough to appease (the defilements, says Nd I).

2. A Sanskrit version of this verse is quoted by Asaṅga in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (48.24).

3. Nd I: Abandoning habits & practices in the sense of no longer believing that purity is measured in terms of them, the view discussed in the preceding verse. See MN 79.

4. Nd I: "Blamable, blameless" = black and white kamma (see AN 4:232, 234, 237–238, quoted in *The Wings to Awakening,* section I/B.

5. Nd I: Having abandoned impure mental qualities, and having fully attained the goal, the arahant has no need to hope for anything at all.

6. "In kindness & peace, without taking up peace"—a pun on the word, *santimanuggahaya*.

7. The word *bhavabhavesu*—"through/for becoming & not-becoming"—functions here as a lamp.

8. "The knowledge of a doctrine, any other doctrine"—a pun on the word, *dhammamaññam.* Nd I favors the second interpretation, saying that the brahman does not see as best any doctrine aside from the Wings to Awakening: the establishings of mindfulness, the exertions, the bases of power, the faculties, the strengths, the factors for awakening, and the noble eightfold path. This reading seems unlikely, though, as these doctrines are not mentioned anywhere in this poem. The first reading is more in line with the Buddha's statement in

Sn 4:9 that the highest state is not defined in terms of knowledge, and is well-illustrated in action in AN 10:93.

9. According to Nd I, this compound—*ñāṇa-bandhu*—should be translated as "tied by means of knowledge," in that the arahant doesn't use the knowledge that comes with the mastery of concentration, the five mundane forms of psychic power *(abhiññā),* or any wrong knowledge to create the bonds of craving or views. However, the compound may also refer to the fact that the arahant isn't tied even to the knowledge that forms part of the path to arahantship (see MN 117).

10. "In the world" functions as a lamp here.

11. See Sn 4:4, note 9.

12. "Is improper :: is free from theories, hasn't stopped :: isn't impassioned, isn't worth wanting :: doesn't desire"—a series of puns—*na kappiyo, nuparato, na patthiyo*—each with a strongly positive and a strongly negative meaning, probably meant for their shock value. For a similar set of puns, see Dhp 97.

See also: MN 24; AN 4:24

4:14 Quickly

"I ask the Kinsman of the Sun, the Great Seer,
about seclusion & the state of peace.
Seeing in what way is a monk unbound,
clinging to nothing in the world?"

"He should put an entire stop
to the root of objectification-classifications:

'I am the thinker.'[1]

He should train, always mindful,
to subdue any craving inside him.
Whatever truth he may know,
within or without,
he shouldn't, because of it,
make himself hardened,
for that isn't called

unbinding by the good.
He shouldn't, because of it, think himself
better,
lower, or
equal.
Touched by contact in various ways,
he shouldn't keep theorizing about self.
Stilled right within,
a monk shouldn't seek peace from another,
from anything else.
For one stilled right within,
there's nothing embraced,
so how rejected?[2]

As in the middle of the sea
it is still,
with no waves upwelling,
so the monk—unperturbed, still—
should not swell himself
anywhere."

"He whose eyes are open has described
the Dhamma he's witnessed,
subduing danger.
Now tell us, sir, the practice:
the Pāṭimokkha & concentration."

"One shouldn't be careless with his eyes,
should close his ears to village-talk,
shouldn't hunger for flavors,
or view anything in the world
as *mine*.
When touched by contact,
he shouldn't lament,
shouldn't covet anywhere any
states of becoming,
or tremble at terrors.

When gaining food & drink,
staples & cloth,
he should not make a hoard.
Nor should he be upset
when receiving no gains.
Doing jhāna, not footloose,
he should refrain from restlessness,
shouldn't be heedless,
should live in a noise-less abode.
Not making much of sleep,
ardent, given to wakefulness,
he should abandon weariness, deception,
laughter, sports,
sexual intercourse,
& all that goes with it;
should not practice casting spells,[3]
interpret dreams, physical marks,
the stars, animal cries;
should not be devoted to
doing cures or inducing fertility.

A monk shouldn't tremble at blame
or grow haughty with praise;
should dispel stinginess, greed,
divisive speech, anger;
shouldn't buy or sell
or revile anyone anywhere;
shouldn't linger in villages,
or flatter people in hope of gains.

A monk shouldn't boast
or speak with ulterior motive,
shouldn't train in insolence
or speak quarrelsome words;
shouldn't engage in lies
or knowingly cheat;
shouldn't despise others for their

life,
discernment,
habits,
or practices.
Annoyed on hearing many words
from contemplatives
or ordinary people,
he shouldn't respond harshly,
for those who retaliate
aren't calm.

Knowing this teaching,
a monk inquiring
should always
train in it mindfully.
Knowing unbinding as peace,
he shouldn't be heedless
of Gotama's message—
for he, the Conqueror unconquered,
witnessed the Dhamma,
not by hearsay,
but directly, himself.
So, heedful, you
should always do homage & train
in line with that Blessed One's message,"

the Blessed One said.[4]

vv. 915–934

Notes

1. On objectification-classifications and their role in leading to conflict, see Sn 4:11 and the introduction to MN 18. The perception, "I am the thinker" lies at the root of these classifications in that it identifies oneself as a being. Because a being requires food, both physical and mental (see SN 12:63–64 and Khp 4), this creates conflict with others seeking food. Because an identity as a being also involves attachment (see SN 23:2), this perception involves internal

conflict as well, as whatever one identifies with will inevitably change. The conceit inherent in this perception thus forms a fetter on the mind. To become unbound, one must learn to examine this perception—to see that it is simply an assumption that is not inherent in experience, and that we would be better off learning how to drop it.

2. This reading follows the version of the verse given in the Thai edition of Nd I, as well as an alternative reading given as a footnote to the Sri Lankan edition of Sn 4:14: *n'atthi attaṁ kuto nirattaṁ vā.* The Burmese and Sri Lankan editions of this verse read, *n'atthi attā kuto nirattā vā:* "There is no self, so how what's opposed to self?" The Thai edition of Sn 4:14 reads, *n'atthi attā kuto nirattaṁ vā:* "There is no self, so how what's rejected?" This last reading makes no sense; the Burmese and Sri Lankan readings depend on the notion that *nirattā* is an actual word, although it appears nowhere in the Canon except in two other verses of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, where it is cited as a possible alternative to *niratta* (Sn 4:3 and Sn 4:10). Because the Buddha in SN 44:10 refuses to take the position that there is no self, and because he says in MN 2 that the questions, "Do I exist? Do I not exist?" are unworthy of attention, all of the readings of this verse that say *n'atthi attā* would appear to be wrong. Thus I have adopted the reading given here.

3. *Āthabbaṇa.* Some scholars have identified this term with the Atharvaveda, but the identification is uncertain. It could also be a generic term for casting spells and curses of any sort. Nd I interprets this term simply as referring to spells for bringing about calamities and diseases for one's enemies.

4. The Chinese version of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga adds, at the end of this sutta, the verses in Sn 1:9.

See also: DN 2

4:15 The Rod Embraced

"When embraced,
the rod of violence[1]
    breeds danger & fear:
Look at people in strife.
    I will tell how

I experienced
terror:
Seeing people floundering
like fish in small puddles,
competing with one another—
as I saw this,
fear came into me.
The world was entirely
without substance.
All the directions
were knocked out of line.
Wanting a haven for myself,
I saw nothing that wasn't laid claim to.
Seeing nothing in the end
but competition,
I felt discontent.
And then I saw
an arrow here,
so very hard to see,
embedded in the heart.
Overcome by this arrow
you run in all directions.
But simply on pulling it out
you don't run,
you don't sink.[2]

[Here the trainings are recited.] [3]

Whatever things are tied down in the world,
you shouldn't be set on them.
Having totally penetrated
sensual pleasures,
sensual passions,[4]
you should train for your own
unbinding.

Be truthful, not insolent,

not deceptive, remote
from divisiveness.
Without anger, the sage
should cross over the evil
    of greed & avarice.
He should conquer drowsiness,
                weariness,
                sloth;
shouldn't consort with heedlessness,
shouldn't stand firm in his pride—
    the man with his heart set
        on unbinding.

He shouldn't engage in lying,
shouldn't create affection for form,
should fully fathom conceit,
and live refraining from impulsiveness;
shouldn't   delight in what's old,
        prefer what's new,[5]
    grieve over decline,
        get entangled in
        what's dazzling & bright.[6]

I call greed
    a great flood;
hunger, a swift current.
Preoccupations are ripples;
sensuality, a bog
    hard to cross over.
Not deviating from truth,
a sage stands on high ground
        : a brahman.[7]

Having relinquished
in every way,
he is said to be
at peace;

having clearly known, he
is an attainer-of-knowledge;
knowing the Dhamma, he's
    independent.
Moving rightly through the world,
    he doesn't envy
    anyone here.

Whoever here has gone beyond
sensual passions—
an attachment hard
to transcend in the world—
doesn't sorrow,
doesn't fret.

He, his stream[8] cut, is free
    from bonds.

Burn up what's *before,*
and have nothing for *after.*
If you don't grasp
at what's *in between,*[9]
    you will go about, calm.

For whom, in name-&-form,
            in every way,
there's no sense of *mine,*
and who doesn't grieve
over what is not:
    He, in the world,
    isn't defeated,
    suffers no loss.[10]

To whom there doesn't occur
    'This is mine,'
for whom nothing is others':
He, feeling no sense of *mine-ness,*
doesn't grieve at the thought
    'I have nothing.'

Not harsh,
not greedy,
not perturbed,[11]
everywhere
concordant[12]:
    This is the reward
    —I say when asked—
    for those who are free
    from theorizing.

For one unperturbed
—who knows—
there's no accumulating.
Abstaining, unaroused,
he everywhere sees
    security.[13]
    The sage
doesn't speak of himself
as among those who are higher,
    equal,
or lower.
At peace, free of stinginess,
he doesn't embrace, doesn't
        reject,"

            the Blessed One said.

vv. 935–954

Notes

1. Nd I: The rod of violence takes three forms: physical violence (the three forms of bodily misconduct), verbal violence (the four forms of verbal misconduct), and mental violence (the three forms of mental misconduct). See AN 10:176 and Dhp 129–142.

2. Nd I: "One doesn't run" to any of the destinations of rebirth; "one doesn't sink" into any of the four floods of sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance. See SN 1:1, SN 45:171, and AN 4:10.

3. This phrase, a kind of stage direction, seems to indicate that this poem had a ritual use, as part of a ceremony for giving the precepts.

4. "Sensual pleasure, sensual passions": two meanings of the word *kāma*.

5. Nd I: "Old" and "new" mean past and present aggregates.

6. Nd I: "what's dazzling & bright" = craving and other defilements.

7. See AN 7:15.

8. Nd I: The stream here stands for craving and the various defilements that arise in its wake. See Dhp 251, 337, 339–340, and 347. It could also stand for the stream of becoming, mentioned in Sn 3:12.

9. Nd I: "Before," "after," and "in between" = past, future, and present.

10. "Isn't defeated, suffers no loss"—two meanings of the Pali phrase, *na jiyyati.*

11. Nd I defines "perturbation" as meaning "craving," and "unperturbed" as meaning unmoved by gain, loss, status, loss of status, praise, criticism, pleasure, or pain (see AN 8:6–7). However, when the Buddha discusses the meaning of "unperturbed" in Sn 5:3, he relates it to the practice of concentration. See Sn 5:3, note 5.

12. *Sama.* See Sn 1:12, note 11.

13. See Ud 2:10.

4:16 To Sāriputta

Ven. Sāriputta:

"Never before
have I seen or heard
from anyone
of a teacher with such lovely speech
come, together with his following
from Tusita heaven,[1]
as the One with Eyes
who appears to the world with its devas,
having dispelled all darkness,
having arrived at delight
all alone.

To that One Awakened—
    unentangled, Such, un-
    deceptive,
    come with his following—
I have come desiring a question
on behalf of the many
here who are fettered:
For a monk disaffected,
frequenting a place remote—
    the root of a tree,
    a cemetery,
    in mountain caves
    various places to stay—
how many are the fears there
at which he shouldn't tremble
    —there in his noiseless abode—
how many the dangers in the world
for the monk   going the direction
                    he never has gone
over which he should prevail
there in his isolated abode?
What should be
    the ways of his speech?
What should be
    his range there of action?
What should be
    a resolute monk's
    habits & practices?[2]
Undertaking what training
    — mindful, astute, alone —
would he blow away
his own impurities
as a silver smith,
    those in molten silver?"

    The Buddha:

“I will tell you
as one who knows,
what is comfort
for one disaffected
if he’s resorting to a place remote,
desiring self-awakening
in line with the Dhamma.
An enlightened monk,
    living circumscribed,
    mindful,
shouldn’t fear the five fears:
of horseflies, mosquitoes, snakes,
human contact, four-footed beings;
shouldn’t be fazed
by those following another’s teaching
even on seeing their manifold
            threats;
should prevail over still other
further dangers
as he seeks what is skillful.

Touched
    by the touch
of disease, hunger,
he should endure cold
& inordinate heat.
He with no home,
in many ways touched by these things,
striving, should make firm his persistence.

He shouldn’t commit a theft,
shouldn’t speak a lie,
should touch with thoughts of goodwill
beings firm & infirm.
Conscious of when
his mind is stirred up & turbid,

he should dispel it:
    ‘It’s on the side
    of the Dark One.’

He shouldn’t come under the sway
of anger or pride.
Having dug up their root
he would stand firm.
Then, when prevailing
    —yes—
he’d prevail over notions of dear & undear.

Deferring to discernment
enraptured with what’s admirable,
he should overcome these dangers,
should conquer
                discontent
                in his isolated spot,
should conquer
                these four
                thoughts of lament:

    ‘What will I eat,
    or where will I eat?
    How badly I slept.
    Tonight where will I sleep?’

These lamenting thoughts
he should subdue—
one under training,
wandering without home.
Receiving food & cloth
at appropriate times,
he should have a sense of enough
for the sake of contentment.[3]
Guarded in regard to these things
going restrained into a village,
even when harassed

he shouldn't say a harsh word.

With eyes downcast,
& not footloose,
committed to jhāna,
he should be continually wakeful.[4]
Arousing equanimity,
    centered within,
he should cut off any penchant
to conjecture or worry.
When reprimanded with words,
he should—mindful—
        rejoice;[5]
should smash any rigidity
toward his fellows in the holy life;
should utter skillful words
that are not untimely;
should give no mind
to the gossip people might say.

And then there are in the world
the five kinds of dust
for whose subduing, mindful,
he should train:
With regard to forms, sounds, tastes,
smells, & tactile sensations
    he should conquer passion;
with regard to these things
    he should subdue his desire.

A monk, mindful,
his mind well-released,
contemplating the right Dhamma
at the right times,
    on coming
    to oneness[6]
    should annihilate

darkness,”

the Blessed One said.

vv. 955–975

Notes

1. The Buddha spent his next-to-last lifetime in the Tusita heaven, one of the highest levels on the sensual plane.

2.The fact that the Buddha answers this question in a straightforward manner illustrates the point that abandoning habits and practices does not mean having undefined precepts or practices—or no precepts or practices at all. See Sn 4:13, note 3.

3. See AN 4:28, AN 4:37, and AN 7:64.

4. See AN 4:37.

5. See Dhp 76–77.

6. *Ekodi-bhūto.* A quality of concentration attained in the second jhāna.

See also: SN 35:117; SN 35:200; AN 4:28; Thag 3:8; Thag 5:8; Thag 6:2; Thag 18

V : The To-the-Far-Shore Chapter (Pārāyana Vagga)

Introduction

Sixteen brahman ascetics—students of a teacher named Bāvarī—approach the Buddha with questions on the goal of his teaching and how to attain it. From their questions, it is obvious that some of them, at least, are quite advanced in their meditation practice. Tradition tells us that the first fifteen of the ascetics attained arahantship immediately after the Buddha answered their questions. As for the sixteenth—Piṅgiya—Nd II tells us that after his questions were answered he attained the Dhamma Eye, a term that usually means stream-entry. The commentary to Nd II, however, interprets it as meaning that he became a non-returner.

A recurrent image in these dialogues is of life as a flood—a flood of birth, aging, and death; sorrow and lamentation; stress and suffering. The purpose of spiritual practice is to find a way across the flood to the safety of the far shore. This image explains the frequent reference to finding a way past entanglements—the flotsam and jetsam swept along by the flood that may prevent one's progress; and to the desire to be without acquisitions—the unnecessary baggage that could well cause one to sink midstream.

There is evidence that these sixteen dialogues were highly regarded right from the very early centuries of the Buddhist tradition. As concise statements of profound teachings particular to Buddhism, they sparked an attitude of devotion coupled with the desire to understand their more cryptic passages. Most of Nd II, a late addition to the Pali Canon, is devoted to explaining them in detail. Five suttas—one in the Saṁyutta Nikāya, four in the Aṅguttara—discuss specific verses in the set, and a sixth sutta (AN 7:53) tells of a lay woman who made a practice of rising before dawn to

chant the Pārāyana—apparently the full set of sixteen dialogues. Whether the Prologue and Epilogue had been added to the sixteen dialogues by her time or were added later, no one knows.

Unlike the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, there is no extant version of the Pārāyana Vagga in any other Buddhist Canon. However, several Sanskrit Buddhist texts quote passages from the individual suttas it contains; and the Chinese Canon contains at least thirteen passages that refer to the Pārāyana Vagga and/or quote passages from it.

So the Pārāyana is characterized by many of the same features that are used to argue for the antiquity of the Aṭṭhaka. However, the case for its antiquity is rarely pressed, perhaps because 5:3–4, 5:7, 5:10–11, and 5:16 center on the issue of how to avoid rebirth. If the Aṭṭhaka and Pārāyana are indeed early records of the Buddha's teachings, the Pārāyana would thus act as a necessary supplement to the Aṭṭhaka in that, unlike the Aṭṭhaka, it explains why clinging and becoming are dangerous: They lead to the suffering of rebirth.

The discussions offered by the five suttas that quote the Pārāyana Vagga show that even in cases where the meaning of a verse seems, on first reading, fairly straightforward, the culture in which they were composed encouraged looking for meanings that were not at all obvious on the surface. For example, the last verse in 5:3 does not explicitly mention concentration practice, and only hints at it in using the phrase "nothing perturbing," but the interpretations that the Buddha himself offers in AN 3:32 and AN 4:41 state that the verse was actually referring to very advanced states of concentration practiced together with discernment. These explanations should serve as warning that the culture of the time gave a framework for understanding the verses that at present we can only guess at—a chastening thought. To help bridge the cultural gap, the notes to this translation offer extensive quotations from the five suttas mentioned above, along with explanations from Nd II and the commentaries both to Sn and to Nd II where these seem useful.

Prologue

From the delightful city of the Kosalans,
a brahman [Bāvarī]
who had mastered mantras,
aspiring to nothingness,[1]
went to the Southern country.
He, in the land of Assaka,
the neighborhood of Muḷaka,
on the bank of the Godhāvarī,
lived on gleanings & fruits.
Close by was a large village.
And with the income from that village
he performed a great sacrifice.
Having sacrificed the great sacrifice,
he returned again to his ashram.

As soon as he had entered there,
another brahman came along:
    thirsty, with
    scratched feet,
    dirty teeth,
    dusty head.
On arrival, he asked Bāvarī
for five hundred [pieces of money].
Bāvarī, on seeing him, invited him to sit down,
asked after what is pleasant & skillful,
and said these words:
“Whatever of mine
that could be given away,
I have disposed of entirely.
Forgive me, brahman,
I don’t have five hundred.”

“If you don’t hand over
to me when I ask,
within seven days,
may your head split
into seven pieces.”

Dissembling, the imposter
proclaimed threats.
Hearing his words,
Bāvarī was distressed.
He wasted away, taking no food,
afflicted with the arrow of grief,
and, with his mind this way,
his heart found no delight in jhāna.

Seeing him nervous & distressed,
a devatā wishing his welfare,
approached Bāvarī
and said these words:
"That imposter, wanting money,
doesn't discern heads;
has no knowledge of heads
or the splitting of heads."

Bāvarī:

"You, sir, surely know.
Explain to me when asked:
heads & the splitting of heads.
I will listen to your words."

The devatā:

"I too don't know that.
I don't have that knowledge.
Heads & the splitting of heads:
That is surely the insight of Victors."

Bāvarī:

"Then who knows surely
in this circle of the earth,
heads & the splitting of heads?
Explain that to me, devatā."

The devatā:

"Gone forth from the city of Kapilavatthu,
the chief of the world,
a descendant of King Okkāka,
a Sakyan-son, a bringer of light:
He, brahman, is Rightly Self-Awakened,
gone to the far shore of all
dhammas;
attainer of all
direct knowledges & strengths,
one with an Eye that sees all
dhammas;
attainer of the end of all
action,
released in the ending of acquisitions.
He, the One with Eyes,
awakened, blessed,
teaches the Dhamma.
Going to him, *you* ask him.
He will answer you."

Hearing the word "Self-Awakened,"
Bāvarī was exultant.
His grief subsided,
and he gained abundant rapture.
So Bāvarī, gratified, exultant,
excited, asked the devatā:
"In which village or town,
or in which country
is the protector of the world?
Going where can we pay homage
to the Self-Awakened One,
supreme among two-footed beings?"

The devatā:

“In Sāvatthī, the Kosalan city,
is the Victor of vast discernment,
of foremost deep intelligence.
He, a matchless Sakyan-son,
effluent-free, a bull among men,
is an expert in the splitting of heads.”
Then Bāvarī addressed his students,
brahmans who had mastered the mantras,
“Come, students, I will explain.
Listen to my words.
He whose appearance in the world
is hard often to gain,
has today arisen in the world,
renowned as Self-Awakened.
Going quickly to Sāvatthī,
see the one supreme
among two-footed beings.”

The students:

“But how, brahman, on seeing him,
will we know for sure
that he’s the One Self-Awakened?
Tell us, who don’t know,
how we will know him.”

Bāvarī:

“There have come down in the mantras
the marks of a Great Man.
Thirty-two are described in all,
step by step.
One in whose body
are the marks of a Great Man
has two destinations.
There isn’t a third.
If he dwells in a home,

he will conquer this world
—without rod, without sword,
but with righteousness—
he will rule.
But if he goes forth
from home into homelessness,
with his roof opened up,[2]
he will be Self-Awakened,
a worthy one unexcelled.
Ask just in your heart
about my caste & clan,
mantras, other students,
and about heads
& the splitting of heads.
If he is awakened,
seeing without obstruction,
he will answer in speech
the questions asked in your heart."

Having heard Bāvarī's words,
sixteen brahman students—
Ajita, Tissa-metteyya,
Puṇṇaka & Mettagū,
Dhotaka & Upasīva,
Nanda & Hemaka,
Todeyya & Kappa,
the wise Jatukaṇṇin,
Bhadrāvudha & Udaya,
Posāla the brahman,
Mogharāja the intelligent,
and Piṅgiya the great seer—
all with their own groups,
famed in all
the world,
endowed with jhāna,
delighting in jhāna,

enlightened,
perfume with perfumes[3]
from previous lives,
having bowed down to Bāvarī
and performed circumambulation,
left, setting out for the North,
wearing coiled hair & deer-skins:
first to the establishment of Muḷaka,
then to Māhissatī, Ujjenī, Gonaddhā,
Vedisā, Vanasa,
to Kosambī & Sāketa,
to Sāvatthī, the supreme city,
to Setabya, Kapilavatthu,
the city of Kusinārā,
to Pāva, Bhoganagara,
to Vesālī, the city of the Magadhans,
and then to the Pāsāṇaka shrine,
refreshing & lovely.

Like a thirsty man for cool water,
like a merchant for a great profit,
like one burning from heat
for shade,
quickly they climbed the mountain.
And at that time, the Blessed One,
surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks,
was teaching the monks the Dhamma,
like a lion roaring in the forest.
Ajita saw the Self-Awakened One,
like the sun with radiance in beams,[4]
like the moon come to fullness
on the fifteenth day.
Then, seeing the marks
complete in his body,
he stood to one side, overjoyed,
and in his heart asked the questions:

“Speak concerning his birth,
speak of his clan & marks,
speak of his perfection in the mantras,
and how many brahmans
does he teach?”

The Buddha:

“His age is one hundred & twenty,
and by clan, he is a Bāvarī.
Three are the marks in his body,
three the Vedas he’s mastered.
In the marks & oral traditions,
etymologies & rituals,
he teaches five hundred.
In his own doctrine
he has reached perfection.”

Ajita:

“Proclaim them in detail—
Bāvarī’s marks—
O man supreme,
cutter of craving,
don’t leave us in doubt.”

The Buddha:

“He can hide his face with his tongue,
he has a tuft of hair between his brows,
his male organ is in a sheath:
Know this, young brahman.”

Not hearing anything asked,
but hearing the questions answered,
all the people, excited,
with hands palm-to-palm over their hearts,
thought:

“What deva or Brahmā,
or Inda Sujampati[5]
asked those questions in his heart?
To whom did he [the Buddha] reply?”

Ajita:

“Bāvarī asked about heads
and the splitting of heads.
Explain that, Blessed One.
Subdue our doubt, seer.”

The Buddha:

“Know the head to be ignorance,
and the splitting of the head, knowledge
connected with conviction,
mindfulness, concentration,
desire, & persistence.”

Then, with great joy,
the young brahman,
putting himself in order,
arranging his deer-skin over one shoulder,
fell with his head at the Blessed One’s feet:
“Master, One with Eyes,
Bāvarī the brahman,
together with his students, dear sir—
exultant in mind, happy at heart—
venerate your feet.”

The Buddha:

“May he be happy,
Bāvarī the brahman,
together with his students.
And may you, too, be happy,
young brahman,

and live a long time.
All doubts—
Bāvarī's
and all of yours:
Ask, now that I've given leave,
whatever you wish in your heart."

Given leave by the Self-Awakened One,
having sat to one side, hands palm-to-palm
over his heart,
Ajita there addressed the first question
to the Tathāgata.

vv. 976–1031

Notes

1. Reading *ākiñcāññaṁ* with the Thai text of Nd II and of SnA. The Thai text of the prologue here reads *āciññaṁ,* "practice, custom." According to SnA, "nothingness" here means freedom from care. However, it might also mean the meditative state of the dimension of nothingness, and the post-mortem deva realm corresponding to that attainment. This would fit in with the fact that, in the following dialogues, two of his students—Upasīva and Posāla—appear to be familiar with this dimension in their meditation, and quiz the Buddha as to what to do after having attained it.

2. See Sn 2:13, note 3.

3. "Perfume" *(vāsanā)* here means traces of good qualities.

4. Following GD in interpreting *vīta-* here as meaning "straight."

5. "Lord of the Well-born," an epithet for Sakka, king of the devas of the Thirty-three.

5:1 Ajita's Questions

With what
is the world shrouded?
Because of what
doesn't it shine?

With what
is it smeared? Tell me.
What
is its great danger & fear?

The Buddha:

With ignorance
the world is shrouded.
Because of stinginess,
heedlessness,[1]
it doesn't shine.
With longing
it's smeared—I tell you.
Suffering-stress:
its great danger & fear.

Ajita:

They flow every which way,
the streams.[2]
What is their blocking,
what their restraint—tell me—
with what are they finally stopped?

The Buddha:

Whatever streams
there are in the world:
Their blocking is
mindfulness, mindfulness
is their restraint—I tell you—
with discernment
they're finally stopped.

Ajita:

Discernment & mindfulness,

name-&-form, dear sir:
Tell me, when asked this,
    where are they brought to a halt?

The Buddha:

This question you've asked, Ajita,
I'll answer it for you—
where name-&-form
    are brought to a halt
    without trace:
With the cessation of consciousness
    they're brought
    to a halt.[3]

Ajita:

Those here who have fathomed the Dhamma,
    those who are learners,
    those who are run-of-the-mill:
When you, dear sir, astute,
    are asked this,
tell me their manner of life.[4]

The Buddha:

He
        should not hanker
        for sensual pleasures,
    should be limpid in mind.
Skilled in all mental qualities,
he, the monk, should wander
        mindfully.

vv. 1032–1039

Notes

1. The Thai edition notes that this word, in terms of the meter of the line, is excessive.

2. According to Nd II, the streams that 'flow every which way' are the streams of craving, views, conceit, defilement, corruption, and ignorance that flow out the six sense media. The first two lines in the translation of Ven. Ajita's second set of questions (the first half-line in the Pali) is identical to the first half-line in Dhp 340.

3. See DN 11, DN 15, MN 49, and SN 12:67. Asaṅga, in the *Yogācārabhūmi,* quotes a Sanskrit translation of this sutta that inserts at this point the final question and answer, on the topic of how consciousness is brought to a halt, occurring at the end of the Pali version of Sn 5:14. A manuscript found in Turfan contains a Sanskrit version of this sutta that inserts the same question at the same point, and includes traces of other insertions as well.

4. In SN 12:31, the Buddha quotes this question to Ven. Sāriputta and asks him to answer it. With a little prodding, Ven. Sāriputta gives this extended answer, on which the Buddha places his seal of approval:

"One sees with right discernment that 'this has come into being.' Seeing with right discernment that 'this has come into being,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment.' Seeing with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.' Seeing with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a learner.

"And how is one a person who has fathomed the Dhamma?

"One sees with right discernment that 'this has come into being.' Seeing with right discernment that 'this has come into being,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment.' Seeing with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment,' one is—through disenchantment,

dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.' Seeing with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a person who has fathomed the Dhamma."

5:2 Tissa-metteyya's Questions

Who
here in the world
is contented?
Who
has no agitations?
What thinker
knowing both sides,
doesn't adhere in between?
Whom
do you call a great person?
Who here
has gone past
the seamstress?—
craving.

The Buddha:

He who
in the midst of sensualities,
follows the holy life,
always mindful, craving-free;
the monk who is
—through fathoming things—
unbound:

He has no agitations. He,
the thinker
knowing both sides,
doesn't adhere in between.[1] He
I call a great person. He
here has gone past
the seamstress: craving.[2]

vv. 1040–1042

Notes

1. AN 6:61 reports a discussion among several elder monks as to what is meant in this poem by "both sides" and "in between." Six of the elders express the following separate opinions:

a) Contact is the first side, the origination of contact the second side, and the cessation of contact is in between.

b) The past is the first side, the future the second, and the present is in between.

c) Pleasant feeling is the first side, painful feeling the second, and neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling is in between.

d) Name (mental phenomena) is the first side, form (physical phenomena) the second, and consciousness is in between.

e) The six internal sense media (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, intellect) are the first side, the six external sense media (sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, tactile sensations, ideas) the second side, and consciousness is in between.

f) Self-identity is the first side, the origination of self-identity the second, and the cessation of self-identity is in between.

The issue is then taken to the Buddha, who states that all six interpretations are well-spoken, but the interpretation he had in mind when speaking the poem was the first.

On the cessation of contact, see SN 35:117.

2. The image of craving as a seamstress also appears in Thag 14:2.

5:3 Puṇṇaka's Questions

To the one unperturbed,
who has seen the roots,[1]
I have come with a question.
Because of what
have many human seers
    —noble warriors, brahmans—
offered sacrifices to devas
here in the world?[2]
I ask you, Blessed One.
Please tell me.

The Buddha:

Those many human seers
    —noble warriors, brahmans—
who have offered sacrifices to devas
here in the world, Puṇṇaka,
hoping for more of this state of being,
    offered their sacrifices
    because of aging.

Puṇṇaka:

These many human seers
    —noble warriors, brahmans—
who have offered sacrifices to devas
here in the world:
                Have they, Blessed One,
heeding the path of sacrifice, dear sir,
crossed over birth & aging?
I ask you, Blessed One.
Please tell me.

The Buddha:

They hoped for, liked,
    longed for,

so they sacrificed—
they longed for sensuality,
dependent on gain.
I tell you:
Those who take on the yoke
of sacrifice,
impassioned with
the passion for becoming,
have not crossed over birth & aging.[3]

Puṇṇaka:

If those who take on the yoke of sacrifice
haven't crossed over birth & aging,
then who in the world, dear sir,
of beings divine & human
has crossed over birth & aging?
I ask you, Blessed One.
Please tell me.

The Buddha:

He who has fathomed
the high & low in the world,
for whom there is nothing
perturbing in the world—
evaporated,[4] undesiring,
untroubled, at peace—
he, I tell you, has crossed over birth
& aging.[5]

vv. 1043–1048

Notes

1. Nd II cites three main ways in which the Buddha has seen the roots:

a) He has seen that greed, aversion, and delusion are the roots of what is unskillful, and that lack of greed, lack of aversion, and lack of delusion are the

roots of what is skillful. Nd II anchors this point with a reference to AN 6:39, although its quote from that sutta contains two phrases not present in the sutta. Where AN 6:39 reads, "It's through action born of non-greed, action born of non-aversion, action born of non-delusion that devas are discerned, that human beings are discerned, or any other good destinations," Nd II reads, "It's through action born of non-greed, action born of non-aversion, action born of non-delusion that devas are discerned, that human beings are discerned, or any other good destinations *for the production of a self-state* [attabhāva] *in a deva or a human being."* Where AN 6:39 reads, "It's through action born of greed, action born of aversion, action born of delusion that hell is discerned, that the animal womb is discerned, that the realm of hungry ghosts is discerned, or any other bad destinations," Nd II reads "It's through action born of greed, action born of aversion, action born of delusion that hell is discerned, that the animal womb is discerned, that the realm of hungry ghosts is discerned, or any other bad destinations *for the production of a self-state in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts."* If we assume that the extra phrases were originally not present in AN 6:39, the question arises as to why they were added in Nd II. One possible reason is that the compilers of Nd II may have been bothered by AN 6:39's suggestion that its list of good and bad destinations was not complete —e.g., that there could be other good destinations aside from the realms of devas and human beings—so they tried to close off that possibility.

b) The Buddha has seen further that all unskillful qualities are rooted in ignorance (here Nd II quotes a passage from SN 20:1: "All qualities that are unskillful, that have a share in what's unskillful, that side with what's unskillful, are rooted in ignorance and converge in ignorance. From the uprooting of ignorance, they are all uprooted"). The Buddha has also seen that all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness (here Nd II quotes a passage found in SN 45:79–80, SN 45:82, and SN 46:31: "All qualities that are skillful, that have a share in what's skillful, that side with what's skillful, are rooted in heedfulness, converge in heedfulness, and heedfulness is foremost among them").

c) The Buddha has also seen that ignorance is the root of all the factors of dependent co-arising.

For another sense in which the Buddha has seen the root, see MN 1.

2. See Sn 3:4 for another answer to a very similar question.

3. On the issue of rebirth in the suttas, see *The Truth of Rebirth.*

4. According to Nd II, this means that one's bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct have evaporated away, along with all one's defilements.

5. AN 3:32 and AN 4:41 contain discussions of the last verse in this poem.

In AN 3:32, Ven. Ānanda asks the Buddha, "Could it be that a monk could attain a concentration of such a sort such that, with regard to this conscious body, he would have no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit, such that with regard to all external themes [topics of concentration] he would have no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit, and that he would enter & remain in the awareness-release & discernment-release in which there is no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit?"

The Buddha answers that it is possible, and that such a concentration can be attained when one is percipient in this way: "This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding." He then adds that it was in connection to this state of mind that he uttered the last verse in this poem.

In AN 4:41, the Buddha identifies four ways of developing concentration: "There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to mindfulness & alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents." The Buddha then adds that he uttered the last verse of this poem in connection with these four ways of developing concentration.

Although the verse does not mention concentration explicitly, the use of the phrase, "nothing perturbing" is apparently a reference to the states of concentration called imperturbable. See MN 102, note 2, and MN 106, note 1.

5:4 Mettagū's Questions

I ask you, Blessed One.
Please tell me.
I regard you as an attainer-of-knowledge,
developed in mind.
From what have the many

forms of stress
arisen in the world?

The Buddha:

You ask me
the source of stress.
I'll tell it to you
as one who discerns.
From acquisition[1] as cause
the many forms of stress
come into being in the world.
Whoever, unknowing,
makes acquisitions
—the dullard—
comes to stress
again & again.
Therefore, discerning,
you shouldn't create acquisitions
as you stay focused on
the birth & origin of stress.[2]

Mettagū:

What we asked, you've expounded.
Now we ask something else.
Please tell us.
How do the enlightened
cross over the flood of
birth & aging,
lamentation & sorrow?
Please, sage, declare this to me
as this Dhamma has
been known by you.

The Buddha:

I will expound to you Dhamma
    —here-&-now,
    not quoted words—
knowing which, living mindfully,
you'll cross over beyond
entanglement in the world.

Mettagū:

And I relish, Great Seer,
that Dhamma supreme,
knowing which, living mindfully,
I'll cross over beyond
entanglement in the world.

The Buddha:

Whatever you're alert to,
    above, below,
    across, in between[3]:
Dispelling any delight,
        any entrenchment
        in those things,
consciousness should not take a stance
        in becoming.[4]
The monk who dwells thus
    —mindful, heedful—
letting go of his sense of *mine,*
knowing right here would abandon
      birth & aging,
    lamentation & sorrow,
      stress.

Mettagū:

I relish, Gotama, the Great Seer's words
well-expounded, without acquisition,

for yes, Blessed One,
you've abandoned stress
as this Dhamma has
been known by you.
And they, too, would abandon stress
those whom you, sage,
would admonish unceasingly.
Having met you, I bow down to you,
Nāga.
Perhaps you will admonish me
unceasingly.

The Buddha:

Whoever you recognize
as a brahman, an attainer-of-knowledge
possessing nothing,
unentangled
in sensuality & becoming—
yes, he has crossed over this flood.
Having crossed to the far shore,
he's free from rigidity, free
from doubt.

And anyone who has realized,
who is an attainer-of-knowledge here,
having unentangled the bond
to becoming and non-,[5]
free of craving,
untroubled,
undesiring—he,
I tell you, has crossed over birth
& aging.

vv. 1049–1060

Notes

1. On the meaning of "acquisition," see Sn 3:12, note 2.

2. This verse is identical with the second set of verses in Sn 3:12.

3. Nd II gives six different valid interpretations for 'above, below, across, in between':

a) above = the future; below = the past; across and in between = the present,

b) above = the deva world; below = hell; across and in between = the human world,

c) above = skillfulness; below = unskillfulness; across and in between = indeterminate mental qualities,

d) above = the property of formlessness; below = the property of sensuality; across and in between = the property of form,

e) above = feelings of pleasure; below = feelings of pain; across and in between = feelings of neither pleasure nor pain,

f) above = the body from the feet on up; below = the body from the crown of the head on down; across and in between = the middle of the body.

4. On unestablished consciousness, see SN 12:38, SN 12:63–64, SN 22:53–54, and 22:87. See also the discussion of this topic in *The Paradox of Becoming,* chapter 7.

5. Becoming and non-becoming (or dis-becoming) are the two most subtle objects of craving that lead on to continued existence—and suffering—in the round of birth and death. See Ud 3:10, Iti 49, and MN 49, note 10. See also, *The Paradox of Becoming.*

See also: SN 35:197; AN 3:77–78

5:5 Dhotaka's Questions

I ask you, Blessed One.
Please tell me.
I hope for your words, Great Seer.
Having heard your pronouncement,
I'll train for my own
    unbinding.

The Buddha:

In that case,
be ardent—
astute & mindful right here.
Then, having heard my pronouncement,
train for your own
    unbinding.

Dhotaka:

I see in the world of beings
    divine & human,
a brahman who lives
possessing nothing.
    I pay homage to him,
    the All-around Eye.[1]
From my perplexities, Sakyan, release me!

The Buddha:

No one in the world, Dhotaka,
can I release from perplexity.
But knowing the most excellent Dhamma,
you will cross over this flood.

Dhotaka:

Teach with compassion, brahman,
the Dhamma of seclusion
so that I may know—
so that I, unafflicted as space,
may go about right here,
    independent,
    at peace.

The Buddha:

I will expound to you peace
    —here-&-now,

not quoted words—
knowing which, living mindfully,
you'll go beyond
entanglement in the world.

Dhotaka:

And I relish, Great Seer,
that peace supreme,
knowing which, living mindfully,
I'll go beyond
entanglement in the world.

The Buddha:

Whatever you're alert to,
above, below,
across, in between:
Knowing it as a bond in the world,
don't create craving
for becoming or non-.[2]

vv. 1061–1068

Notes

1. See Sn 2:12, note 2.

2. Craving for becoming and non-becoming are the two most subtle forms of craving that lead to continued existence—and suffering—in the round of birth and death. See Sn 5:4, note 5.

5:6 Upasīva's Questions

Alone, Sakyan, with nothing to rely on,
I can't venture across
the great flood.
Tell me, All-around Eye,

the support to rely on
for crossing over this flood.

The Buddha:

Mindfully focused on nothingness,[1]
relying on 'There isn't,'
you should cross over the flood.
Abandoning sensuality,
abstaining from conversations,
keep watch for the ending of
craving, night & day.

Upasīva:

One free from passion
for all sensuality
relying on nothingness, letting go of all else,
released in the highest emancipation of perception:
Does he stay there unaffected?

The Buddha:

One free from passion
for all sensuality
relying on nothingness, letting go of all else,
released in the highest emancipation of perception:
He stays there unaffected.

Upasīva:

If, All-around Eye, he stays there,
unaffected for many years,
right there
would he be cooled & released?
Would his consciousness be like that?

The Buddha:

As a flame overthrown by the force of the wind
goes to an end
that cannot be classified,[2]
so the sage freed from the name-body[3]
goes to an end
that cannot be classified.

Upasīva:

One who has reached the end:
Does he not exist,
or is he for eternity
free from dis-ease?
Please, sage, declare this to me
as this phenomenon has been known by you.

The Buddha:

One who has reached the end
has no criterion[4]
by which anyone would say that—
for him it doesn't exist.
When all phenomena are done away with,[5]
all means of speaking
are done away with as well.

vv. 1069–1076

Notes

1. "Nothingness" here denotes the dimension of nothingness, one of the four levels of mental absorption on formless themes. One attains this level, after surmounting the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, by focusing on the perception, "There is nothing." MN 26 tells us that Āḷāra Kālāma, the Buddha's first teacher when the latter was still a Bodhisatta, had attained this level of mental absorption and had thought that it was the highest possible attainment. The Bodhisatta left him upon realizing that it was not true liberation from stress and suffering. Nevertheless, the dimension of nothingness

can be used as a basis for the insight leading to that liberation. On this point, see Sn 5:14, below, and AN 9:36. On the strategy of relying on the formless states to cross over the flood, see MN 52, MN 106, MN 111, and AN 9:36.

2. For a discussion of this passage in light of early Buddhist theories of fire, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* chapter 1.

3. *Nāma-kāya* = mental activities of all sorts.

4. For a discussion of the meaning of "criterion" in this passage, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* chapter 1. On the Tathāgata as being undescribable, see *Skill in Questions,* chapter 9 and appendix 4.

5. This is one of the passages in the Canon that treats unbinding, not as a phenomenon *(dhamma),* but as the end of phenomena. On this point, see AN 3:137, note 1.

5:7 Nanda's Questions

There are in the world
sages, they say
  —in what way?
Do they call one a sage
for possessing knowledge
or possessing a way of life?

  The Buddha:

Not on account of his views,
  learning,
  or knowledge
do the skilled here, Nanda,
    call one a sage.
Those who live
    disarmed,
    undesiring,
    untroubled:
Those, I say, are called sages.

Nanda:

Whatever brahmans & contemplatives
describe purity
in terms of views & learning,
describe purity
in terms of habits & practices,
describe purity
in terms of manifold ways:
Have they, dear sir, living there in that way,
crossed over birth & aging?
I ask you, Blessed One.
Please tell me.

The Buddha:

Whatever brahmans & contemplatives
describe purity
in terms of views & learning,
describe purity
in terms of habits & practices,
describe purity
in terms of manifold ways:
None of them, living there in that way,
I tell you, have crossed over birth & aging.

Nanda:

Whatever brahmans & contemplatives
describe purity
in terms of views & learning,
describe purity
in terms of habits & practices,
describe purity
in terms of manifold ways:
If, sage, as you say,
they've not crossed over the flood,

then who in the world
of beings divine & human, dear sir,
has crossed over birth & aging?
    I ask you, Blessed One.
    Please tell me.

    The Buddha:

I don't say that all brahmans & contemplatives
are shrouded in birth & aging.
Those here who've abandoned
    what's seen, heard, & sensed,
    habits & practices[1]
        —all—
who've abandoned their manifold ways
        —again, all—
who, comprehending craving,
    are effluent-free:
They are the ones, I tell you,
who've crossed over the flood.

    Nanda:

I relish, Gotama, the Great Seer's words
well-expounded, without acquisition.
Those here who've abandoned
    what's seen, heard, & sensed,
    habits & practices
        —all—
who've abandoned their manifold ways
        —again, all—
who, comprehending craving,
    are effluent-free:
I, too, say they've crossed over the flood.

vv. 1077–1083

Note

1. For a discussion of the abandoning of habits and practices, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* chapters 3 and 4, and *The Paradox of Becoming,* chapter 4.

5:8 Hemaka's Question

In the past,
before hearing Gotama's message,
when anyone explained 'It is,' 'It will be,'
all that was hearsay,
        quotation marks.
All that promoted conjecture
and gave me no pleasure.
Now, sage, teach me the Dhamma
demolishing craving,
knowing which, living mindfully,
one would cross over beyond
entanglement in the world.

The Buddha:

Here, Hemaka,
with regard to things dear
  —seen, heard, sensed, & cognized—
there is:
        the dispelling of passion & desire,
        the unfallen, undying[1] state of unbinding.

Those knowing this, mindful,
  fully unbound
  in the here-&-now,
are always[2] calmed,
have crossed over beyond
entanglement in the world.

vv. 1084–1087

Notes

1. "Unfallen, undying": two meanings of the word, *accuta*.

2. Reading *sadā* with the Burmese, Sri Lankan, and PTS editions. The Thai edition read *satā,* mindful, but this is a repetition of *satā* in the previous line, something that Pali poetry tends to avoid except for purposes of emphasis.

5:9 Todeyya's Questions

One in whom
no sensualities dwell;
in whom
no craving is found;
who has crossed over perplexity—
    his emancipation:
    What is it like?

    The Buddha:

One in whom
no sensualities dwell;
in whom
no craving is found;
who has crossed over perplexity—
    his emancipation
    is not other than that.[1]

    Todeyya:

Is he without desire,
or desiring?
Discerning or
still acquiring discernment?
Describe the sage to me, Sakyan,
All-around Eye,
so that I may recognize
what he is like.

The Buddha:

He's without desire,
    not desiring;
discerning,
not still acquiring discernment.
Recognize the sage, Todeyya,
as having nothing,
unentangled
    in sensuality
        & becoming.

vv. 1088–1091

Note

1. Nd IIA: The ending of craving is, in and of itself, emancipation. See SN 43.

5:10 Kappa's Question

For one stranded in the middle of the lake,
in the flood of great danger—birth—
overwhelmed with aging & death:
    Tell me the island, dear sir,
    and show me the island
    so that this may not happen again.

The Buddha:

For one stranded in the middle of the lake,
in the flood of great danger—birth—
overwhelmed with aging & death,
    Kappa, I will tell you the island.[1]

Having nothing, free
of clinging:

That is the island,
there is no other.
That's unbinding, I tell you,
the total ending of aging & death.

Those knowing this, mindful,
fully unbound
in the here-&-now,
don't serve as Māra's servants,
don't come under Māra's sway.[2]

vv. 1092–1095

Notes

1. On the Dhamma as an island, see DN 16.
2. On Māra's sway, see SN 4:19, SN 35:115, SN 35:189, and SN 35:199.

5:11 Jatukaṇṇin's Question

Hearing, hero,
of one with no desire for sensuality,
I've come to ask
the one gone beyond the flood,
sensuality-free:
Tell me the state of peace,
Blessed One, Simultaneous Eye.[1]
Tell me
as it actually is.
For the Blessed One lives
having conquered sensuality,
as the radiant sun, in its radiance,
the earth.
Limited my discernment,
O Deeply Discerning.
Teach me to know the Dhamma,
the abandoning here

of birth
& aging.

The Buddha:

Subdue greed for sensuality,
& see renunciation as rest.
Let there be nothing grasped
or rejected by you.
Burn up what's *before,*
and have nothing for *after.*
If you don't grasp
at what's *in between,*[2]
you will go about, calm.

One completely devoid of greed
for name-&-form, brahman,
has
no effluents
by which he would go
under Māra's sway.

vv. 1096–1100

Notes

1. According to Nd II, the Buddha is called the Simultaneous Eye because the Eye of his omniscience arose simultaneously with his awakening to Buddhahood. It's hardly likely, though, that Jatukaṇṇin would have this idea in mind when speaking to the Buddha for the first time. More likely, he might be alluding to the idea that the Buddha is able to see things, and to understand them for what they are, the moment they arise.

2. According to Nd II, 'before' stands for defilements related to the past, 'after' for defilements related to the future, and 'in between' for the five aggregates—form, feeling, perception, thought-fabrications, sensory consciousness—in the present.

5:12 Bhadrāvudha's Question

I entreat the one who has
abandoned home—cutting through craving, unperturbed;
abandoned delight—crossed over the flood, released;
abandoned theory—very intelligent:
Having heard the Nāga, they will leave—
    the many gathered
    from many lands, hero,
    in hopes of your words.
So tell them, please,
    how this Dhamma has
    been known to you.

The Buddha:

Subdue craving & grasping—all—
    above, below,
    across, in between.[1]
For whatever people cling to in the world,
    it's through that
    that Māra pursues them.

So a monk, mindful,
    seeing these people
    entangled in grasping
    as entangled in Death's realm,
should cling to nothing
    in all the world,
        every world.

vv. 1101–1104

Note

1. For Nd II's discussion of the various meanings of the objects of craving "above, below, across, in between," see Sn 5:4, note 3. For further discussions of the many places where craving can arise, see DN 22 and SN 35:95, note 1.

See also: MN 26; MN 49; SN 4:19; SN 4:21; SN 35:115; SN 35:189; SN 35:199

5:13 Udaya's Questions

To the one in jhāna—
    seated, dustless,
        passionless,
    his task done,
    effluent-free,
        gone to the beyond
        of all phenomena—
I've come with a desire for a question.
Tell me the gnosis of emancipation,
    the breaking open
    of ignorance.

    The Buddha:

The abandoning
    both of sensual desires,
    & of unhappiness,
the dispelling of sloth,
the warding off of anxieties,
equanimity-&-mindfulness purified,
    with inspection of mental qualities
    swift in the forefront:
That I call the gnosis of emancipation,[1]
    the breaking open
    of ignorance.[2]

    Udaya:

With what
    is the world fettered?
With what
    is it examined?

Through the abandoning of what
    is there said to be
        unbinding?

The Buddha:

With delight
    the world's fettered.
With directed thought
    it's examined.
Through the abandoning of craving
    is there said to be
        unbinding.

Udaya:

Living mindful in what way
does one bring consciousness
        to a halt?
We've come to ask
    the Blessed One.
Let us hear your words.

The Buddha:

Not relishing feeling,
    inside or out:
One living mindful in this way
    brings consciousness
        to a halt.[3]

vv. 1105–1111

Notes

1. The state of mind described here corresponds to the five-factored noble right concentration described in AN 5:28, and analyzed more fully in AN 9:36. For further discussion, see section III/F in *The Wings to Awakening* and the essays, "Jhāna Not by the Numbers" and "Silence Isn't Mandatory."

2. AN 3:33 contains a discussion of this verse. The Buddha tells Ven. Sāriputta that one should train oneself such that "with regard to this conscious body, there will be no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit, such that with regard to all external themes [topics of concentration] there will be no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit, and that we will enter & remain in the awareness-release & discernment-release in which there is no 'I'-making or 'mine'-making or obsession with conceit." When one has trained in this way, he says, one is called a person who has cut through craving, unraveled the fetter, who has, through the right penetration of conceit, put an end to suffering and stress. He then states that it was in connection to this state that he uttered this verse.

3. See DN 11, DN 15, MN 49, and SN 12:67. For a discussion of "bringing consciousness to a halt"—showing that it is not an annihilation of consciousness, but rather the ending of its proliferating activity—see SN 22:53. See also the image in SN 12:64.

5:14 Posāla's Question

To one who reveals the past
—unperturbed,
his doubts cut through—
who has gone to the beyond
of all phenomena,
I've come with a desire for a question.
I ask the Sakyan about the knowledge[1]
of one devoid of perception of forms,
who has abandoned all the body,
every body,
who sees, within & without,
'There is nothing':
How is he
to be led further on?

The Buddha:

The Tathāgata, knowing directly
    all stations of consciousness,[2]
knows for one stationed in them
    release
    & the steps leading there.

Knowing directly
the origin of nothingness
to be the fetter of delight,
one then sees there
    clearly.
That's his genuine knowledge—
    the brahman who has lived
    to fulfillment.

vv. 1112–1115

Notes

1. Posāla's question concerning the knowledge of the person in the dimension of nothingness has a double meaning: He is asking about the Buddha's knowledge about that person, and also what a person in that dimension of attainment should do to develop his/her knowledge even further. The Buddha's answer deals with the question in both its senses. On delight in nothingness, see MN 106.

2. On the seven stations of consciousness, see DN 15. The dimension of nothingness, discussed in this dialogue, is the seventh and most refined. See Sn 5:6, note 1. On the steps leading to release from being stationed in the formless states, see MN 52, MN 102, MN 106, MN 111, MN 140, and AN 9:36.

5:15 Mogharāja's Question

Twice now, Sakyan,
    I've asked you,
but you, One with Eyes,
    haven't answered me.
"When asked the third time,

the divine seer answers":
So I have heard.
This world, the next world,
the Brahmā world with its devas:
I don't know how they're viewed
by the prestigious Gotama.
So to the one who has seen
to the far extreme,
I've come with a desire for a question:
One who regards the world in what way
isn't seen by Death's King?

The Buddha:

Always mindful, Mogharāja,[1]
regard the world as
empty,
having removed any view
in terms of self.
This way
one is above & beyond death.
One who regards the world
in this way
isn't seen by Death's King.

vv. 1116–1119

Note

1. Cited by the Buddha at AN 1:149 (1:234) as foremost among the monks in wearing coarse robes.

See also: DN 15; MN 22; MN 26; MN 49; MN 121; SN 22:1; SN 4:19; SN 5:10; SN 12:15; SN 35:23; SN 35:82; SN 35:85; AN 9:39

5:16 Piṅgiya's Questions

I'm old & weak,
my complexion dull,
I've blurry eyes
and trouble hearing—
but may I not perish
while still deluded,
confused!
Teach me the Dhamma
so that I may know
the abandoning here
of birth & aging.

The Buddha:

Seeing people suffering
on account of their bodies—
heedless people are afflicted
on account of their bodies—
then heedful, Piṅgiya,
let go of the body
for the sake of no further becoming.

Piṅgiya:

In the four cardinal directions,
the four intermediate,
above & below
—these ten directions—
there is nothing in the world
unseen, unheard,
unsensed, uncognized by you.
Teach me the Dhamma
so that I may know
the abandoning here
of birth & aging.

The Buddha:

Seeing people,
victims of craving—
inflamed, overwhelmed with aging—
then heedful, Piṅgiya,
let go of craving
for the sake of no further becoming.

vv. 1120–1123

Epilogue

That is what the Blessed One said when dwelling among the Magadhans at the Pāsāṇaka shrine. Asked in turn by the sixteen brahmans, he answered their questions. And if one were to practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma,[1] knowing the meaning and Dhamma of each of these questions, one would go to the far shore of birth & death. Because these Dhammas lead there, this Dhamma-sequence is called "To the Far Shore."

Ajita, Tissa-metteyya,
Puṇṇaka & Mettagū,
Dhotaka & Upasīva,
Nanda & Hemaka,
Todeyya & Kappa,
the wise Jatukaṇṇin,
Bhadrāvudha & Udaya,
Posāla the brahman,
Mogharāja the intelligent,
and Piṅgiya the great seer:
They went to the Awakened One,
consummate in conduct, the seer.
They went to the excellent Awakened One,
asking subtle questions.
The Awakened One,
when asked their questions,
answered in line with the truth.

By answering their questions, the sage
delighted the brahmans.
They, delighted by the One with Eyes—
Awakened, Kinsman of the Sun—
lived the holy life
in the presence of the one
of foremost discernment.

Whoever would practice
as the Awakened One taught
concerning each of these questions,
would go from the near shore to the far—
would go from the near shore to the far
developing the path supreme.
The path is for going beyond,
and so it's called "To the Far Shore."

Ven. Piṅgiya:[2]

"I will recite 'To the Far Shore.'
As he saw, so he taught—
stainless, of deep intelligence,
the Nāga with
no sensuality,
no forest[3]:
For what reason would he tell a lie?
His delusion & stains
left behind; left behind,
his hypocrisy, conceit:
Let me praise his beautiful words.
He who is truly described
as
dispeller of darkness,
awakened,
All-around Eye,
gone to the end of the cosmos,[4]

all his becoming transcended,
effluent-free,
his stress all abandoned:
He is served by me.

As a bird leaving a scrubby grove
would dwell in a forest abundant in fruit,
even so, I have left those of next-to-no vision,
have arrived
like a swan at a large lake.

In the past,
before hearing Gotama's message,
when anyone explained 'It is,' 'It will be,'
all that was hearsay,
quotation marks.
All that promoted conjecture
and gave me no pleasure.[5]

Sitting alone—
the dispeller of darkness,
shining, bringer of light,
Gotama of deep knowledge,
Gotama of deep intelligence:
He taught me the Dhamma
timeless, visible here-&-now,
the ending of craving,
calamity-free,
whose likeness is nowhere at all."

Bāvarī:

"Piṅgiya, for even a moment
can you stay apart from him—
Gotama of deep knowledge,
Gotama of deep intelligence,
who taught you the Dhamma
timeless, visible here-&-now,

the ending of craving,
    calamity-free,
whose likeness is nowhere at all?”

Ven. Piṅgiya:

“No, brahman, not even for a moment
can I stay apart from him—
    Gotama of deep knowledge,
    Gotama of deep intelligence,
who taught me the Dhamma
timeless, visible here-&-now,
the ending of craving,
    calamity-free,
whose likeness is nowhere at all.

I see him with my heart
as if with my eye—
heedful, brahman, by day & by night.
I spend the night paying homage to him,
and that way, as it were,
    not staying apart.
My conviction, rapture,
mindfulness, & heart,
don’t stray from Gotama’s message.

To whatever direction he goes,
the one deeply discerning,
to that direction I bow down.
I am old, my stamina frail,
which is why my body doesn’t run away to there.
But through the machine of my resolves
    I constantly go,
for my heart, brahman, is connected to him.

Floundering in the mud,
I swam from island to island,
but then I saw the One Self-Awakened,

crossed over the flood, effluent-free.

‘As Vakkali has shown his conviction[6]—
as Bhadrāvudha & Āḷavi Gotama too—
so will you show your conviction, Piṅgiya.
You will go beyond the realm of death.’

I feel confidence all the more,
having heard the words of the sage,
his roof opened-up, self-awakened,
quick-witted, free from rigidity.
Knowing the supreme devas,[7]
he knows all dhammas, from high to low:
the Teacher who puts an end
to the questions
of those admitting
their doubt.

To the untaken-in, unshaken,[8]
whose likeness is nowhere at all:
Yes, I will go there.
I’ve no doubt about that.
Remember me thus
as one whose mind
is decided.

vv. 1124–1149

Notes

1. See SN 22:39–42.

2. According to SnA, the sixteen brahmans, after their questions were answered, requested and received the Going-forth and Acceptance. After that, Piṅgiya, now Ven. Piṅgiya, received permission from the Buddha to return to Bāvarī to report the results of their trip.

3. Reading *nikkāmo nibbano nāgo* with the Sri Lankan and Burmese versions, a reading confirmed by Nd II. The Thai version has *nibbuto,* “unbound,” instead of *nibbano.* The PTS version has *nātho,* “protector,” instead of *nāgo.*

According to Nd II, “no forest” here means free from the forests of passion, aversion, delusion, resentment, and all other unskillful mental fabrications. See Dhp 283.

4. See SN 35:82, SN 35:116, and AN 4:45.

5. The phrase, “and gave me no pleasure,” appears in the Thai edition but not the others.

6. According to Nd IIA, to show conviction means to attain arahantship through the strength of conviction. The expression also occurs in SN 6:1, where it seems to have a more general meaning. Ven. Vakkali’s story appears in SN 22:87. At AN 1:147 (1:208) the Buddha cites him as foremost among the monks in being decisive in his conviction. Bhadrāvudha is apparently the same Bhadrāvudha in Sn 5:12. Āḷavi Gotama is mentioned nowhere else in the Canon.

7. In AN 8:71 (AN 8:64 in the PTS reckoning), the Buddha states that he did not claim full awakening until his knowledge of the deva world was complete.

8. See MN 131.

Glossary

Ājīvaka: A member of a hedonistic contemplative sect, contemporary with the Buddha.

Arahant: A "worthy one" or "pure one;" a person whose mind is free of defilement and thus is not destined for further rebirth. An epithet for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Āsava: Effluent; fermentation. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that "flow out" of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth.

Asuras: A race of heavenly beings who, like the Titans of Greek mythology, fought the devas for sovereignty over the heavens and lost.

Bhikkhu: A Buddhist monk.

Bodhisatta: "A being (striving) for awakening;" the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually became Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full awakening. Sanskrit form: *bodhisattva*.

Brahmā: A higher level of deva, inhabiting the heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahman: In common usage, a brahman is a member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, "brahman" can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based, not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Deva (devatā): Literally, "shining one." A level of being above the human, inhabiting either celestial or terrestrial realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event; a phenomenon in and of itself; (2) action; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) rectitude, a standard of righteous

behavior; (6) unbinding (although some passages in the Canon describe unbinding as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *dharma*.

Gandhabba: (1) A celestial musician, the lowest level of celestial deva. (2) A being about to take birth.

Gotama: The Buddha's clan name.

Indra (Inda): King of the devas of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. Another name for Sakka.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is related to the verb *jhāyati,* which means to burn with a steady, still flame. Sanskrit form: *dhyāna*.

Kamma: Intentional act. Sanskrit form: *karma*.

Māra: The personification of evil and temptation.

Meru: A mountain at the center of the universe where devas are said to dwell.

Nāga: A term commonly used to refer to strong, stately, and heroic animals, such as elephants and magical serpents. In Buddhism, it is also used to refer to those who have attained the goal of the practice.

Nibbāna: Literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion; from the entire round of death and rebirth; and from all that can be described or defined. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. Sanskrit form: *nirvāṇa*.

Nigaṇṭha: A member of the Jain sect, a contemporary of the Buddha.

Pali: The name of the Canon that forms the basis for the Theravāda and, by extension, the language in which it was composed.

Pāṭimokkha: Basic code of monastic discipline, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns.

Rakkhasa: A fierce spirit said to dwell in bodies of water.

Sakka: King of the devas of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. Another name for Indra.

Sakya: The Buddha's family name.

Saṁvega: A sense of terror or dismay over the meaninglessness and futility of life as it is ordinarily lived, combined with a strong sense of urgency in looking for a way out.

Saṅgha: On the conventional *(sammati)* level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns. On the ideal *(ariya)* level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry.

Stūpa: A memorial to a dead person, derived from the form of a burial mound.

Sutta: Discourse. Sanskrit form: *sūtra*.

Tādin: "Such," an adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person's state is indefinable but not subject to change or influences of any sort.

Tathāgata: Literally, "one who has truly gone *(tatha-gata)"* or "one who has become authentic *(tatha-āgata),"* an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest spiritual goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Uposatha: Observance day, coinciding with the full moon, new moon, and half moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the eight precepts on this day. Monks recite the Pāṭimokkha on the full moon and new moon uposathas.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text. The Buddha's own term for the religion he founded was "this Dhamma & Vinaya."

Yakkha: Spirit; a lower level of deva—sometimes friendly to human beings, sometimes not—often dwelling in trees or other wild places.

Abbreviations

References are to texts from the Pali Canon:

AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
Cv	*Cullavagga*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*
Iti	*Itivuttaka*
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*
Mv	*Mahāvagga*
Nd I	*Mahāniddesa*
Nd II	*Cullaniddesa*
Pv	*Petavatthu*
SN	*Saṁyutta Nikāya*
Sn	*Sutta Nipāta*
Thag	*Theragāthā*
Thig	*Therīgāthā*
Ud	*Udāna*

References to DN, Iti, and MN are to discourse (sutta). Those to Dhp are to verse. Those to Cv and Mv are to chapter, section, and sub-section. References to other texts are to section (saṁyutta, nipāta, or vagga) and discourse.

An “A” after any of these abbreviations denotes the Commentary (Aṭṭhakathā) to that text.

Other abbreviations:

ChU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
GD	*The Group of Discourses*
MLDB	*The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*
PTS	*Pali Text Society*

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