

Udāna



Udāna
Exclamations

A TRANSLATION
WITH AN INTRODUCTION & NOTES

by

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Acknowledgements

More than a decade ago I began supplying translations from the Pali Canon to what was then a fledgling website, Access to Insight. Among the earliest translations was an anthology of passages from the Udāna. For quite some time now I have wanted to replace that anthology with a complete translation, both because my early effort contained a number of minor mistakes, and because, as I became more sensitive to the literary dimensions of the Pali Canon, I came to see that the Udāna is a well-constructed whole, with each part amplifying and amplified by the others. Only a complete translation could do justice to the skill with which the collection was compiled.

In October of last year I had the opportunity to revisit the text and to begin work on a complete, more correct translation. With the benefit of computerized versions of the Pali Canon now available, I was able not only to compare various editions of the text, but also to explore more fully other udānas and udāna-like passages in the Pali Canon. Also, I made a more thorough study of the text and the values it expresses, creating the tables used in the Introduction. And I tried to place the text in the context of Indian literary theory, to help get a better sense of the effect at which the compilers may have been aiming.

At the same time, because of the recent surge of interest in approaching early Buddhist texts from modern and post-modern perspectives, I felt that it would be worthwhile to consider how beneficial these approaches might be with this particular text. These considerations made their way into the Introduction as well. I hope you find them useful.

Just as I was completing the manuscript, I became aware of two works by Ven. Ānandajoti in this area: a complete translation of the Udāna and a comparative study of parallels to the Udāna verses in the Udānavarga, a text composed in the language called Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

Comparing my work with his, I was able to ferret out a few more errors in my translation and to incorporate the results of some of his research into my notes. Thus I am in his debt. However, because the aims and method of his translation differed from mine, I feel that this new translation is not superfluous.

The primary foundation for this translation is the Thai edition of the Pali text, printed by Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, Bangkok, 1981. 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 stuck with the Thai reading even when the other editions were seconded by the Udānavarga. This is 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.

Many people have reviewed the manuscript and made valuable suggestions for improvement. In addition to the monks here at the monastery, this includes Michael Barber, Charles Malloy IV, Addie Onsanit, Nathaniel Osgood, Mary Talbot, and Barbara Wright. Any errors that remain in the manuscript, of course, are my own.

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Introduction

MEANING IN THE UDĀNA

The term *udāna* has two meanings, one denoting a vocal expression, the other a genre of text. As a vocal expression, it can be translated roughly as “exclamation,” and in particular an exclamation that’s spontaneous and inspired. As a genre of text, *udāna* means a style of narrative that developed in an effort to commit to memory the Buddha’s inspired exclamations, along with brief accounts of the events that inspired them.

Several passages in the Pali Canon (such as AN 7:64 and MN 22) depict the Buddha as mentioning nine genres in which his teachings and events in his life were memorized during his lifetime, *udānas* being among them. Cullavagga XI reports that, shortly after the Buddha’s passing away, a large council of his disciples met to agree on a standardized form in which to remember his teachings, beginning a process that led to the Pali Canon we have today. At present, the Khuddaka Nikāya (Short Collection) contains as its third text a collection of eighty *udānas* called, simply, *Udāna*. (To distinguish between individual *udānas* and the collection as a whole, the standard practice is to capitalize the latter and not the former.) Scholars have questioned whether this collection is related to the *udānas* collected during the Buddha’s lifetime—for a few observations on this question, see [Appendix One](#)—but there are no compelling reasons to believe that the relationship is not close. That is why I felt that a complete translation of the *Udāna* we currently have would be worthwhile.

The role of the *Udāna* within the context of the Pali Canon is to focus on the values and principles—“meaning” in the larger sense of the term—that underlie the Buddha’s teachings. This point can be seen clearly in how each *udāna* is organized. It begins with a narrative of an event or

series of events, followed (with a few variations) by the formula: “Then, on realizing the significance/meaning (attha) of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed.” This, in turn, is followed by a spontaneous exclamation—a poem, a passage of prose, or a combination of the two—in which the Buddha expresses what that meaning or significance is.

To understand the purpose of this way of structuring each udāna, we can compare it to the *itivuttakas* (“quotations”), which resemble the udānas in three ways: They are listed among the original nine genres of Buddhist texts; they currently exist as a book in the Khuddaka Nikāya (the fourth, immediately after the Udāna); and each consists of a prose passage followed by a poem. The *itivuttakas* differ from the udānas in that the prose passage is a summary of a Dhamma talk, and the concluding poem further distills the basic points of the talk into an easy-to-memorize form. Thus the closing passages in an *itivuttaka* are meant primarily as memory aids.

In an udāna, however, the closing exclamations are aimed more at understanding the significance of what can be learned from an event. Although some of these exclamations give recommendations on what to do in response to an event of that particular sort—such as how to deal with unfair criticism—most of them express and extol more general values in their praise or criticism of people or attitudes involved in the event. The fact that no human being but the Buddha was present to record some of the exclamations reported in the Udāna—such as those in [1:1](#), [1:2](#), [1:3](#), [1:7](#), [2:1](#), [3:10](#)—suggests that he himself played a role in the shaping of the genre, for these events wouldn’t have been recorded unless he had reported them to others. But whether the idea of collecting these pieces as a distinct genre originated with him or with his disciples, we have no way of knowing.

What we *can* know, however, when we look carefully at the form and content of the Udāna as a whole, is that a cohesive set of values runs throughout the collection. We also find that those values run directly counter to the values of domestic society in the Buddha’s time: stating, for instance, that brahmans—people worthy of respect—are made and not born; and that the happiness of lay life is nothing compared to the happiness of renunciation.

This last value, of course, flies in the face of the domestic values not only of the Buddha's time, but also of human society in all time. Thus the Udāna seems aimed at having a revolutionary impact on the mind of any reader raised in domestic society. To make these values palatable to the reader, the compilers employed all the literary skills at their disposal when shaping the narratives around the Buddha's explanations and organizing them into a collection. So as we look at the values expressed in the Udāna, we have to be sensitive not only to the content of the Buddha's spontaneous exclamations, but also to the form and content of the compilers' contributions in collecting them.

First, in terms of the Udāna's content, we can learn a lot, on the one hand, by looking at the types of events that inspired the Buddha to break forth with a spontaneous exclamation, and on the other, by identifying the values his exclamations express.

What kinds of events would inspire an awakened one to exclaim? When we sort the events described by the narrators into categories, we find that they fall primarily into two: those inciting a sense of *pasāda* (cheerful confidence) in the practice and attainment of the Dhamma, and those inciting a sense of *saṃvega* (dismay) over the heedlessness of those who don't practice the Dhamma. In the following list, individual udānas are indicated by their number in the collection.

Pasāda:

Celebrating the Dhamma and the Buddha's own attainment of

it: [1:1](#), [1:2](#), [1:3](#), [1:4](#), [1:7](#), [2:1](#), [3:10](#), [6:1](#), [6:3](#), [7:7](#), [7:8](#),
[8:1](#), [8:2](#), [8:3](#), [8:4](#)

Celebrating the attainments of his disciples: [1:5](#), [1:6](#), [1:8](#),

[1:10](#), [2:10](#), [3:1](#), [3:2](#), [3:3](#), [3:4](#), [3:5](#), [3:6](#), [3:7](#), [4:4](#), [4:6](#), [4:7](#),
[4:9](#), [4:10](#), [5:6](#), [5:7](#), [5:10](#), [6:7](#), [7:1](#), [7:2](#), [7:5](#), [7:6](#), [8:9](#), [8:10](#)

Joy in solitude: [4:5](#)

Miraculous events: [2:8](#), [7:9](#), [8:6](#)

In praise of the practice of giving, virtue, and meditation: [8:5](#)

Samvega:

Chastising monks: [2:2](#), [3:8](#), [3:9](#), [4:1](#), [8:7](#)

Commenting on monks' misbehavior: [4:2](#), [5:5](#), [5:8](#)

Seeing the foolishness of other sectarians: [1:9](#), [2:4](#), [2:6](#), [6:4](#),
[6:5](#), [6:6](#), [6:10](#)

Teaching children who are harming animals: [2:3](#), [5:4](#)

Teaching a king: [5:1](#), [6:2](#)

Seeing hardships of domestic life: [2:5](#), [2:6](#), [2:7](#), [2:9](#), [8:8](#)

Commenting on the foolishness/heedlessness of lay people's
behavior: [2:8](#), [5:9](#), [6:8](#), [6:9](#), [7:3](#), [7:4](#)

Contrasting the attainment of the Dhamma with the situation
of ordinary people: [3:10](#), [8:6](#)

In response to a death: [2:7](#), [4:3](#), [5:2](#), [5:3](#), [7:10](#), [8:8](#)

It's interesting to note that the emotions of pasāda and samvega are paired rarely in the Canon but frequently in later Theravāda texts focusing on the emotions to be developed when visiting memorials to the Buddha, such as stūpas or Buddha images. Pasāda is the appropriate response to feel when reflecting that the Buddha's total unbinding (*parinibbāna*) transcended birth and death because he had awakened to the birthless, deathless dimension ([8:1](#), [8:3](#), [8:4](#)). Samvega is the appropriate response when reflecting on your own situation, subject to repeated rebirths and redeaths as long you have yet to awaken to that dimension yourself.

Thus the experience of reading the Udāna is like that of gaining inspiration from a stūpa or Buddha image—a point reinforced not only by its explicit reference to the dimension beyond birth and death in [8:3](#) and [8:4](#), but also by the large number of deaths mentioned throughout the collection. It's also reinforced by the way in which the deaths of those who have not reached awakening ([2:7](#), [4:3](#), [4:8](#), [5:2](#), [8:8](#)) are contrasted with the deaths of those who have ([1:10](#), [5:3](#), [7:10](#), [8:9](#), [8:10](#), and the foreshadowing of the Buddha's own death in [6:1](#) and [8:5](#)).

When an unawakened person dies, it's a cause for *saṃvega*; when an awakened person dies, a cause for *pasāda*—although in the case of Suppabuddha the leper ([5:3](#)), his death is a cause for both: *saṃvega* over the past *kamma* that led to his present rebirth as a leper, and *pasāda* for the fact that, having gained the Dhamma-eye just before dying, he is now a prominent *deva* in the heaven of the Thirty-three.

It's also interesting to note from these lists how often the narratives in the *Udāna* focus on celebrating the accomplishments of the Buddha's disciples, a point to which we will return below.

Just as it's instructive to note what would cause the Buddha to exclaim, it's also instructive to note what doesn't: He never exclaims over the beauty of the body or of material possessions, the wealth or power of those who govern, the joys of a loving relationship, or a kindness done to him personally. In other words, he doesn't exclaim over the things that people in domestic society normally value. This fact relates directly to the values that his exclamations express.

To understand these values, it's useful to map them against a list found elsewhere in the Canon, in the Buddha's instructions to his foster mother concerning the eight basic values that determine which *dhammas*—teachings, actions, qualities of mind—qualify categorically as true Dhamma. Again, in the following list, *udānas* expressing a particular value are identified by their numbers in the collection. Individual *udānas* expressing more than one value are listed more than once.

“As for the *dhammas* of which you may know, ‘These *dhammas* lead:

to *dispassion*, not to passion [[1:7](#), [2:1](#), [2:8](#), [3:10](#), [4:4](#), [7:3](#), [7:4](#)];

to being *unfettered*, not to being fettered [[1:1](#), [1:2](#), [1:3](#), [1:5](#), [1:8](#), [1:9](#), [1:10](#), [2:1](#), [2:4](#), [2:10](#), [3:2](#), [3:4](#), [3:5](#), [3:6](#), [3:10](#), [4:4](#), [4:9](#), [4:10](#), [6:1](#), [6:3](#), [6:4](#), [6:6](#), [6:7](#), [6:8](#), [6:9](#), [6:10](#), [7:1](#), [7:2](#), [7:3](#), [7:4](#), [7:5](#), [7:6](#), [7:7](#), [7:8](#), [7:9](#), [7:10](#), [8:1](#), [8:2](#), [8:3](#), [8:4](#), [8:5](#), [8:6](#), [8:7](#), [8:8](#), [8:9](#), [8:10](#)];

to *shedding*, not to accumulating [[1:4](#), [2:4](#), [4:8](#), [7:9](#), [7:10](#)];
to *modesty*, not to self-aggrandizement [[3:1](#), [3:8](#), [5:9](#), [6:4](#),
[6:5](#)];
to *contentment*, not to discontent [[1:6](#), [2:1](#), [2:10](#), [3:7](#), [4:6](#)];
to *seclusion*, not to entanglement [[1:8](#), [2:1](#), [2:5](#), [2:6](#), [2:7](#), [2:8](#),
[2:9](#), [3:3](#), [3:9](#), [4:2](#), [4:5](#), [4:6](#), [5:6](#), [6:2](#), [8:7](#), [8:8](#)];
to *aroused persistence*, not to laziness [[2:2](#), [3:1](#), [3:3](#), [4:1](#), [4:2](#),
[4:3](#), [4:6](#), [4:7](#), [5:2](#), [5:3](#), [5:5](#), [5:7](#), [5:8](#), [5:10](#), [8:5](#)];
to being *unburdensome*, not to being burdensome' [[1:6](#), [2:3](#),
[3:7](#), [3:9](#), [5:1](#), [5:4](#)]:

You may categorically hold, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.'" – AN 8:53

The first thing to notice about these values is that, even though they are closely interrelated, they can be divided into three sorts: those touching on the goal of the practice (dispassion, being unfettered), those touching on internal virtues needed to reach that goal (shedding, contentment, aroused persistence), and those touching on one's relations with others in the course of the practice (modesty, seclusion, and being unburdensome). In each case, these values are all noble—which means that nothing is lost when you engage in putting them to the test. Even if you don't attain the ultimate goal, you have developed qualities worthy of inner and outer respect, at the same time alleviating a fair amount of suffering in the here and now.

Also notice that all eight values are expressed in the Udāna. Far and away, the largest number of udānas focus on values related to the goal—dispassion and being unfettered—but in doing so, they also provide motivation for developing the virtues and values needed to attain that goal. This motivation is important, for all of these values, as we have noted, run counter to the common values of domestic society—as expressed both in the particular structures of Indian society in the Buddha's time, and in the common values of domesticity in human cultures across time.

For instance, the values of dispassion and being unfettered run counter to the pursuit of sensuality and to the sense of “I,” “mine,” “we,” and “ours” that underlie family life. The value of shedding runs counter to the domestic desire to accumulate as a protection against future lack; because this value includes the shedding of pride, it also runs counter to the desire for prominence in social affairs. The value of contentment runs counter to the domestic concern with accumulating wealth and stockpiling for the future; the value of modesty, counter to the desire for fame and recognition; and the value of seclusion, counter to the domestic desire to be surrounded by loved ones. The value of being unburdensome, on its face, coincides with the domestic value of frugality, but on a deeper level—in light of the fact that the act of creating a family places extra burdens on the environment to feed and support more people—it counsels celibacy as the ideal way to be unburdensome. Thus it runs directly counter to the domestic idea that the creation of a family is a gift to the world. As for persistence, both the Dhamma and domestic society value persistence in the pursuit of one’s aims, but they differ widely in their understanding of what those aims should be.

All of this means that the task of the Udāna is to convey—and make convincing—the countercultural message that the reader would be wise to focus on the drawbacks of many of the values and structures in which he/she has been nurtured since childhood, and to see the advantages of taking on a more demanding set of values in their place.

This task, in turn, relates directly to the form of the Udāna as a collection, for it shows clear signs of having been consciously and skillfully shaped to present a coherent impression and message. It’s not simply a stenographic account of all the Buddha’s explanations or a random set of texts arranged so that they would be easy to memorize.

The fact that the Udāna was consciously shaped can easily be seen by comparing it with the rest of the Pali Canon. On the one hand, the Udāna does not contain all the Buddha’s exclamations recorded in the Canon. Appendix Two contains the three accounts of the Buddha’s exclamations that the Udāna’s compilers did not include in their collection, and a glance at these accounts helps to suggest why: In one case (SN 56:11), the exclamation was too short to convey much of a

meaning. In the other two, there is no record of any event whose significance—sparking either *saṃvega* or *pasāda*—incited the Buddha to exclaim. In both of these latter two incidents, the Buddha also had to explain the exclamation to his audience. Thus these cases did not fit into the pattern of the *udāna* genre.

On the other hand, there are six passages in the *Kosala-Saṃyutta* and *Māra-Saṃyutta* (SN 3 and 4) that follow the form of the *udānas*: a short narrative, followed by the formula, “*Then, on realizing the significance/meaning of that, the Blessed One on that occasion...*” but instead of exclaiming, the Buddha is said simply to have “spoken these verses.” Aside from this small discrepancy, this formula is exclusive to the *udānas*.

As it turns out, one of these passages has a direct parallel, and another a near parallel, in the *Udāna* itself. (See [Appendix Three](#).) All of this suggests that these passages may have been part of the original collection of *udānas* but later were moved to the *Saṃyutta* instead. Similarly, but at one step further removed, several suttas included in the *Bhikkhu-saṃyutta* (SN 21) lack the standard *udāna* formula but otherwise follow the *udāna* format in presenting a common *udāna* theme: the Buddha commenting in verse on the good or bad behavior of his monks. In fact one of these suttas—SN 21:7—is a near parallel with [Ud 7:5](#). Thus these suttas might have originally been *udānas* that were later moved to the *Saṃyutta* as well. Because nothing in the content or form of any of these *Saṃyutta* passages differs from the *udānas* included in the *Udāna*, there is the possibility that the monks who made the final selection simply wanted the number of passages in the *Udāna* to equal a round eighty, the number of years in the Buddha’s life.

The conscious shaping of the *Udāna* is also apparent when we look at its overall arrangement, for it shows a literary sensibility at work. First, there is the narrative arc of the whole. It begins with the Buddha’s awakening, includes several passages that foreshadow the Buddha’s final unbinding (*nibbāna*)—the final unbinding of *Bāhiya* in [1:10](#), the narratives of the Buddha’s last year in [6:1](#) and [8:5](#), and the discussions of unbinding in [8:1-4](#)—and ends with the final unbinding of another one of his disciples, Ven. *Dabba Mallaputta*. The form of the genre would not

have allowed the collection to end with the Buddha's own final unbinding—he wouldn't have been present to comment on the meaning of the event—and so Ven. Dabba Mallaputta's final unbinding is made to stand in for the Buddha's, thus giving narrative closure to the whole.

Underlying this narrative arc are two doctrinal arcs. The first lies in the fact that the udānas of the first four chapters focus on basic principles—the true brahman (the person worthy of admiration) in the first chapter, true bliss in the second, the ideal monk in the third, and the importance of training the mind in the fourth—whereas all of the udānas in the last two chapters focus on the theme of being unfettered. The collection thus starts with basics and ends with the ultimate goal.

The second doctrinal arc starts with the description of dependent co-arising in the first three udānas. While this teaching is by no means simple or elementary, it is basic in the sense that it provides the framework for understanding one of the more difficult teachings in the collection: the arahant's abandoning of any sense of personal identity—a point mentioned in [2:1](#), [4:1](#), [6:6](#), and [7:1](#), and graphically symbolized in [8:9](#) and [8:10](#). In this way the first udānas introduce a string of udānas that help to explain how what in the last two udānas looks like annihilation actually is not: Instead, it is simply the ending of suffering and the attainment of an indescribable destination, beyond location, that brings unwavering bliss.

Within these overall arcs, many of the individual udānas play off of one another in a dialog on recurring themes. For instance, [3:2](#), [3:3](#), and [3:4](#) all comment on how the ideal monk's mind is like rock, a point illustrated in the narrative to [4:4](#), in which Ven. Sāriputta's mind is shown to be even stronger than rock. The proper attitude of the alms-going monk is the focus of [1:5](#), [3:7](#), and [3:8](#), and this in turn highlights a recurring narrative motif: Many of the Buddha's exclamations are inspired by observations on lay life that he or the monks make while going on alms. This shows that alms-going was not only a means of physical support for the monks, but also an opportunity for them to reflect on the Dhamma.

Other recurring themes include the jealousy of other sectarians over the support given to the Buddha and his disciples ([2:4](#), [4:8](#)), and the

difference between the way in which pain is handled by unawakened people on the one hand ([2:6](#)) and by the Buddha and his disciples on the other ([2:7](#), [3:1](#), [4:4](#), [8:5](#)). There are also three udānas on the misery of having children ([2:6-8](#)) and three on the theme of not harming others, in which—with no little irony—the Buddha teaches King Pasenadi the same message in [5:1](#) that he teaches two groups of boys tormenting animals in [2:3](#) and [5:4](#).

There is also a recurring pattern of imagery, as when the clearing of the well water in [7:9](#) foreshadows the clearing of the river in [8:5](#). And, as we have noted above, the most prominent recurring theme concerns the difference between the death of those who haven't gained awakening and the death of those who have. All of these elements give an overall unity to the collection.

This sense of unity is augmented by the fact that the collection has a dominant aesthetic savor (*rasa*). Ancient Indian aesthetic treatises focused a great deal of attention to the theory of savor, to the point where "savor" became the central technical term in Indian aesthetics. Critics wrote volumes on how savor gave unity to a work of art and on the techniques for best conveying it. The basic theory was this: Artistic composition expressed states of emotion or states of mind called "*vibhāva*" or "*bhāva*." According to the earliest treatises, which were apparently known in the Buddha's time, there are eight basic emotions: love, humor, grief, anger, energy, fear, disgust, and astonishment. The reader or listener exposed to the presentation of these emotion did not participate in them directly; instead, he/she savored them as an aesthetic experience at one remove from the emotion. Thus, the savor of grief is not grief but compassion. The savor of energy is not energy itself but admiration for heroism. The savor of love is not love but an experience of sensitivity. The savor of astonishment is a sense of the astounding. The proof of the indirectness of the aesthetic experience was that some of the basic emotions were decidedly unpleasant, while the savor of the emotion was to be enjoyed.

Although a work of art might depict many emotions, and thus—like a good meal—offer many savors for the reader/listener to taste, one savor was supposed to dominate. I have noted elsewhere that the dominant

savor of the Dhammapada is the heroic. In the Udāna, the dominant savor is the astounding (*abbhūta*), and it is conveyed on many levels. On the most obvious level are the many events that the narrative itself describes as amazing and astounding. These range from the perfectly natural—such as the amazing stubbornness of the monk in [5:5](#)—to the more singular—the Buddha’s ability to see through the disguised ascetics in [6:2](#), the abrupt end of the verbal abuse of the monks in [4:8](#), and amazing and astounding qualities of the Dhamma & Vinaya described in [5:5](#)—to the outright supernatural—such as the most improbable event in the entire collection: Suppavāsā’s unnaturally long pregnancy and labor issuing in a healthy child just as the Buddha says, “May Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter be well & free from disease. And may she deliver a son free from disease.” ([2:8](#)) Other supernatural events include the Buddha’s taking Nanda to the heaven of the Thirty-three in [3:2](#), his crossing the river in [8:6](#), the clearing of the well in [7:9](#), the clearing of the river in [8:5](#), Ven. Dabba Mallaputta’s final display of his powers in [8:9](#), and many others.

Before proceeding to the other levels on which the astounding savor is conveyed in the Udāna, it’s necessary to point out that—in line with the theory of savor just mentioned—the collection conveys subsidiary savors as well, both to augment the astounding and to counteract its excesses. The primary augmenting savor is the heroic, the foremost example being the Buddha’s behavior in [8:5](#) after his final illness: Not only does he continue walking to Kusinārā despite his weakness and pain, but he also has the compassion to make sure that Cunda, the donor of his final meal, is never made to feel regret for having given the food that brought on his final illness. Other examples of heroism in the collection include Ven. Saṅgāmaji’s firm response to his previous wife’s use of his son as bait in [1:8](#), the endurance of the unnamed monk in the face of pain in [3:1](#), and Ven. Sāriputta’s ability to withstand the yakkhā’s blow in [4:4](#).

The primary leavening savor in the Udāna is humor. This is to counteract the tendency of the astounding savor, if over-emphasized, to become unbelievable, and thus ridiculous in the eyes of the reader. To counter this reaction, the narrators add a dash of humor when relating the most astonishing events to show that, no, they have not lost their

sense of reality. For instance, after treating the story of Suppavāsā's pregnancy, the compilers add the humor of the discussion between Ven. Moggallāna and his supporter, along with the humor of the final scene, in which Suppavāsā, thrilled over her son, states that she would be willing to go through the same misery seven times more. Also there is the humor in the story of Ven. Nanda, as his fellow monks, after hearing of his deal with the Buddha, treat him sardonically like a man who has sold himself for a price.

Other examples of humor in the collection include Ven. Ānanda's obtuseness in [3:3](#) and [5:5](#), Ven. Sāriputta's "slight headache" in [4:4](#), the reflections of the bull elephant in [4:5](#), Queen Mallikā's frank rebuff of King Pasenadi's advances in [5:1](#), the famous story of the blind men and the elephant in [6:4](#), and Ven. Sāriputta's teaching Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf, not knowing that Ven. Bhaddiya has already attained arahantship, in [7:2](#). All of these touches of humor—and there are others—help to establish a sense of rapport between the narrators and the reader, thus making the blatantly astounding events in the collection, if not more believable, at least more palatable.

There is one savor, however, that is studiously avoided throughout the collection, and that is the horrific, the savor associated with disgust. On two occasions when the story risks getting into disgusting details, the narrative avoids direct language. The first instance is in the story of Sundarī, the lady wanderer killed by her fellow wanderers in [4:8](#). When they dig up her body, the narrative simply refers to their digging up "what they had buried." The second instance is in the story of the Buddha's final illness in [8:5](#). When he develops dysentery, the illness is not mentioned by name. Instead, it is a "severe illness with blood." In this way, the horrific savor is carefully avoided so as not to spoil the astounding.

In addition to cultivating the astounding savor by narrating astounding events, the Udāna also conveys it in more subtle ways. To begin with, there is what may be called the cast of characters. In AN 1, the Buddha lists his foremost disciples—male and female, ordained and lay—citing the area(s) in which each is pre-eminent. Of these, 22 of his 40 foremost monk disciples and three of his ten foremost lay female

disciples appear in the Udāna (see [Appendix Four](#)). In five udānas we actually get to see the events—or examples of the events—that led the Buddha to single these individuals out for praise: Ven. Mahā Kassapa’s practice of strictness in [1:6](#) and [3:7](#); Bāhiya’s quick awakening in [1:10](#); Ven. Moggallana’s psychic acuity in [4:4](#); Ven. Soṇa’s fine recitation in [5:6](#); and Suppavāsā’s gift of meals in [2:8](#). In other cases, the Buddha gives his prominent disciples more general praise; and in others, we simply get to see these disciples in action.

As we noted above, the most frequent instigation for the Buddha’s exclamations is in celebration of his disciples’ attainments. So it is only fitting that many of his foremost disciples appear in the collection, lending a sense of heightened occasion to the narrated events. But what adds a more genuine touch of the astounding to the savor of the text is the way in which their stories are handled. This is apparent in the treatment both of the monks and of the female lay disciples.

It would have been all too easy for the compilers of the Udāna simply to bask in the reflected glory of the pre-eminent monks as a way of advertising their own worth as a field of merit. And, admittedly, an air of competitiveness with rival sectarians pervades the collection, with the support and respect accorded to the Saṅgha frequently contrasted with the lack of support accorded to other sects. There is also the strong contrast between the noble and heroic behavior of the pre-eminent monks and the way in which other sectarians are made to look petty ([2:4](#)), ridiculous ([6:4](#)), ignorant ([6:10](#)), and vile ([4:8](#)).

However, that’s not all there is to the treatment, for not all the monks are portrayed in a flattering light. In fact, there are more udānas focused on the misbehavior of monks than there are on the misbehavior of rival sectarians. Thus the simple fact that a monk is a member of the Saṅgha does not mean that he is automatically worthy of admiration. The text sets an extremely high standard for what makes a person a true monk. In this way it portrays an ideal toward which the monks should strive, at the same time informing the laity of how to judge who is truly worthy of their respect.

A similar impressive maturity is found in the treatment of the stories of Lady Visākhā and Suppavāsā, both of whom the Buddha cited for their

pre-eminence in giving material support to the Saṅgha. It would have been easy for the compilers to focus simply on their generosity—or the pleasant rewards of their generosity—as a way of encouraging the generosity of others. Had they done so, it would have confirmed the common stereotype that monks see women only in the role of donors. But that’s not how the text treats these women at all. Both are portrayed as suffering—from the pains (2:8) and sorrows (8:8) of family life, and from disappointment in business dealings (2:9)—a fair warning that generosity to the Saṅgha is not always quickly rewarded. And the Buddha’s attitude toward both is admirable. Instead of sweet-talking them into even more generosity or humoring their weaknesses, he chides them for their heedlessness: somewhat gently in Lady Visākhā’s case; startlingly abrupt in Suppavāsā’s. This shows that his main concern was with their true welfare, and in particular with showing them that they shouldn’t fall prey to society’s demand that they look for their primary happiness in bearing and raising children.

In this way the Udāna’s cast of characters lends the savor of the astounding to the collection not only in the eminence of the individuals, but also in the mature way in which their stories are treated.

A touch of the astounding flavors the collection’s treatment not only of the Saṅgha but also of the Dhamma. Although a few specific Dhamma teachings are explained (as in 4:1, 6:2, and 8:6), most of the standard teachings, such as the four noble truths or the five aggregates, are not even mentioned. The few standard lists that *are* mentioned are complex and presented as unexplained lists. The collection opens (1:1-3) with an unadorned statement of what the Buddha called his deepest and most complex teaching—dependent co-arising—completely devoid of preparation or explanation. The seven lists in the wings to awakening are mentioned, again without explanation, in 5:5, where they are described simply as amazing and astounding. The complexity of kamma (action) is touched on in 4:3, 5:2, and 5:3, but never really clarified. And two particularly abstruse topics of meditation are mentioned—again without explanation—in 7:7 and 7:8. The only detailed meditation instructions given in the collection are those the Buddha teaches to Bāhiya in 1:10, but from the context these are clearly appropriate only for a person on

the verge of awakening. There is no explanation of how an aspiring meditator should practice to attain that advanced level. All of this gives the impression that the compilers of the Udāna were interested less in clarifying the techniques of Dhamma practice than in conveying a sense of how astounding and marvelous they are.

The text also makes use of poetic figures (*alaṅkāra*) to intensify the astounding savor. I have commented on some of the more technical figures in the notes to individual udānas. Here I would like to focus on two of the most prominent figures in the collection as a whole: paradox and contrast.

Paradox augments the astounding savor by surprising the reader. Some of the paradoxes in the Udāna deal in imagery, such as the observations that people are not cleaned by water ([1:9](#)) and that rain soddens what is concealed, but not what is left open ([5:5](#)). Other paradoxes deal on the level of ideas, such as the assertion that self-love is the basis of compassion ([5:1](#), [5:4](#)), or that release from becoming is achieved neither through becoming nor non-becoming ([3:10](#)). The deepest use of paradox, however, deals with the fact that unbinding, the goal of the practice, lies beyond the dichotomies inherent in human thought and language. Thus [8:10](#), while stating that the destination of the arahant after death cannot be described, characterizes it as unwavering bliss. This, in turn, seems to contradict [1:10](#), which describes it as freedom from bliss and pain. The verses in [6:3](#) and [8:2](#) suggest that unbinding is more like a nothing, whereas [8:1](#) suggests that it is a something. The exclamation in [8:1](#) also states that unbinding cannot be described either as a staying or a moving. The exclamation in [8:4](#) asserts that it doesn't fall into the categories of here, there, or between the two, echoing a point from the Buddha's instructions in [1:10](#). All of these paradoxes serve notice that ultimate freedom is something that defies even the most basic categories of thought.

There is also an element of paradox in the way the Udāna reverses the conventional values of domestic society. Because the brahmins of the time were vociferously advancing the idea that they were superior to others because of their birth—the ancient Indian form of racism—there's a certain amount of shock value in the fact that the collection opens with a

series of exclamations that redefine how a person becomes a brahman—not through birth, but through the cultivation of the mind ([1:4-6](#), [1:9](#)). Similarly, there is an implicit reversal of conventional domestic ideas of happiness as the collection repeatedly makes the point that loved ones, sensuality, power, and responsibilities actually bring misery, whereas the highest bliss lies in being unpossessive to the point of abandoning the conceit, “I am” ([2:1](#), [4:1](#), [6:6](#), [7:1](#)). Perhaps the most shocking rejection of domestic values is in [1:8](#), where the Buddha praises Ven. Saṅgāmaḥ for not even looking at his little son.

Because the paradoxes concerning unbinding might seem nonsensical on the surface, and because the frequent rejection of domestic values goes against the grain, the collection makes heavy use of contrast to emphasize the point that things are not always what they seem. This contrast is most prominent in the story of the false ascetics in [6:2](#), in the famous story of the blind men and the elephant in [6:4](#), and in the contrast between Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf’s physical appearance and the description of his mind as a beautiful chariot in [7:5](#). However, the contrast between appearance and reality plays a role in many other udānas as well, such as [2:7](#), [2:8](#), [2:10](#), [3:2](#), [3:6](#), [3:7](#), [4:1](#), [4:8](#), [5:3](#), [5:5](#), [7:1](#), [7:2](#), [7:10](#), [8:5](#), and [8:7](#). These contrasts help to make concrete the point that paradoxical teachings should not be rejected because of surface contradictions, for they may speak of a level of experience that is not below logic but above and beyond it.

The contrasts in the Udāna occur not only within individual udānas but also between them. This higher level of contrast occurs frequently throughout the text, but most strikingly in chapters two and eight. In chapter two—which is devoted to the topic of pleasure and bliss—five of the stories, [2:5-9](#), focus on the actual miseries inherent in the supposed joys of lay life: having children and engaging in business affairs. These are then sharply contrasted with the story of Ven. Bhaddiya in [2:10](#), who rejoices in the joys of living at the root of a tree and his release from the worries of kingship.

There’s a similar strong contrast in chapter eight. The story of Ven. Nāgasamāla in [8:7](#), suffering for not following the Buddha’s choice of which path to take—a story that is surely meant to have symbolic

overtone—contrast strongly with the preceding udāna, in which the monks who follow the Buddha are carried by his psychic power effortlessly over the flooding river. Similarly, the story of Lady Visākhā, mourning the death of her grandchild in [8:8](#), contrasts with the following udāna, in which Ven. Dabba Mallaputta voluntarily heads for death with a final display of *his* psychic powers. In this way, the astounding savor of these psychic displays is augmented by contrasting them so directly with ordinary mundane human failings.

In fact, the formal nature of the udāna genre, focused on the Buddha's exclamations, seems designed to emphasize this element of contrast. As we have seen, when the Buddha exclaims, it is usually from one of two strongly contrasting emotions: *saṃvega* and *pasāda*. Because of the strong contrast between these two emotions, the act of collecting stories around these exclamations naturally heightens the savor of the astounding by placing them in sharp contrast with one another.

And there are other ways in which the formal structure of the Udāna helps to convey the savor of the astounding. For example, in [8:5](#) the story of the Buddha's final illness is told in a combination of prose and epic-like verse, a form called the *campū*, which heightens the sense of the importance of the events. Because, chronologically, this is the last story in the collection, leading up to the Buddha's final exclamation, this heightened style adds to the solemnity of the narrative.

Then there is the basic format of each udāna text. As we have noted, each narrative ends with the formula (or a close variation of it): "*Then, on realizing the significance/meaning (attha) of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed.*" This formula assigns the Buddha's exclamations to two categories of poetry explained in a discourse elsewhere in the Pali Canon (AN 4:231–4:230 in the Pali Text Society (PTS) version):

"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 discourse doesn't explain these four, but the Commentary notes 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 and the extemporaneous poet require the most skill, and to combine these two skills is a sign of genuine accomplishment: a level of accomplishment that the udāna formula assigns directly to the Buddha. In calling his statements “exclamations,” the formula asserts that his remarks were extemporaneous; in stating that they were inspired by his understanding of the significance/meaning of the event, the formula categorizes him as a meaning-poet. And he is able to find meaning not only in extraordinary events, but also in some of the most ordinary imaginable: boys hitting a snake with a stick ([2:3](#)), men fighting over a woman ([6:8](#)), women wanting more children and grandchildren ([2:8](#), [8:8](#)). The Buddha’s ability to combine these two skills in this way, grasping the meaning and expressing it memorably on the spur of the moment, is—from a strictly literary point of view—one of the most astounding aspects of the udāna texts.

This, in turn, relates to one of the most basic features of the udāna genre: the fact that the Buddha plays a double role in all of these pieces, both as a character *in* the stories and as the author of the comments *on* the stories. The way the compilers handle the stories—both in the choice and organization of events, and in their use of literary technique to foster the astounding savor—capitalizes on this double role in two ways.

The first, of course, is to help clarify the Buddha’s exclamations, showing what led him to exclaim in the way he did. The second is to give his exclamations more credence and weight. As a character in the stories, he is shown to be capable and upright: a person of reliable character who has mastered an amazing range of skills and who has trained others to become skilled as well, capable of finding an amazingly satisfying happiness. Thus when he states values that go against common social norms, he is not to be dismissed as someone who has failed to live up to social standards. He has seen the limitations of those standards by developing an integrity and a range of skills that go beyond them.

Similarly, as a partial author of the text, he is shown to be extremely capable in expressing what he has to say. Thus, when he states that

unbinding lies beyond the structures of language, it's not because he is deficient in his mastery of language. It's because he knows, through a high level of mastery, the limits of precisely how far language can go.

In this way, the udāna genre helps give extra meaning to the Buddha's exclamations in two senses of the term: "meaning" in the sense of helping to explain what the words signify, and "meaning" in the sense of having value for the reader. Of course, the fact that the compilers of the Udāna were skilled with words does not prove that the values they promote actually do lead to an unfettered freedom beyond the values of words and social norms. The ultimate test of the meaning of the udānas for you will lie in your own practice: your willingness to learn the techniques of the practice from other parts of the Canon and from reliable members of the Saṅgha, and to apply them in your thoughts, words, and deeds. But my hope is that the act of reading the Udāna will help convince you that there is value in giving the Buddha's teachings a fair try.

ON READING THE UDĀNA

The Udāna's focus on communicating values to revolutionize the heart and mind of the reader is precisely where it runs up against modern and postmodern attitudes toward finding meaning in a text. Because these attitudes are so entrenched in our culture, and because they are cited so often not only in scholarly circles but also among Buddhist practitioners, it's worth asking how useful they are when reading texts—like the Pali Canon in general, and the Udāna in particular—that offer guidance on how to attain total freedom. Because both modern and postmodern attitudes toward reading claim to be aiming at freedom for the reader, we need to look carefully at how the types of freedom they offer measure up against the freedom taught in the Pali Canon, to see whether—if you adopt them—they enhance or interfere with the benefits that can come from the act of reading these records of the Buddha's words.

Modern ways of reading approach pre-modern texts by asking questions first about the texts' historical reliability. In the case of the Udāna, these would cover whether udānas really were memorized during the Buddha's lifetime and, if so, how they were related to the Udāna we

have at present. Were his words memorized accurately? Are the stories associated with his words accurate accounts? Could they actually have happened?

Questions of this sort can be fruitfully explored in one of two ways: by finding reliable evidence outside of a particular text against which to measure its reliability, or by searching for inconsistencies or improbabilities within the text itself. What makes this approach “modern” is that it subjects the text to the standards of materialistic empiricism established in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and further developed in the historical method of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its purpose is to free us in the present from the irrational and ignorant superstitions of the pre-modern world.

This approach is useful when applied to texts whose historical context is well documented from other sources, and it has succeeded in exposing the weak and arbitrary foundations for many a pre-modern system of thought. But it’s relatively fruitless when applied to the Udāna. To begin with, there are no outside contemporary accounts against which the history of the Pali Canon can be measured. As for internal inconsistencies, those that occur in the various recensions of the Udāna and parallel passages elsewhere in the Canon are all so minor that they do not affect the basic meaning of the text.

The text does, however, contain many elements that, from a modern materialist point of view, are highly improbable. A good number of the stories revolve around meditative powers, some of them quite extravagant, and a strictly modern reading would reject them out of hand. Many of the values expressed in the Buddha’s exclamations fly in the face of a materialist view of life and death. To strip the text of these elements might satisfy a modern reader, but would leave very little behind.

And why should the narrow views of modern materialism—the views of those with little expertise in meditation—have the final word on what can and cannot be achieved through the training of the mind? Even the physical sciences of recent times are filled with discoveries about physical and chemical events that are deeply counter-intuitive; the study of non-linear systems shows that the complex interaction of even

physical laws can lead to highly unlikely singularities. And that's just in the physical sciences. There's even more that we still don't know about the complex workings of the mind. If we allow ourselves to be tyrannized by the likely—and if we define “likely” in line with the views of those who lack meditative prowess—we close our minds to the possibility of the singular. There are many useful things we will never be open to learn.

This would not be a problem if the modern approach could provide a freedom equal to or greater than the freedom to which the Udāna points. You could simply ignore the Udāna and other texts in the Pali Canon, and still gain liberation. But the problem is that the modern approach leaves us trapped in our historically conditioned assumptions about what seems reasonable and likely.

The Romantics recognized this trap and rebelled against it, and postmodern theory continues this rebellion. Yet despite their quest for freedom, these two approaches, too, work against allowing the values of a text like the Udāna to have a truly revolutionary effect on the heart and mind. This is because each, in its own way, places the reader's pre-existing values over and above any values that might be absorbed from a text.

Their rationales for doing so, however, are quite different. The Romantics—and the American Transcendentalists who followed them—posited a common source of inspiration within the deepest part of each person. According to them, authors and readers throughout time have had access within to the same source of inspiration. To understand which meanings within an ancient text might have value in our day and age, we need only check the text against the original source deep in our own minds. Wherever the author's expression differs from this inner sense of inspiration, it can simply be rejected as no longer relevant. Whatever resonates with this inner sense of inspiration can be accepted as trustworthy and true.

This approach, however, leaves no room for the possibility that a person like the Buddha could have realized truths about experience that are not already available to the reader. In other words—contrary to a basic principle of the Buddha's teaching—there was nothing special or singular

about the Buddha's awakening. The only teachings of any value derived from that awakening are those that agree with what the reader already feels deep down inside to be true. There is nothing really new to be learned from the Udāna or from any Buddhist text. The only reason to read them is to confirm what we already know.

The postmodern approach leads to a similar conclusion but via a different route, for it denies the existence of any common inner source of meaning. Instead, it maintains that authors and readers can know nothing but the arbitrary systems of values to which they have been exposed at their point in history—systems that are inherently suspect because they are created and propagated by social structures of power. (This postmodern theory is called poststructuralism because it arose in reaction to structuralism, the theory that the structures of human thought are innate to the human mind.) Thus, from this point of view, a fully reliable source of meaning is nowhere to be found. As a result, postmodern ways of reading a text—although they start with the Romantic realization that modern ways of reading can't produce the freedom they promise—tend to be even less willing than the modern or Romantic approach to be changed by the values expressed in any text.

This attitude is most often based on an observation from poststructuralist theory: that a text—regardless of the conscious intentions of the author—may be the product of a structure of meanings and values inherent in language that is oppressive to the reader, no matter how rational or objective it may seem. Freedom from that oppression can be maintained only by digging up and exposing those structures, and by reading the text in a way that is resistant to those values. From this observation comes the argument that the most liberating way to read a text is to approach it with a sense of suspicion and to create one's own meanings—and sometimes one's own personal language—out of it, and to ignore whatever the author(s) had in mind. The fact that this approach is applied even to modern texts is what makes it postmodern. And, just as the modern approach has exposed the arbitrary foundations of oppressive patterns of thought in pre-modern texts and institutions, the postmodern approach has done the same for

many seemingly rational but oppressive patterns in texts and institutions from the modern period.

It can, however, fall into the trap of the poststructuralist paradox: that the reader's own values and reading of a text may be shaped unconsciously by structures that are equally—if not more—oppressive than the unconscious values expressed in the text. Thus a suspicious reading of a text may often leave the reader more entrenched in his/her own preexisting state of oppression than before. And, in fact, poststructuralist theory holds little hope that a human being could ever gain freedom from value structures. Meanings, it insists, point only to other systems of meanings, which in turn point to other systems of meanings, *ad infinitum*, never arriving at any experience in-and-of-itself. Thus the quest for liberation is an always on-going process doomed never fully to succeed.

Never. This is where poststructuralist values depart most radically from the Dhamma. Although there is a recent fashion to apply poststructuralist theory to the act of reading and interpreting the Pali Canon, it's hard to imagine a system of values more at odds with what the Buddha, as portrayed in the Canon, had to say: that total freedom *is* possible, that strategies of values and practice can be used to reach it—at which point they are put aside—and that the teachings contained in the Canon are among those strategies. Anyone who is content to regard total freedom as an impossibility and would prefer to hold to a postmodern identity is free to maintain a poststructuralist attitude to the Canon. But if you'd like to test to see if the Buddha was right, you have to bring a different attitude and set of assumptions to the act of reading the Canon's message.

Fortunately, the Pali Canon is not a text like the Bible, demanding total, unquestioning acceptance. It assumes the authority, not of your creator who has the right to tell you what and what not to believe, but of an expert, someone who has found the way to total freedom and offers to show how you can find that freedom yourself.

The primary working hypothesis when testing this expert's teaching is that total freedom is possible. Thus, contrary to poststructuralist theory, you have to assume that some experiences are not embedded in

structures of meaning created by human minds. This is not that difficult an assumption to make. After all, there's physical pain. You don't need to run pain through an interpretive structure in order to experience it. You first encountered it well before you knew anything of signs or words. However, the Buddha noted that there are two primary responses to pain—bewilderment and a search for how to put an end to it (AN 6:63)—and from these responses we tend to develop systems of values and meanings that, because they are ignorant, lead only to more mental suffering.

The second working hypothesis in testing the Buddha's recommendations for ending this suffering is this: that the basic pattern underlying any attachment to these oppressive systems of values and meanings is constant regardless of culture. In other words, the way we cling to these meanings is the same regardless of their content or our culture. Otherwise, a path taught to alleviate suffering in India more than 2,500 years ago would be irrelevant to our problem of suffering now. Again, the commonality of suffering is not a difficult assumption to make, for the Buddha's basic image of how and why we suffer is the act of feeding, both physically and mentally. This is something common to all beings, and not just human beings living in social structures. We all suffer from the need to feed, regardless of how the details of this need are shaped by culture.

From these two assumptions, we can see precisely what the Buddha asks us to test: his strategy of feeding the mind in new ways that give it the strength to reach a dimension where it no longer needs to feed. Part of this strategy is to adopt skillful structures of value and meaning—called appropriate attention and right view—that focus on the problem of suffering in a way that dismantles attachment to unskillful structures and, ultimately, even to themselves. This way they dismantle all attachment (AN 10:93), leading to a different type of experience beyond the need to feed, and beyond interpretation: unbinding, total freedom from any and all conditions.

This claim means that the texts derive their meaning and value from how helpful they are in accomplishing this freedom. Because they themselves cannot provide this liberation for you, but only point out the

techniques and values that can lead there, the test of their validity depends on your actually adopting their teachings in your actions and then gauging the results. And because the goal to which they point, freedom from suffering, is something you can potentially touch directly, the guarantee of their validity lies ultimately in your own honest experience.

At the same time, however, the texts do set some conditions on what counts as a valid test. Even though you're not asked to accept without question whatever the Pali texts say, if you're interested in putting an end to suffering, you have to develop within yourself the qualities that will make you a competent judge of their message.

This will require energy, dedication, and time. And this, in turn, requires a special attitude toward reading the discourses, approaching them with openness and respect. In other words, you experiment to see where you are taken by the working hypothesis that the monks who assembled them knew something of value and were basically honest in their desire to transmit it to later generations, you included. The texts recognize that there can be errors of transmission (DN 16), so respect does not mean accepting without question whatever the texts say. But it does mean giving them the benefit of the doubt until you can meet the conditions of a valid test and determine what does and doesn't actually work in leading to true freedom.

A large part of the "something of value" transmitted in the Canon consists of specific tactics and techniques for training the mind, but it also consists of more general values and principles. This, as we have noted, is one of the Udāna's functions: to present these values in an appealing and "savorful" way. Yet the Canon treats even values and principles as actions—attitudes that inform a larger strategy of practice—which means that they, too, can be tested. Thus, as with all the texts in the Canon, the act of reading the Udāna is not meant as an end in and of itself, as an opportunity to enjoy its astonishing and humorous savor. Instead, it's meant as a challenge for you to test whether the values it expresses, when adopted as working hypotheses, really do lead to the singular and ultimate savor of the Dhamma ([5:5](#)): the savor of release.

1 : AWAKENING

1:1 Awakening (1) (Bodhi Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, in the first watch of the night, he gave close attention to dependent co-arising in forward order,¹ thus:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

In other words:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.²

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.³

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

As phenomena grow clear
to the brahman–ardent, in jhāna–
his doubts all vanish
when he discerns
a phenomenon with its cause.

NOTES

1. In the parallel passage at Mv.I.1.2, the Buddha gives attention to dependent co-arising in both forward and reverse order.

2. This hybrid word–clinging/sustenance–is a translation of the Pali term *upādāna*. *Upādāna* has a hybrid meaning because it is used to cover two sides of a physical process metaphorically applied to the mind: the act of clinging whereby a fire takes sustenance from a piece of fuel, together with the sustenance offered by the fuel. On the level of the mind, *upādāna* denotes both the act of clinging and the object clung to, which together give sustenance to the process of becoming and its attendant factors leading to suffering and stress. For more on this image and its implications for the practice, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*.

3. Notice that dependent co-arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is expressed in terms of processes–of events and actions–without reference to a framework containing those processes. In other words, it doesn't mention the existence or non-existence of agents doing the actions, or of a framework in time and space in which these processes happen. Thus it makes possible a way of understanding the causes of suffering and stress without reference to the existence or non-existence of an "I" or an "other" responsible for those events. Instead, the events are viewed simply as events in the context of the process—a way of viewing that makes it possible to abandon clinging for any of these events, so as to bring suffering to an end. Even the idea of an "I" or an "other" is seen simply as part of the process (under the factors of fabrication and the sub-factor of attention under "name" in name-and-form). This is what makes possible the abandoning of any attachment to the conceit "I am," as mentioned in [Ud 2:1](#), [4:1](#), [6:6](#), and [7:1](#). In this way, the treatment of dependent co-arising in the first three udānas, while terse, actually sets the stage for

understanding some of the more paradoxical teachings that appear later in the collection.

For a discussion of dependent co-arising in general, see *The Shape of Suffering*. For further discussion of its role in framing and abandoning thoughts of “I am,” see *Skill in Questions*, chapters 3 and 8.

1:2 Awakening (2) (Bodhi Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, in the second watch of the night, he gave close attention to dependent co-arising in reverse order,¹ thus:

When this isn’t, that isn’t.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

In other words:

From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness.

From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.

From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.

From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact.

From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling.

From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving.

From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance.

From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming.

From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth.

From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

As phenomena grow clear
to the brahman-ardent, in jhāna-
his doubts all vanish
when he penetrates the ending
of requisite conditions.

NOTE

1. In the parallel passage at Mv.I.1.4, the Buddha gives attention to dependent co-arising in both forward and reverse order.

1:3 Awakening (3) (Bodhi Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, in the third watch of the night, he gave close attention to dependent co-arising in forward and reverse order, thus:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

When this isn't, that isn't.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

In other words:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

Now from the remainderless fading and cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/ sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

As phenomena grow clear
to the brahman—ardent, in jhāna—
he stands,
 routing Māra's army,
as the sun,

illuminating the sky.¹

NOTE

1. This verse is an example of a “lamp”—a poetic figure in which one word, such as an adjective or a verb, functions in two or more different clauses or sentences. The name of the figure comes from the image of the different clauses or sentences “radiating” from the one word. In this case the lamp-word is “stands.” For other examples of lamps, see [Ud 5:3](#) and [Ud 8:9](#).

1:4 Overbearing (Huhuṅka Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. At the end of seven days, he emerged from that concentration.

Then a certain overbearing brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “To what extent, Master Gotama, is one a brahman? And which are the qualities that make one a brahman?”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Any brahman
who has banished evil qualities,¹
—not overbearing,
not stained,
his mind controlled—
gone to the end of wisdom,²
the holy life completed:³
Rightly would that brahman
speak the holy teaching.

He has no swelling of pride⁴
anywhere in the world.

NOTES

1. This line contains a wordplay on the words *brāhmaṇa* and *bāhita* (banished)—the same wordplay used in Dhp 388 and [Ud 1:5](#).
2. This line plays with the term *vedanta*, which can mean “end of wisdom,” “end of the Vedas,” or “supplement to the Vedas.” In the latter two cases, it would be a term referring to a brahman-by-birth who has studied all the Vedas and their supplements, but the Buddha is obviously giving this term a different meaning here.
3. Here and two lines down, the word “holy” translates *brahma*.
4. See Sn 4:10 and Sn 4:14.

1:5 Brahmins (*Brāhmaṇa Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jetā’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta, Ven. Mahā Moggalāna, Ven. Mahā Kassapa, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, Ven. Mahā Kappina, Ven. Mahā Cunda, Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Revata, and Ven. Nanda¹ went to the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw them coming from afar and, on seeing them, addressed the monks, “Monks, those are brahmins who are coming. Monks, those are brahmins who are coming.”

When this was said, a certain monk who was a brahman by birth said to the Blessed One, “To what extent, lord, is one a brahman? And which are the qualities that make one a brahman?”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Having banished evil qualities,²
those who go about ever mindful,
awakened, their fetters ended:

They, in the world,

are truly brahmans.

NOTES

1. This translation follows the Thai and Burmese versions of this passage. The Sri Lankan version replaces Ven. Nanda in this list with Ven. Ānanda; the PTS version replaces him with Ven. Devadatta and Ven. Ānanda. These latter two readings would appear to be mistaken, as the Buddha in this sutta defines “brahman” as one whose fetters are ended—i.e., an arahant—whereas Ven. Ānanda became an arahant only after the Buddha’s passing; Devadatta, after having caused a split in the Saṅgha toward the end of the Buddha’s life, fell into hell.

2. This line contains a wordplay on the words *brāhmaṇa* and *bāhita* (banished)—the same wordplay used in Dh 388 and [Ud 1:4](#).

1:6 Mahā Kassapa (Kassapa Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. And on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa was staying at the Pippali Cave, afflicted, in pain, & seriously ill. Then, at a later time, he recovered from his illness. When he had recovered from the illness, the thought occurred to him: “What if I were to go into Rājagaha for alms?”

Now on that occasion 500 devatās were in a state of eagerness for the chance to give alms to Ven. Mahā Kassapa. But Ven. Mahā Kassapa, turning down those 500 devatās, early in the morning adjusted his under robe¹ and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Rājagaha for alms along the streets of the poor, the streets of the indigent, the streets of the weavers. The Blessed One saw that Ven. Mahā Kassapa had gone into Rājagaha for alms along the streets of the poor, the streets of the indigent, the streets of the weavers.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Supporting no others,

unknown,²
tamed, established
in what is essential,
effluents ended,
anger disgorged:
 He's what I call
 a brahman.

NOTES

1. According to the protocols given in Cv.VIII, a monk leaving a monastery in the wilderness with the purpose of going for alms would wear just his under robe, while carrying his upper and outer robes folded over his shoulder or upper back. On approaching an inhabited area he would stop and make sure that his under robe was neatly arranged: covering the area from above his navel to below his knees, and hanging down evenly in front and behind. Then he would put on his upper and outer robe, arranged so that the upper robe was a lining for the outer robe. If he was wearing sandals, he would take them off and place them in a small cloth bag. Only then would he enter the inhabited area for alms.

2. There is an alliterative play of words here on *anañña* (no others) and *aññāta* (unknown).

1:7 Aja (*Aja Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Pāva at the Ajakalāpaka [Herd-of-Goats] shrine, the dwelling of the Ajakalāpaka spirit. And on that occasion, in the pitch-black darkness of the night, the Blessed One was sitting in the open air, and the rain was falling in scattered drops.

Then the Ajakalāpaka spirit—wanting to cause fear, terror, & horripilation in the Blessed One—went to him and, on arrival, not far from him, three times made a commotion & pandemonium:
“Commotion & pandemonium! Commotion & pandemonium!
Commotion & pandemonium!—That’s a goblin for you, contemplative!”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

When,
with regard to his own qualities,¹
a brahman is one
who has gone beyond,
he transcends this goblin
and his pandemonium.

NOTE

1. *Dhammas*. This is apparently a reference to skillful and unskillful mental qualities—which would mean that this sutta sides with the passages in the Canon categorizing unbinding not as a dhamma, but as the transcending of all dhammas. (The suttas in general are inconsistent on this point. Iti 90, among others, states clearly that unbinding counts as a dhamma. AN 10:58, on the other hand, calls unbinding the ending of all dhammas. Sn 5:6 calls the attainment of the goal the transcending of all dhammas, just as Sn 4:6 and Sn 4:10 state that the arahant has transcended dispassion, said to be the highest dhamma. MN 22, in the famous simile of the raft, states that all dhammas are abandoned at the end of the path.)

1:8 Saṅgāmaji (Saṅgāmaji Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattḥī at Jetā's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Saṅgāmaji had arrived in Sāvattḥī to see the Blessed One. His former wife heard, "Master Saṅgāmaji, they say, has arrived in Sāvattḥī." Taking her small child, she went to Jetā's Grove. On that occasion Ven. Saṅgāmaji was sitting at the root of a tree for the day's abiding. His former wife went to him and, on arrival, said to him, "Look after me, contemplative—(a woman) with a little son." When this was said, Ven. Saṅgāmaji remained silent. A second time... A third time, his former wife said to him, "Look after me, contemplative—(a woman) with a little son." A third time, Ven. Saṅgāmaji remained silent.

Then his former wife, taking the baby and leaving him in front of Ven. Saṅgāmaji, went away, saying, “That’s your son, contemplative. Look after him.”

Then Ven. Saṅgāmaji neither looked at the child nor spoke to him. His wife, after going not far away, was looking back and saw Ven. Saṅgāmaji neither looking at the child nor speaking to him. On seeing this, the thought occurred to her, “The contemplative doesn’t even care about his son.” Returning from there and taking the child, she left.

The Blessed One—with his divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—saw Ven. Saṅgāmaji’s former wife misbehaving in that way.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

At her coming,
he didn’t delight;
at her leaving,
he didn’t grieve.

A victor in battle, freed from the tie:¹
He’s what I call
a brahman.

NOTE

1. This line is a double wordplay on Saṅgāmaji’s name. Literally, it means a victor in battle—a compound of *saṅgāma* (battle) and *-ji* (victor)—but the Buddha also extracts from the first member of the compound the word *saṅgā*, which means “from the tie.” Strictly speaking, *saṅgāma* and *saṅgā* are not related to each other. The ability to engage in wordplay using unrelated words like this was considered a sign of intelligence and wit.

See also: Dhp 345—346

1:9 Ascetics (*Jaṭila Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Gayā at Gayā Head. And on that occasion, many ascetics—on the cold

winter nights of the “Between-the-Eights,”¹ when the snow was falling in Gayā—jumped up in the water, jumped down in the water, did a jumping-up-&-down in the water, poured (water over themselves), and performed the fire sacrifice, (thinking,) “Through this there is purity.”

The Blessed One saw those many ascetics—on the cold winter nights of the “Between-the-Eights,” when the snow was falling in Gayā—jumping up in the water, jumping down in the water, doing a jumping-up-&-down in the water, pouring (water over themselves), and performing the fire sacrifice, (thinking,) “Through this there is purity.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Not by water is one clean,
though many people are bathing here.
Whoever has truth
& rectitude:
 He’s a clean one;
 *he, a brahman.*²

NOTES

1. The “Eights” are the waning half-moon days (each on the eighth day of the waning cycle) after three of the full moons in the cold season. These are the dates of brahmanical ceremonies for making merit for the dead. The period between the first and last of these dates—the “Between-the-Eights”—is regarded in northern India as the coldest part of the year. See AN 3:35.

2. The last half of this verse is identical with the last half of Dhp 393.

1:10 Bāhiya (Bāhiya Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was living in Suppāraka by the seashore. He was worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal

requisites for the sick. Then, when he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking appeared to his awareness: “Now, of those who in this world are arahants or have entered the path of arahantship, am I one?”

Then a devatā who had once been a blood relative of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth–compassionate, desiring his welfare, knowing with her own awareness the line of thinking that had arisen in his awareness—went to him and on arrival said to him, “You, Bāhiya, are neither an arahant nor have you entered the path of arahantship. You don’t even have the practice whereby you would become an arahant or enter the path of arahantship.”

“Then who, in this world with its devas, are arahants or have entered the path to arahantship?”

“Bāhiya, there is a city in the northern country named Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One—an arahant, rightly self-awakened—is living now. He truly is an arahant and teaches the Dhamma leading to arahantship.”

Then Bāhiya, deeply chastened by the devatā, left Suppāraka right then and, in the space of one night,¹ went all the way to where the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jetā’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍikā’s monastery. Now on that occasion, a large number of monks were doing walking meditation in the open air. He went to them and, on arrival, said, “Where, venerable sirs, is the Blessed One—the arahant, rightly self-awakened—now staying? We want to see that Blessed One—the arahant, rightly self-awakened.”

“The Blessed One has gone into town for alms.”

Then Bāhiya, hurriedly leaving Jetā’s Grove and entering Sāvattthī, saw the Blessed One going for alms in Sāvattthī—serene & inspiring serene confidence, calming, his senses at peace, his mind at peace, having attained the utmost tranquility & poise, tamed, guarded, his senses restrained, a Great One (*nāga*). Seeing him, he approached the Blessed One and, on reaching him, threw himself down, with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and said, “Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare & bliss.”

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him, "This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have entered the town for alms."

A second time, Bāhiya said to the Blessed One, "But it is hard to know for sure what dangers there may be for the Blessed One's life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare & bliss."

A second time, the Blessed One said to him, "This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have entered the town for alms."

A third time, Bāhiya said to the Blessed One, "But it is hard to know for sure what dangers there may be for the Blessed One's life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare & bliss."

"Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress."²

Through hearing this brief explanation of the Dhamma from the Blessed One, the mind of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth right then and there was released from effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance. Having exhorted Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth with this brief explanation of the Dhamma, the Blessed One left.

Now, not long after the Blessed One's departure, Bāhiya was attacked & killed by a cow with a young calf. Then the Blessed One, having gone for alms in Sāvattihī, after the meal, returning from his alms round with a large number of monks, saw that Bāhiya had died. On seeing him, he

said to the monks, “Take Bāhiya’s body, monks, and, placing it on a litter and carrying it away, cremate it and build him a memorial. Your companion in the holy life has died.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monks—placing Bāhiya’s body on a litter, carrying it away, cremating it, and building him a memorial—went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “Bāhiya’s body has been cremated, lord, and his memorial has been built. What is his destination? What is his future state?”

“Monks, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was wise. He practiced the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma and did not pester me with issues related to the Dhamma. Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth, monks, is totally unbound.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Where water, earth,
fire, & wind
have no footing:
There the stars don’t shine,
the sun isn’t visible.
There the moon doesn’t appear.
There darkness is not found.
And when a sage,
a brahman through sagacity,
has realized [this] for himself,
then from form & formless,
from bliss & pain,
he is freed.

NOTES

1. *Eka-ratti-parivāsenā*: This phrase can also mean, “taking one-night sojourns” (i.e., resting no more than one night in any one spot); or “with a one-night sojourn.” The Commentary prefers the meaning used in the translation, noting that the distance between Suppāraka and Sāvattḥī amounts to 120

leagues, or approximately 1,200 miles. In its version of Bāhiya's story, Bāhiya had no meditative attainments at all, and so the miraculous speed of his journey had to be attributed either to the power of the deva or the power of the Buddha. However, he may actually have had strong powers of concentration with some attendant psychic powers of his own.

2. For a discussion of these instructions, see the article, "Food for Awakening: The Role of Appropriate Attention."

2 : MUCCALINDA

2:1 Muccalinda (Muccalinda Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Muccalinda tree, newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release.

And on that occasion a great, out-of-season storm-cloud rose up, with seven days of rainy weather, cold winds, & intense darkness. Then Muccalinda the nāga king—leaving his dwelling place and encircling the Blessed One’s body seven times with his coils—stood with his great hood spread over the Blessed One, (thinking,) “Don’t let the Blessed One be disturbed by cold. Don’t let the Blessed One be disturbed by heat. Don’t let the Blessed One be disturbed by the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & creeping things.”

Then, with the passing of seven days, the Blessed One emerged from that concentration. Muccalinda the nāga king, realizing that the sky had cleared and was free of clouds, unraveled his coils from the body of the Blessed One, dropped his own appearance and, assuming the appearance of a young man, stood in front of the Blessed One with hands before his heart, paying homage.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Blissful is solitude
for one who’s content,
 who has heard the Dhamma,
 who sees.
Blissful is non-affliction

with regard for the world,
 restraint for living beings.
Blissful is dispassion
with regard for the world,
 the overcoming of sensuality.
But the subduing of the conceit “I am”¹—
 That is truly
 the ultimate bliss.

NOTE

1. See [Ud 1:1, note 3](#).

2:2 Kings (*Rājā Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms round, were sitting gathered together in the assembly hall when this discussion arose: “Friends, which of these two kings has greater wealth, greater possessions, the greater treasury, the larger realm, the greater stock of riding animals, the greater army, greater power, greater might: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or King Pasenadi of Kosala?” And this discussion came to no conclusion.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the assembly hall and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: “For what topic are you sitting together here? And what was the discussion that came to no conclusion?”

“Just now, lord, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we were sitting gathered here at the assembly hall when this discussion arose: ‘Friends, which of these two kings has greater wealth, greater possessions, the greater treasury, the larger realm, the greater stock of riding animals, the greater army, greater power, greater might: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or King Pasenadi of Kosala?’ This was the

discussion that had come to no conclusion when the Blessed One arrived.”

“It isn’t proper, monks, that sons of good families, on having gone forth out of faith from home to the homeless life, should talk on such a topic. When you have gathered you have two duties: either Dhamma-talk or noble silence.”¹

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Any sensual bliss in the world,
any heavenly bliss,
isn’t worth one sixteenth-sixteenth
of the bliss of the ending of craving.

NOTE

1. SN 21:1 equates noble silence with the second jhāna. This apparently relates to the fact that directed thought and evaluation, which MN 44 identifies as verbal fabrications, are abandoned when going from the first jhāna into the second.

2:3 *The Stick (Daṇḍa Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion, a large number of boys on the road between Sāvattthī & Jeta’s Grove were hitting a snake with a stick. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. He saw the large number of boys on the road between Sāvattthī & Jeta’s Grove hitting the snake with a stick.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Whoever hits with a stick
beings desiring ease,
when he himself is looking for ease,

will meet with no ease after death.

Whoever doesn't hit with a stick
beings desiring ease,
when he himself is looking for ease,
will meet with ease after death.¹

NOTE

1. These verses are identical with Dhp 131–132.

2:4 Veneration (*Sakkāra Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One was worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. The community of monks was also worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. But the wanderers of other sects were not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage; nor were they recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, or medicinal requisites for the sick. So the wanderers of other sects, unable to stand the veneration given to the Blessed One and the community of monks, on seeing monks in village or wilderness, would insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language.

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, "At present the Blessed One is worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. The community of monks is also worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. But the wanderers of other sects are not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage; nor are they

recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, or medicinal requisites for the sick. So the wanderers of other sects, unable to stand the veneration given to the Blessed One and the community of monks, on seeing monks in village or wilderness, insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

When in contact with pleasure or pain
in village or wilderness,
don't take it as yours or as others'.
Contacts make contact
dependent on a sense of acquisition.
Where there's no sense of acquisition,
contacts would make contact
with what?

See also: DN 21; MN 28

2:5 The Lay Follower (Upāsaka Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion a certain lay follower from Icchānaṅgalaka had arrived in Sāvattihī on some business affairs. Having settled his affairs in Sāvattihī, he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “At long last you have managed to come here.”

“For a long time, lord, have I wanted to come see the Blessed One, but being involved in one business affair after another, I have not been able to do so.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

How blissful it is, for one who has nothing,

who has mastered the Dhamma,
is learned.

See him suffering, one who has something,
a person bound in body
with people.

See also: Dhp 200, 221, 396, 421

2:6 *The Pregnant Woman (Gabbhinin Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the young wife of a certain wanderer was pregnant and on the verge of delivery. So she said to the wanderer, "Go, brahman, get some oil for my delivery."

When this was said, the wanderer said to her, "But where can I get any oil?"

A second time, she said to him, "Go, brahman, get some oil for my delivery."

A second time, he said to her, "But where can I get any oil?"

A third time, she said to him, "Go, brahman get some oil for my delivery."

Now on that occasion at the storehouse of King Pasenadi Kosala contemplatives & brahmans were being given as much oil or ghee as they needed to drink, but not to take away. So the thought occurred to the wanderer, "At present at the storehouse of King Pasenadi Kosala contemplatives & brahmans are being given as much oil or ghee as they need to drink, but not to take away. Suppose, having gone there, I were to drink as much oil as I need and, on returning home, vomiting it up, were to give it to use at this delivery?"

So, having gone to the storehouse of King Pasenadi Kosala, he drank as much oil as he needed but, on returning home, was unable to bring it up or pass it down. So he rolled back & forth, suffering from fierce pains, sharp & severe. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his

under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. He saw the wanderer rolling back & forth, suffering from fierce pains, sharp & severe.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

How blissful it is, for one who has nothing.
Attainers-of-wisdom
are people with nothing.
See him suffering, one who has something,
a person bound in mind
with people.

2:7 The Only Son (Ekaputta Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion the dear and beloved only son of a certain lay follower had died. So a large number of lay followers—their clothes wet, their hair wet—went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there the Blessed One said to them: “Why have you come here—your clothes wet, your hair wet—in the middle of the day?”

When this was said, the lay follower said to the Blessed One, “My dear and beloved only son, lord, has died. This is why we have come here—our clothes wet, our hair wet—in the middle of the day.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Tied down by the allure
of what seems dear,¹
hosts of devas, most human beings,
worn out with misery,
fall under the sway
of the King of Death.

But those who, day & night,
heedfully abandon
what seems dear,
dig up misery
by the root—
 Death's bait
 so hard
 to overcome.

NOTE

1. Following the reading, *piyarūpassāda-gaddhitāse* in the Thai, Burmese, and BJT editions. The Sri Lankan edition available from the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* has, *piyarūpa-sātarūpa-gaddhitā ye*: “Those tied down by what seems dear & what seems agreeable”; the PTS edition, *piyarūpāsāta-gaddhitā ve*: “Truly tied down by what seems dear & what is disagreeable.” The parallel passage in the Udānavarga (5.10) has, *priyarūpa-sāta-grathitā*: “Tied down by what seems dear and is agreeable.”

See also: MN 87, SN 42:11, [Ud 2:8](#), [Ud 8:8](#)

2:8 Suppavāsā (Suppavāsā Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kuṇḍiyya in the Kuṇḍiṭṭhāna forest. And on that occasion Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter had been seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor. She—touched by fierce, sharp pains—endured them with three thoughts: “How rightly self-awakened is the Blessed One who, abandoning this sort of suffering, teaches the Dhamma! How well-practiced is the community of the Blessed One’s disciples who practice, abandoning this sort of suffering! How truly blissful is unbinding, where this sort of pain is not found!”

Then Suppavāsā said to her husband, “Come, young master. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name, ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, saying: ‘Suppavāsā the Koliyan-

daughter, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And say this: 'Suppavāsā has been seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor. She—touched by fierce, sharp pains—endures them with three thoughts: "How rightly self-awakened is the Blessed One who, abandoning this sort of suffering, teaches the Dhamma! How well-practiced is the community of the Blessed One's disciples who practice, abandoning this sort of suffering! How truly blissful is unbinding, where this sort of pain is not found!"'

Responding, "Excellent!" to Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, the Koliyan-son went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. And she says this: 'Suppavāsā has been seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor. She—touched by fierce, sharp pains—endures them with three thoughts: "How rightly self-awakened is the Blessed One who, abandoning this sort of suffering, teaches the Dhamma! How well-practiced is the community of the Blessed One's disciples who practice, abandoning this sort of suffering! How truly blissful is unbinding, where this sort of pain is not found!"'

[The Blessed One said:] "May Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter be well & free from disease. And may she deliver a son free from disease." And at the same time as the Blessed One's statement, Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter—well & free from disease—delivered a son free from disease.

Saying, "Very well, lord," the Koliyan-son, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and—circling him to the right—returned to his home. He saw that Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter—well & free from disease—had delivered a son free from disease. On seeing this, the thought occurred to him, "How amazing! How astounding!—the Tathāgata's great power, great might, in that, at the same time as the Blessed One's statement, Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter—well & free from disease—would

deliver a son free from disease!" Gratified, he was joyful, rapturous, & happy.

Then Suppavāsā said to her husband, "Come, young master. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name, saying: 'Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet.' And say this: 'Suppavāsā, who was seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor, has now—well & free from disease—delivered a son free from disease. She invites the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, for seven days of meals. May the Blessed One acquiesce to Suppavāsā's seven meals, together with the community of monks.'"

Responding, "Excellent!" to Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, the Koliyan-son went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet. And she says this: 'Suppavāsā, who was seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor, has now—well & free from disease—delivered a son free from disease. She invites the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, for seven days of meals. May the Blessed One acquiesce to Suppavāsā's seven meals, together with the community of monks.'"

Now at that time a certain lay follower had invited the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, for the next day's meal. That lay follower was a supporter of Ven. Mahā Moggallāna. So the Blessed One addressed Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, "Come, Moggallāna. Go to the lay follower and, on arrival, say to him, 'Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, who was seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor, has now—well & free from disease—delivered a son free from disease. She has invited the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, for seven days of meals. Let Suppavāsā do seven meals. Afterward, you will do yours.' He's your supporter."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Moggallāna went to the lay follower and, on arrival, said to him, "Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter, who was seven years pregnant and seven days in difficult labor, has now—well & free from disease—delivered a son free

from disease. She has invited the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, for seven days of meals. Let Suppavāsā do seven meals; afterward, you will do yours.”

“Venerable sir, if Ven. Moggallāna will be my guarantor for three things—(my) wealth, life, & faith—then let Suppavāsā do seven meals; afterward, I will do mine.”

“For two things, friend, will I be your guarantor: your wealth & life. Only you are the guarantor of your faith.”

“Venerable sir, if Ven. Moggallāna will be my guarantor for two things—(my) wealth & life—then let Suppavāsā do seven meals; afterward, I will do mine.”

Then Ven. Moggallāna, having conciliated the lay follower, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said, “The lay follower, lord, has been conciliated. Let Suppavāsā do seven meals; afterward, he will do his.”

So for seven days Suppavāsā the Koliyan-daughter with her own hand served & satisfied the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. And she had the child show reverence to the Blessed One and the community of monks. Then Ven. Sāriputta said to the child, “I trust, child, that things are bearable for you. I trust that things are comfortable for you. I trust that there’s no pain.”

“From where, Ven. Sāriputta, would things be bearable for me? From where would they be comfortable for me living seven years in a belly of blood?”¹

Then Suppavāsā—(thinking,) “My son is conversing with the Dhamma General!”—was gratified, joyful, rapturous, & happy.

The Blessed One, knowing that Suppavāsā was gratified, joyful, rapturous, & happy, said to her, “Suppavāsā, would you like to have another son like this?”

“Lord Blessed One², I would like to have seven more sons like this!”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The disagreeable
in the guise of the agreeable,

the unlovable
in the guise of the lovable,
pain in the guise of bliss,
overcome
one who is heedless.

NOTES

1. Reading *lohita-kucchiyā* with the Thai edition. The Commentary favors the reading, *lohita-kumbhiyā*, in a pot of blood. The Commentary states that Suppavāsā's son later became the famous arahant, Sīvalin, whom the Buddha declared to be foremost among his disciples in receiving gifts.

2. Reading *bhante Bhagavā* with the Thai edition. This extreme way of addressing the Buddha also occurs in [Ud 8:7](#). The Sri Lankan and Burmese editions here read simply *Bhagavā*.

2:9 *Visākhā (Visākhā Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother.¹ And on that occasion, Visākhā, Migāra's mother, had some dealings with King Pasenadi Kosala that he did not settle as she had wished. So in the middle of the day she went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As she was sitting there the Blessed One said to her, "Well now, Visākhā, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?"

"Just now, lord, I had some dealings with King Pasenadi Kosala that he did not settle as I had wished."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

All subjection to others
is painful.
All independence
is bliss.
What is held in common

brings suffering,
for duties are hard
to overcome.

NOTE

1. According to the Commentary, Visākhā was actually Migāra's daughter, but because she introduced him to the Dhamma, she gained the epithet of being his mother.

2:10 Bhaddiya Kāḷigodha (Kāḷigodha Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Anupiyā in the Mango Grove. And on that occasion, Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā's son, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, would repeatedly exclaim, "What bliss! What bliss!"

A large number of monks heard Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā's son, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaim, "What bliss! What bliss!" and on hearing him, the thought occurred to them, "There's no doubt but that Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā's son, doesn't enjoy leading the holy life, for when he was a householder he knew the bliss of kingship, so that now, on recollecting that when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, he is repeatedly exclaiming, 'What bliss! What bliss!'"

So they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they told him, "Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā's son, lord, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaims, 'What bliss! What bliss!' There's no doubt but that Ven. Bhaddiya doesn't enjoy leading the holy life, for when he was a householder he knew the bliss of kingship, so that now, on recollecting that when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, he is repeatedly exclaiming, 'What bliss! What bliss!'"

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, "Come, monk. In my name, call Bhaddiya, saying, 'The Teacher calls you, friend Bhaddiya.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhās son, and on arrival he said to him, "The Teacher calls you, friend Bhaddiya."

Responding, "As you say, my friend," to the monk, Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhās son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Bhaddiya that—on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, 'What bliss! What bliss!'"

"Yes, lord."

"What compelling reason do you have in mind that—when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, 'What bliss! What bliss!'"

"Before, when I was a householder, maintaining the bliss of kingship,¹ lord, I had guards posted within and without the royal apartments, within and without the city, within and without the countryside. But even though I was thus guarded, thus protected, I dwelled in fear—agitated, distrustful, & afraid. But now, on going alone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, I dwell without fear, unagitated, confident, & unafraid—unconcerned, unruffled, living on the gifts of others, with my mind like a wild deer. This is the compelling reason I have in mind that—when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—I repeatedly exclaim, 'What bliss! What bliss!'"

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

From whose heart
there is no provocation,
& for whom becoming & non-becoming
are overcome,
he—
beyond fear,
blissful,
with no grief—

is one the devas can't see.

NOTE

1. Reading *rajja-sukham* with the Thai and PTS editions. The Sri Lankan and Burmese editions have *rajjan*: "kingship."

See also: SN 1:10; AN 3:35; AN 11:10; Thag 1:14; Thag 1:41; Thag 1:49; Thag
18

3 : NANDA

3:1 Kamma (Kamma Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion a certain monk was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, enduring fierce pains, sharp & severe, that were the result of old kamma—mindful, alert, without suffering. The Blessed One saw him sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect, enduring fierce pains, sharp & severe, that were the result of old kamma—mindful, alert, and not struck down by them.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

For the monk who has left
all kamma
behind,
shaking off the dust of the past,
steady, unpossessive,
Such:¹
There’s no point in telling
anyone else.

NOTE

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.

See also: SN 41:3; AN 8:30; Thag 6:10

3:2 Nanda (Nanda Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One's brother, son of his maternal aunt—announced to a large number of monks: "I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life."

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One: "Lord, Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One's brother, son of his maternal aunt—has announced to a large number of monks: 'I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life.'"

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, "Come, monk. In my name, call Nanda, saying, 'The Teacher calls you, friend Nanda.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Nanda, on arrival he said, "The Teacher calls you, friend Nanda."

Responding, "As you say, my friend," to the monk, Ven. Nanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Nanda, that you have announced to a large number of monks: 'I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life'?"

"Yes, lord."

"But why, Nanda, don't you enjoy leading the holy life? Why can't you keep up the holy life? Why, giving up the training, will you return to the common life?"

"Lord, as I was leaving home, a Sakyan girl—the envy of the countryside—glanced up at me, with her hair half-combed, and said, 'Hurry back, master.' Recollecting that, I don't enjoy leading the holy life. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life."

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm—as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm—the Blessed One disappeared from Jeta’s Grove and reappeared among the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three [Tāvātimsa]. Now on that occasion about 500 dove-footed nymphs had come to wait upon Sakka, the ruler of the devas. The Blessed One said to Ven. Nanda, “Nanda, do you see these 500 dove-footed nymphs?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think, Nanda? Which is lovelier, better looking, more charming: the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, or these 500 dove-footed nymphs?”

“Lord, compared to these 500 dove-footed nymphs, the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, is like a cauterized monkey with its ears & nose cut off. She doesn’t count. She’s not even a small fraction. There’s no comparison. The 500 dove-footed nymphs are lovelier, better looking, more charming.”

“Then take joy, Nanda. Take joy! I am your guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs.”

“If the Blessed One is my guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs, I will enjoy leading the holy life under the Blessed One.”

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm—as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm—the Blessed One disappeared from among the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three and reappeared at Jeta’s Grove. The monks heard, “They say that Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One’s brother, son of his maternal aunt—is leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. They say that the Blessed One is his guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs.”

Then the monks who were companions of Ven. Nanda went around addressing him as they would a hired hand & a person who had been bought: “Venerable Nanda, they say, has been hired. Venerable Nanda, they say, has been bought.¹ He’s leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. The Blessed One is his guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs.”

Then Ven. Nanda—humiliated, ashamed, & disgusted that the monks who were his companions were addressing him as they would a hired hand & a person who had been bought—went to dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute. He in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself right 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 thus Ven. Nanda became another one of the arahants.

Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jetā’s Grove, approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One’s brother, son of his maternal aunt—through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.” And within the Blessed One, the knowledge arose: “Nanda, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.”

Then, when the night had passed, Ven. Nanda 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, “Lord, about the Blessed One’s being my guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs: I hereby release the Blessed One from that promise.”

“Nanda, having comprehended your awareness with my own awareness, I realized that ‘Nanda, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.’ And a devatā informed me that ‘Ven. Nanda, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.’ When your mind,

through lack of clinging, was released from the effluents, I was thereby released from that promise.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

In whom

the mire of sensuality is crossed over,²
the thorn of sensuality crushed,
the ending of delusion reached:

He doesn't quiver
from pleasures & pains
: a monk.

NOTES

1. The monks here address Ven. Nanda as “*āyasmant.*” According to DN 16, they did not normally address one another in this formal way while the Buddha was still alive. Thus there is an element of sarcasm in the way they use the term here.

2. Reading *yassa tiṇṇo kāmapaṅko* with the Thai edition. The Burmese, Sri Lankan, and PTS editions read, *yassa nittiṇṇo paṅko*: “In whom the mire is crossed over.” The parallel passage in the Udānavarga (32.2) essentially agrees with this latter version.

3:3 *Yasoja (Yasoja Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattḥī at Jetā's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍikā's monastery. And on that occasion approximately 500 monks, headed by Ven. Yasoja, had arrived in Sāvattḥī to see the Blessed One. As these visiting monks were exchanging greetings with the resident monks, setting their lodgings in order, and putting away their robes & bowls, they made a loud racket, a great racket. Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, what is that loud racket, that great racket like fishermen with a catch of fish?”

“Lord, those are approximately 500 monks, headed by Ven. Yasoja, who have arrived in Sāvattḥī to see the Blessed One. As these visiting

monks are exchanging greetings with the resident monks, setting their lodgings in order, and putting away their robes & bowls, they are making a loud racket, a great racket."

"In that case, Ānanda, tell those monks in my name, 'The Teacher calls you, friends.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda went to the monks and said, "The Teacher calls you, friends."

Responding, "As you say, friend," to Ven. Ānanda, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to them, "Monks, why were you making that loud racket, that great racket, like fishermen with a catch of fish?"

When this was said, Ven. Yasoja said to the Blessed One, "Lord, these 500 monks have arrived in Sāvattḥī to see the Blessed One. As they were exchanging greetings with the resident monks, setting their lodgings in order, and putting away their robes & bowls, they made a loud racket, a great racket."

"Go away, monks. I dismiss you. You are not to stay in my vicinity."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, the monks got up from their seats, bowed down to the Blessed One, and left, circling him to the right. Setting their lodgings in order and taking their robes & bowls, they went wandering among the Vajjians. After wandering by stages among the Vajjians, they came to the River Vaggamudā. There on the bank of the River Vaggamudā they made leaf-huts and entered the Rains Retreat.

Then Ven. Yasoja addressed the monks as they entered the Rains Retreat: "Friends, the Blessed One dismissed us, wishing for our benefit, seeking our wellbeing, being sympathetic, and acting out of sympathy. Let's live in such a way that the Blessed One will be gratified by our way of living."

"As you say, friend," the monks responded to Ven. Yasoja. And so, living secluded, ardent, & resolute, every one of them realized the Three Knowledges [remembrance of past lives, knowledge of the arising &

passing away of living beings, and knowledge of the ending of mental effluents] in the course of that very Rains Retreat.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed as long as he liked in Sāvattthī, went wandering in the direction of Vesālī. After wandering by stages, he arrived in Vesālī and stayed there in the Peaked Roof Pavilion in the Great Wood. Then, encompassing with his awareness the awareness of the monks staying on the bank of the River Vaggamudā, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “This direction seems bright to me, Ānanda. This direction seems dazzling to me. It’s not at all repugnant for me to go & pay attention to where the monks on the bank of the River Vaggamudā are staying. Send a messenger into their presence to say, ‘The Teacher calls you, friends. The Teacher wants to see you.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda went to a certain monk and said, “Come now, friend. Go to the monks on the bank of the River Vaggamudā and say to them, ‘The Teacher calls you, friends. The Teacher wants to see you.’”

Responding, “As you say, friend,” to Ven. Ānanda, the monk—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the Peaked Roof Pavilion in the Great Wood and appeared in front of the monks on the bank of the River Vaggamudā. Then he said to them, “The Teacher calls you, friends. The Teacher wants to see you.”

Responding, “As you say, friend,” to the monk, the monks set their lodgings in order and, taking their robes & bowls, disappeared from the bank of the River Vaggamudā—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—and appeared in the presence of the Blessed One in the Peaked Roof Pavilion in the Great Wood.

Now, at that time the Blessed One was sitting in imperturbable concentration [either in the fourth jhāna, the dimension of the infinitude of space, or the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness]. The thought occurred to the monks, “Now, in which mental dwelling is the Blessed One now residing?” Then they realized, “He is residing in the imperturbable dwelling.” So they all sat in imperturbable concentration.

Then Ven. Ānanda—when the night was far advanced, at the end of the first watch—got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one

shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, "The night, lord, is far advanced. The first watch has ended. The visiting monks have been sitting here a long time. May the Blessed One greet them." When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a second time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the middle watch, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage to him with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, "The night, lord, is far advanced. The middle watch has ended. The visiting monks have been sitting here a long time. May the Blessed One greet them." When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a third time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the last watch, as dawn was approaching and the face of the night was beaming, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage to him with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, "The night, lord, is far advanced. The last watch has ended. Dawn is approaching and the face of the night is beaming. The visiting monks have been sitting here a long time. May the Blessed One greet them."

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his imperturbable concentration, said to Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, if you had known, not even that much would have occurred to you (to say).¹ I, along with all 500 of these monks, have been sitting in imperturbable concentration."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

In whom they're defeated—
the thorn of sensuality,
insult,
assault,
& imprisonment:
Like a mountain standing unperturbed,
he doesn't quiver
from pleasures & pains

: a monk.

NOTE

1. All the major editions here read, *nappaṭibhāseyya*: “He/it would have not said in return.” This makes no sense, so I follow a variant reading listed in the Burmese edition, *nappaṭibheyya* (the optative of *paṭibhāti*).

3:4 *Sāriputta (Sāriputta Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jetā’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, having set mindfulness to the fore. The Blessed One saw Ven. Sāriputta sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect, having set mindfulness to the fore.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

As a mountain of rock
is unwavering, well-settled,
so a monk whose delusion is ended
doesn’t quiver—
just like a mountain.¹

NOTE

1. This verse also appears among the verses attributed to Ven. Revata at Thag 14:1 (verse 651 in the PTS edition) and among the verses attributed to Ven. Sāriputta at Thag 17:2 (verse 1000 in the PTS edition).

3:5 *Mahā Moggallāna (Kolita Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jetā’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Mahā Moggallāna was sitting not far from the Blessed

One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, having mindfulness immersed in the body well-established within. The Blessed One saw Ven. Mahā Moggallāna sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect, having mindfulness immersed in the body well-established within.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

With mindfulness immersed in the body
well-established, restrained
with regard to the six contact-media—
continually centered,
a monk
can know
unbinding for himself.

See also: MN 119; SN 47:20

3:6 Pilinda (Pilinda Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' refuge. Now at on that occasion Ven. Pilindavaccha went around addressing the monks as if they were outcastes.

So a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said to him, "Lord, Ven. Pilindavaccha goes around addressing the monks as if they were outcastes."

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, "Come, monk. In my name, call Pilindavaccha, saying, 'The Teacher calls you, friend Vaccha.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Pilindavaccha and on arrival said to him, "The Teacher calls you, friend Vaccha."

Responding, "As you say, my friend," to the monk, Ven. Pilindavaccha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it

true, Pilindavaccha, that you go around addressing the monks as if they were outcastes?"

"Yes, lord."

Then the Blessed One, having directed attention to Ven. Pilindavaccha's previous lives, said to the monks, "Don't take offense at the monk Vaccha. It's not out of inner hatred that he goes around addressing the monks as if they were outcastes. For 500 consecutive lifetimes the monk Vaccha has been born in brahman families. For a long time he has been accustomed to addressing people as outcastes. That's why he goes around addressing the monks as if they were outcastes."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

In whom there's no deceit
or conceit,
his greed ended,
unpossessive, free from longing,
his anger dispelled,
his mind unbound:¹
He's a contemplative.
He's a brahman
: a monk.

NOTE

1. The first part of this verse is nearly identical with the first part of a verse in Sn 3:4 (verse 469 in the PTS edition).

See also: SN 21:4

3:7 Mahā Kassapa (Kassapa Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa was staying at the Pippali Cave, sitting for seven days in a single session, having attained a certain level of

concentration. Then, with the passing of seven days, he emerged from that concentration. To him, emerging from that concentration, the thought occurred: “What if I were to go into Rājagaha for alms?”

Now on that occasion 500 devatās were in a state of eagerness for the chance to give alms to Ven. Mahā Kassapa. But Ven. Mahā Kassapa, turning down those 500 devatās, early in the morning adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Rājagaha for alms.

Now on that occasion Sakka, the deva-king, wanted to give alms to Ven. Mahā Kassapa. So, assuming the appearance of a weaver, he was working a loom, while Sujātā, an asura-maiden, filled the shuttle. Then, as Ven. Mahā Kassapa was going on an almsround that bypassed no donors¹ in Rājagaha, he arrived at Sakka’s home. Sakka saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, came out of house to meet him. Taking the bowl from his hand, entered the house, took cooked rice from the pot, filled the bowl, and gave it back to Ven. Mahā Kassapa. And that gift of alms included many kinds of curry, many kinds of sauces.

The thought occurred to Ven. Mahā Kassapa, “Now, who is this being with such power & might as this?” Then the thought occurred to him, “This is Sakka, the deva-king, isn’t it?” On realizing this, he said to Sakka, “Is this your doing, Kosiya?² Don’t ever do anything like this again.”

“We, too, need merit, Ven. Kassapa. We, too, have use for merit.”

Then, bowing down to Ven. Mahā Kassapa and circling him to the right, Sakka rose up into the air and, while up in the sky, exclaimed three times:

“O the alms, the foremost alms, well-established in Kassapa!”

“O the alms, the foremost alms, well-established in Kassapa!”

“O the alms, the foremost alms, well-established in Kassapa!”

The Blessed One—with his divine hearing-property, surpassing that of the human—heard Sakka the deva-king, while up in the sky, exclaiming three times:

“O the alms, the foremost alms, well-established in Kassapa!”

“O the alms, the foremost alms, well-established in Kassapa!”

“O the alms, the foremost alms, well-established in Kassapa!”

On realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The monk going for alms,
supporting himself and no other:
The devas adore one who is Such,
calmed & ever mindful.

NOTES

1. Going on an almsround that bypasses no donors is one of the thirteen optional ascetic (*dhutaṅga*) practices. See Thag 16:7.

2. Kosiya—“Owl”—is Sakka’s clan name.

3:8 Alms (Piṇḍa Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms round, were sitting gathered together at the kareri-tree pavilion when this discussion arose: “Friends, an alms-collecting monk,¹ while going for alms, periodically sees agreeable sights via the eye. He periodically hears agreeable sounds via the ear... smells agreeable aromas via the nose... tastes agreeable flavors via the tongue... touches agreeable tactile sensations via the body. An alms-collecting monk, while going for alms, is honored, respected, revered, venerated, and given homage.

“So, friends, let’s become alms-collecting monks. Then we, too, while going for alms, will periodically get to see agreeable sights via the eye... to hear agreeable sounds via the ear... to smell agreeable aromas via the nose... to taste agreeable flavors via the tongue... to touch agreeable tactile sensations via the body. We, too, while going for alms, will be honored, respected, revered, venerated, and given homage.” And this discussion came to no conclusion.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the kareri-tree pavilion and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: “For what topic are you sitting together here? And what was the discussion that came to no conclusion?”

“Just now, lord, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we were sitting gathered together here at the kareri-tree pavilion when this discussion arose: [They repeat what had been said.]”

“It isn’t proper, monks, that sons of good families, on having gone forth out of faith from home to the homeless life, should talk on such a topic. When you have gathered you have two duties: either Dhamma-talk or noble silence.”²

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The monk going for alms,
supporting himself and no other:
The devas adore one who is Such
if he’s not intent
on fame & praise.

NOTES

1. A monk who makes a steady practice of eating only the food received while going for alms.

2. SN 21:1 equates noble silence with the second jhāna. This apparently relates to the fact that directed thought and evaluation, which MN 44 identifies as verbal fabrications, are abandoned when going from the first jhāna into the second.

3:9 Crafts (Sippa Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now at that time a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms

round, were sitting gathered together at a pavilion when this discussion arose: “Who, friends, knows a craft? Who’s studying which craft? Which is the supreme among crafts?”

With regard to that, some said, “The elephant-craft is the supreme craft among crafts.” Some said, “The horse-craft is the supreme craft among crafts” ... “The chariot-craft...” ... “Archery...” ... “Swordsmanship...” ... “Signaling¹...” ... “Calculating...” ... “Accounting...” ... “Writing...” ... “Literary composition...” ... “Cosmology...” Some said, “Geomancy is the supreme craft among crafts.” And this discussion came to no conclusion.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the pavilion and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. As he was sitting there, he addressed the monks: “For what topic are you sitting together here? And what was the discussion that came to no conclusion?”

“Just now, lord, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we were sitting gathered together here at the pavilion when this discussion arose: [They repeat what had been said.]”

“It isn’t proper, monks, that sons of good families, on having gone forth out of faith from home to the homeless life, should talk on such a topic. When you have gathered you have two duties: either Dhamma-talk or noble silence.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Supporting himself
without a craft—
light, desiring the goal—
his faculties controlled,
released everywhere;
living in no home,
unpossessive,
free from longing,
having slain Māra,
going alone

: a monk.

NOTE

1. Reading *mudda-sippam* with the Commentary. The Thai edition has *muddha-sippam*, which could mean phrenology, but that doesn't fit in with the previous members of the list, all of which deal with military skills.

See also: SN 46:45

3:10 Surveying the World (Loka Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, he surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One. As he did so, he saw living beings burning with the many fevers and aflame with the many fires born of passion, aversion, & delusion.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, he on that occasion exclaimed:

This world is burning.
Afflicted by contact,
it calls disease a 'self.'
By whatever means it supposes [anything],
it becomes otherwise than that.¹
Becoming otherwise,
the world is
 attached to becoming,
 afflicted by becoming,
and yet delights
 in that very becoming.
Where there's delight,

there is fear.
What one fears
is stressful.
This holy life is lived
for the abandoning of becoming.

Whatever contemplatives or brahmans say that liberation from becoming is by means of becoming, all of them are not released from becoming, I say.

And whatever contemplatives or brahmans say that escape from becoming is by means of non-becoming, all of them have not escaped from becoming, I say.

For this stress comes into play
in dependence on every acquisition.²
With the ending of every clinging/sustenance,
there's no stress coming into play.

Look at this world:
Beings, afflicted with thick ignorance,
are unreleased
from passion for what has come to be.
All levels of becoming,
anywhere,
in any way,
are inconstant, stressful, subject to change.
Seeing this—as it's come to be—
with right discernment,
one abandons craving for becoming
and doesn't delight in non-becoming.³
From the total ending of craving
comes fading & cessation without remainder:
unbinding.

For the monk unbound
through lack of clinging/sustenance,
there's no further becoming.
He has conquered Māra,

won the battle,
having gone beyond becomings
: Such.

NOTES

1. In other words, regardless of whatever one bases one's construal of an experience on, by the time the construal is complete, the base has already changed.

2. Reading *sabb'upadhiṃ hi* with the Thai edition. The Burmese and Sri Lankan editions read *upadhiṃ hi*: "For this stress comes into play in dependence on acquisition." The parallel passage in the Udānavarga (32.36) agrees with this latter version.

3. This passage indicates the way out of the dilemma posed above, that one cannot gain release either through becoming or non-becoming. Rather than focus on whether one wants to take "what has come to be" in the direction of becoming or non-becoming, one develops dispassion for "what has come to be" as it occurs, and this provides the way out. On this point, see *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapters 2 and 6.

See also: MN 113; SN 1:1; SN 12:15; Iti 49

4 : MEGHIYA

4:1 Meghiya (Meghiya Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Cālikans, at Cālikā Mountain. And on that occasion Ven. Meghiya was his attendant. Then Ven. Meghiya went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As he was standing there he said to the Blessed One, “I would like to go into Jantu Village for alms.”

“Then do, Meghiya, what you think it is now time to do.”

Then in the early morning, Ven. Meghiya adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Jantu Village for alms. Having gone for alms in Jantu Village, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he went to the bank of the Kimikālā River. As he was walking up & down along the bank of the river to exercise his legs, he saw a pleasing, charming mango grove. Seeing it, the thought occurred to him: “How pleasing & charming this mango grove! It’s enough for a young man of good family intent on exertion to exert himself [in meditation]. If the Blessed One gives me permission, I would like to exert myself [in meditation] in this mango grove.”

So Ven. Meghiya 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, in the early morning, I adjusted my under robe and—carrying my bowl & robes—went into Jantu Village for alms. Having gone for alms in Jantu Village, after the meal, returning from my alms round, I went to the bank of the Kimikālā River. As I was walking up & down along the bank of the river to exercise my legs, I saw a pleasing, charming mango grove. Seeing it, the thought occurred to me: ‘How pleasing & charming this mango grove! It’s enough for a young

man of good family intent on exertion to exert himself [in meditation]. If the Blessed One gives me permission, I would like to exert myself [in meditation] in this mango grove.' If the Blessed One gives me permission, I would like to go to the mango grove to exert myself [in meditation]."

When this was said, the Blessed One responded to Ven. Meghiya, "As long as I am still alone, stay here until another monk comes."

A second time, Ven. Meghiya said to the Blessed One, "Lord, the Blessed One has nothing further to do, and nothing further to add to what he has done. I, however, have something further to do, and something further to add to what I have done. If the Blessed One gives me permission, I would like to go to the mango grove to exert myself [in meditation]."

A second time, the Blessed One responded to Ven. Meghiya, "As long as I am still alone, stay here until another monk comes."

A third time, Ven. Meghiya said to the Blessed One, "Lord, the Blessed One has nothing further to do, and nothing further to add to what he has done. I, however, have something further to do, and something further to add to what I have done. If the Blessed One gives me permission, I would like to go to the mango grove to exert myself [in meditation]."

"As you are talking about exertion, Meghiya, what can we say? Do what you think it is now time to do."

Then Ven. Meghiya, rising from his seat, bowing down to the Blessed One and, circling him to the right, went to the mango grove. On arrival, having gone deep into the grove, he sat down at the root of a certain tree for the day's abiding.

Now while Ven. Meghiya was staying in the mango grove, he was for the most part assailed by three kinds of unskillful thoughts: thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of doing harm. The thought occurred to him: "How amazing! How astounding! Even though it was through faith that I went forth from home to the homeless life, still I am overpowered by these three kinds of unskillful thoughts: thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of doing harm."

Emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, he 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, while I was staying in the mango grove, I was for the most part assailed by three kinds of unskillful thoughts: thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of doing harm. The thought occurred to me: ‘How amazing! How astounding! Even though it was through faith that I went forth from home to the homeless life, still I am overpowered by these three kinds of unskillful thoughts: thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of doing harm.’”

“Meghiya, in one whose awareness-release is still immature, five qualities bring it to maturity. Which five?”

“There is the case where a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues. In one whose awareness-release is still immature, this is the first quality that brings it to maturity.

“Furthermore, the monk is virtuous. He dwells restrained in accordance with the Pāṭimokkha, consummate in his behavior & range of activity. He trains himself, having undertaken the training rules, seeing danger in the slightest faults. In one whose awareness-release is still immature, this is the second quality that brings it to maturity.

“Furthermore, he gets to hear at will, easily and without difficulty, talk that is truly sobering and conducive to the opening of awareness, i.e., talk on modesty, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglement, arousing persistence, virtue, concentration, discernment, release, and the knowledge & vision of release. In one whose awareness-release is still immature, this is the third quality that brings it to maturity.

“Furthermore, he keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful [mental] qualities and for taking on skillful qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful qualities. In one whose awareness-release is still immature, this is the fourth quality that brings it to maturity.

“Furthermore, he is discerning, endowed with the discernment related to arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. In one whose awareness-release is still immature, this is the fifth quality that brings it to maturity.

“Meghiya, in one whose awareness-release is still immature, these are the five qualities that bring it to maturity.

“Meghiya, when a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, it is to be expected that he will be virtuous, will dwell restrained in accordance with the Pāṭimokkha, consummate in his behavior & range of activity, and will train himself, having undertaken the training rules, seeing danger in the slightest faults.

“When a monk has admirable people as friends & colleagues, it is to be expected that he will get to hear at will, easily and without difficulty, talk that is truly sobering and conducive to the opening of awareness, i.e., talk on modesty, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglement, arousing persistence, virtue, concentration, discernment, release, and the knowledge & vision of release.

“When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, it is to be expected that he will keep his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful qualities and for taking on skillful qualities—steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful qualities.

“When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, it is to be expected that he will be discerning, endowed with the discernment relating to arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress.

“And furthermore, when the monk is established in these five qualities, there are four additional qualities he should develop: He should develop [contemplation of] the unattractive so as to abandon passion. He should develop good will so as to abandon ill will. He should develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing so as to cut off thinking. He should develop the perception of inconstancy so as to uproot the conceit, ‘I am.’¹ For a monk perceiving inconstancy, the perception of not-self is made steady. One perceiving not-self attains the uprooting of the conceit, ‘I am’—unbinding right in the here-&-now.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Little thoughts, subtle thoughts,

when followed, stir up the heart.
Not comprehending the thoughts of the heart,
one runs here & there,
the mind out of control.
But comprehending the thoughts of the heart,
one who is ardent, mindful,
restrains them.
When, followed, they stir up the heart,
one awakened
lets them go without trace.

NOTE

1. See [Ud 1:1, note 3](#).

See also: SN 45:2; AN 8:2; AN 9:1

4:2 High-strung (*Uddhata Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Upavattana, the Mallan sal grove near Kusinarā.¹ And on that occasion, not far from the Blessed One, many monks were staying in wilderness huts: high-strung, rowdy, unruly, talkative, of loose words & muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated, their minds scattered, their faculties left wide open.

The Blessed One saw those many monks staying in wilderness huts: high-strung, rowdy, unruly, talkative, of loose words & muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated, their minds scattered, their faculties left wide open.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

By leaving your body unprotected,
being immersed in wrong view,
conquered by sloth & torpor,
you go under Māra's sway.

Therefore,
with protected mind,
ranging in right resolve,
honoring right view,
knowing rise-&-fall,
conquering sloth & torpor, a monk
leaves all
bad destinations
behind.

NOTE

1. This is the location where the Buddha later was totally unbound.

See also: MN 69

4:3 The Cowherd (Gopāla Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was wandering among the Kosalans with a large community of monks. Then, coming down from the road, he went to a certain tree, and on arrival sat down on a seat laid out. A certain cowherd then went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One, instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma-talk. The cowherd—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One’s talk on Dhamma—said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One, together with the community of monks, acquiesce to my offer of tomorrow’s meal.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then the cowherd, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and left, circling him to the right.

Then, after the night had passed, the cowherd—having prepared in his own home a great deal of thick milk-rice porridge & fresh ghee—announced the time of the meal to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

So the Blessed One early in the morning adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went together with the community of monks to the cowherd’s home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. The cowherd, with his own hand, served & satisfied the community of monks headed by the Blessed One with thick milk-rice porridge & fresh ghee. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had rinsed his bowl & hands, the cowherd, taking a lower seat, sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One, instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma-talk, then got up from his seat & left.

Now, not long after the Blessed One’s departure, the cowherd was killed by a certain man between the boundaries of two villages. A large number of monks then went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they told him, “The cowherd who today served & satisfied the community of monks headed by the Blessed One with thick milk-rice porridge & fresh ghee, has been killed, it is said, by a certain man between the boundaries of two villages.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Whatever an enemy
might do to an enemy,
 or a foe
 to a foe,
the ill-directed mind
can do to you
 even worse.¹

NOTE

1. This verse also occurs at Dhp 42, where it is paired with Dhp 43:

Whatever a mother, father
or other kinsman
might do for you,
the well-directed mind
can do for you

even better.

See also: MN 136

4:4 Moonlit (Juñha Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Moggallāna were staying in Pigeon Cave. Then, on a moonlit night, Ven. Sāriputta—his head newly shaven—was sitting in the open air, having attained a certain level of concentration.

And on that occasion two yakkhas who were companions were flying from north to south on some business or other. They saw Ven. Sāriputta—his head newly shaven—sitting in the open air. Seeing him, the first yakkha said to the second, "I'm inspired to give this contemplative a blow on the head."

When this was said, the second yakkha said to the first, "Enough of that, my good friend. Don't lay a hand on the contemplative. He's an outstanding contemplative, of great power & great might."

A second time, the first yakkha said to the second, "I'm inspired to give this contemplative a blow on the head."

A second time, the second yakkha said to the first, "Enough of that, my good friend. Don't lay a hand on the contemplative. He's an outstanding contemplative, of great power & great might."

A third time, the first yakkha said to the second, "I'm inspired to give this contemplative a blow on the head."

A third time, the second yakkha said to the first, "Enough of that, my good friend. Don't lay a hand on the contemplative. He's an outstanding contemplative, of great power & great might."

Then the first yakkha, ignoring the second yakkha, gave Ven. Sāriputta a blow on the head. And with that blow he might have knocked over an elephant seven or eight cubits tall, or split a great rocky crag. But right there the yakkha—yelling, "I'm burning!"—fell into the Great Hell.

Now, Ven. Moggallāna—with his divine eye, pure and surpassing the human—saw the yakkha give Ven. Sāriputta a blow on the head. Seeing this, he went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, said to him, “I hope you are well, friend Sāriputta. I hope you are comfortable. I hope you are feeling no pain.”

“I am well, friend Moggallāna. I am comfortable. But I do have a slight headache.”

“How amazing, friend Sāriputta! How astounding! How great your power & might! Just now a yakkha gave you a blow on the head. So great was that blow that he might have knocked over an elephant seven or eight cubits tall, or split a great rocky crag. But all you say is this: ‘I am well, friend Moggallāna. I am comfortable. But I do have a slight headache!’”

“How amazing, friend Moggallāna! How astounding! How great your power & might! Where you saw a yakkha just now, I didn’t even see a dust devil!”

The Blessed One—with the divine ear-property, pure and surpassing the human—heard those two great beings conversing in this way. Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Whose mind, standing like rock,
doesn’t shake,
dispassionate for things that spark passion,
unprovoked by things that spark provocation:
When one’s mind is developed like this,
from where can there come to him
suffering & stress?¹

NOTE

1. A variant of this verse is attributed to Ven. Khitaka at Thag 2:36 (verses 191-192 in the PTS edition):

Whose mind, standing like rock,
doesn’t shake,

dispassionate for things that spark passion,
unprovoked by things that spark provocation?

When one's mind is developed like this,
from where can there come to him
suffering & stress?

*My mind, standing like rock,
doesn't shake,*

dispassionate for things that spark passion,
unprovoked by things that spark provocation.

When my mind is developed like this,
from where can there come to me
suffering & stress?

See also: SN 21:3

4:5 The Bull Elephant (Nāga Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kosambī at Kosita's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One lived hemmed in with monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples. Hemmed in, he lived unpleasantly and not in ease. The thought occurred to him: "I now live hemmed in by monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples. Hemmed in, I live unpleasantly and not in ease. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?"

So, early in the morning, the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Kosambī for alms. Then, having gone for alms in Kosambī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he set his own lodgings in order and, carrying his bowl & robes, without telling his attendant, without informing the community of monks—alone & without a companion—left on a wandering tour toward Palileyyaka. After wandering by stages, he reached Palileyyaka. There he stayed in Palileyyaka in the protected forest grove at the root of the auspicious sal tree.

It so happened that a certain bull elephant was living hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. He fed off grass with cut-off tips. They chewed up his stash of broken-off branches. He drank disturbed water. And when he came up from his bathing-place, cow-elephants went along, banging up against his body. Hemmed in, he lived unpleasantly and not in ease. The thought occurred to him: "I now live hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. I feed off grass with cut-off tips. They chew up my stash of broken-off branches. I drink disturbed water. And when I come up from my bathing place, cow-elephants go along, banging up against my body. Hemmed in, I live unpleasantly and not in ease. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?"

So the bull elephant, leaving the herd, went to Palileyaka, to the protected forest grove and the root of the auspicious sal tree—to where the Blessed One was staying. There he kept the grass down in the area where the Blessed One was staying, and brought drinking water and washing water for the Blessed One with his trunk.

Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to his awareness: "Before, I lived hemmed in by monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples. Hemmed in, I lived unpleasantly and not in ease. But now I live not hemmed in by monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples. Not hemmed in, I live pleasantly and in ease."

And this train of thought appeared to the awareness of the bull elephant, "Before, I lived hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. I fed off grass with cut-off tips. They chewed up my stash of broken-off branches. I drank disturbed water. And when I came up from my bathing place, cow-elephants went along, banging up against my body. Hemmed in, I lived unpleasantly and not in ease. But now I live not hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. I feed off grass with uncut tips. They don't chew up my stash of broken-off branches. I drink undisturbed water. When I come up from my bathing place, cow-elephants don't go along,

banging up against my body. Not hemmed in, I live pleasantly and in ease."¹

Then the Blessed One, realizing his own seclusion and knowing the train of thought in the bull elephant's awareness, on that occasion exclaimed:

This
harmonizes
mind with mind—
the great one's with the great one's²—
the elephant with tusks like chariot poles:
that each finds joy,
alone,
in the forest.

NOTES

1. Mv.X.4.6-7 places the story of the elephant's service to the Buddha in the context of the quarrel at Kosambī, but the details of how the Buddha left Kosambī given in Mv.X.3 are different.

2. Great one = *nāga*. This term can mean magical serpent or large elephant, and is often used as an epithet for an arahant.

See also: AN 9:40

4:6 Piṇḍola (Piṇḍola Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect—a wilderness dweller, an alms-goer, a rag-robe wearer, an owner of only one set of three robes, modest, content, solitary, unentangled, his persistence aroused, an advocate of the ascetic practices, devoted to the heightened mind. The Blessed One saw Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect—a wilderness dweller, an alms-goer, a rag-robe wearer,

an owner of only one set of three robes, modest, content, solitary, unentangled, his persistence aroused, an advocate of the ascetic practices, devoted to the heightened mind.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Not disparaging, not injuring,
restraint in line with the Pāṭimokkha,
moderation in food,
dwelling in seclusion,
commitment to the heightened mind:
this is the teaching
of the Awakened.¹

NOTE

1. This verse also occurs at Dhp 185, where it forms part of a set including Dhp 183—184:

The non-doing of any evil,
the performance of what's skillful,
the cleansing of one's own mind:
this is the teaching
of the Awakened.

Patient endurance:
the foremost austerity.

Unbinding:
the foremost,
so say the Awakened.

He who injures another
is no contemplative.
He who mistreats another,
no monk.

4:7 Sāriputta (Sāriputta Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta was sitting not far from the Blessed One—his legs crossed, his body held erect—modest, content, solitary, unentangled, his persistence aroused, devoted to the heightened mind. The Blessed One saw Ven. Sāriputta sitting not far away—his legs crossed, his body held erect—modest, content, solitary, unentangled, his persistence aroused, devoted to the heightened mind.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Of heightened awareness & heedful,
the sage trained in sagacity’s way:
He has no sorrows, one who is Such,
calmed & ever mindful.¹

NOTE

1. This is the verse that Ven. Cūḷa Panthaka used to exhort the nuns in the origin story to Pācittiya 22. It also appears at Thag 1:68.

4:8 Sundarī (Sundarī Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now at that time the Blessed One was worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. The community of monks was also worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. But the wanderers of other sects were not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage; nor were they recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, or medicinal requisites for the sick.

So the wanderers of other sects—unable to stand the veneration given to the Blessed One and the community of monks—went to Sundarī the

female wanderer and, on arrival, said to her, “Sundarī, would you dare to do something for the benefit of your kinsmen?”

“What shall I do, masters? What can I *not* do?¹ I have given up even my life for the benefit of my kinsmen!”

“In that case, sister, go often to Jeta’s Grove.”

Responding, “As you say, masters,” to those wanderers of other sects, Sundarī the female wanderer went often to Jeta’s Grove. When the wanderers of other sects knew that many people had seen Sundarī the female wanderer going often to Jeta’s Grove, then—having murdered her and buried her right there in the moat-ditch surrounding Jeta’s Grove—they went to King Pasenadi Kosala and, on arrival, said to him, “Great king, we can’t find Sundarī the female wanderer.”

“But where do you suspect she is?”

“At Jeta’s Grove, great king.”

“Then in that case, search Jeta’s Grove.”

Then those wanderers of other sects, having searched Jeta’s Grove, having dug up what they had buried in the surrounding moat-ditch, having mounted it on a litter, took it into Sāvattthī and went from street to street, crossroad to crossroad, stirring up people’s indignation: “See, masters, the handiwork of the Sakyan-son contemplatives. They’re shameless, these Sakyan-son contemplatives: unvirtuous, evil-natured, liars, unholy, though they claim to be practicing the Dhamma, practicing what is harmonious, practicing the holy life, speakers of the truth, virtuous, fine-natured. They have no quality of a contemplative, no holy quality. Destroyed is their quality of a contemplative! Destroyed is their holy quality! From where is their quality of a contemplative? From where, their holy quality? Gone are they from any quality of a contemplative! Gone from any holy quality! How can a man, having done a man’s business with a woman, take her life?”

So on that occasion, people seeing monks in Sāvattthī would insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language: “They’re shameless, these Sakyan-son contemplatives: unvirtuous, evil-natured, liars, unholy, though they claim to be practicing the Dhamma, practicing what is harmonious, practicing the holy life, speakers of the

truth, virtuous, fine-natured. They have no quality of a contemplative, no holy quality. Destroyed is their quality of a contemplative! Destroyed is their holy quality! From where is their quality of a contemplative? From where, their holy quality? Gone are they from any quality of a contemplative! Gone from any holy quality! How can a man, having done a man's business with a woman, take her life?"

Then, early in the morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Then, having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said to the Blessed One, "At present, lord, people seeing monks in Sāvattthī insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language: 'They're shameless, these Sakyan-son contemplatives: unvirtuous, evil-natured, liars, unholy.... How can a man, having done a man's business with a woman, take her life?'"

"Monks, this noise will not last long. It will last only seven days. With the passing of seven days, it will disappear. So in that case, when those people, on seeing monks, insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language, counter their accusation with this verse:

"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 world beyond."²

So, having learned this verse in the Blessed One's presence, the monks—whenever people, on seeing monks in Sāvattthī, insulted, reviled, irritated, & harassed them with discourteous, abusive language—countered the accusation with this verse:

“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 world beyond.”

The thought occurred to those people, “They’re innocent, these Sakyan-son contemplatives. It wasn’t done by them.³ They’re taking an oath, these Sakyan-son contemplatives.” And so that noise didn’t last long. It lasted only seven days. With the passing of seven days, it disappeared.

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding—how well-said that was by the Blessed One: ‘Monks, this noise will not last long. It will last only seven days. With the passing of seven days, it will disappear.’ Lord, that noise has disappeared.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

They stab with their words
—people unrestrained—
as they do, with arrows,
a tusker gone into battle.⁴
Hearing abusive words spoken,
one should endure them:
a monk with unbothered mind.

NOTES

1. Following the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions. In the Thai edition, this sentence reads, less effectively, “What can I do?”

2. This verse = Dhp 306.

3. Reading *na imehi kataṃ, sapant'ime samaṇā sakya-puttiyā* with the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions. The Thai reads, less grammatically, *na imehi kataṃ, pāpant'ime samaṇā sakya-puttiyā*.

4. Because *sarehi* can mean either “with arrows” or “with voices,” this verse can also be translated:

They goad with their words
–people unrestrained–
as they do, with shouts,
a tusker gone into battle.

The verse thus yields two equally valid interpretations:

a) The people stabbing the elephant with arrows (*sarehi*) are enemy soldiers, trying to bring it down.

b) The people goading the elephant with their shouts and voices (*sarehi*) are soldiers fighting on the same side as the elephant, urging it to charge into danger.

The Commentary gives only the first interpretation. But if we accept both interpretations, the verse contains a more useful double warning: When there's a controversy, beware of the unrestrained people on both sides. Learn to endure the hurtful words of those on the other side who want to bring you down, and the hurtful words of those on your side who try to rouse your anger so that you will say something rash.

4:9 Upasena Vaṅgantaputta (Upasena Vaṅgantaputta Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion, when Ven. Upasena Vaṅgantaputta was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking appeared to his awareness: “What a gain, what a true gain it is for me that my teacher is the Blessed One, worthy and fully self-awakened; that I have gone forth from home to the homeless life in a well-taught Dhamma & Vinaya; that my companions in the holy life are virtuous and endowed with admirable qualities; that I have achieved

culmination in terms of the precepts; that my mind is unified and well-concentrated; that I am an arahant, with effluents ended; that I have great power & great might. Fortunate has been my life; fortunate will be my death.”

Then the Blessed One, comprehending with his awareness the line of thinking that had appeared to Ven. Upasena Vaṅgantaputta’s awareness, on that occasion exclaimed:

He doesn’t regret
 what life has been,
doesn’t grieve
 at death,
if–enlightened¹–
 he has seen that state.
He doesn’t grieve
in the midst of grief.
For one who has crushed
craving for becoming–
the monk of peaceful mind–
birth & the wandering on
 are totally ended.
He has no further becoming.²

NOTES

1. Enlightened (*dhīra*): Throughout this translation I have rendered *buddha* as “awakened,” and *dhīra* as “enlightened.” As Jan Gonda points out in his book, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, the word *dhīra* was used in Vedic and Buddhist poetry to mean a person who has the heightened powers of mental vision needed to perceive the “light” of the underlying principles of the cosmos, together with the expertise to implement those principles in the affairs of life and to reveal them to others. A person enlightened in this sense may also be awakened, but is not necessarily so.

2. This last verse is identical with a verse in Sn 3:12 (verse 746 in the PTS edition).

4:10 *Sāriputta (Sāriputta Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta was sitting not far from the Blessed One—his legs crossed, his body held erect—reflecting on the peace within himself. The Blessed One saw Ven. Sāriputta sitting not far away—his legs crossed, his body held erect—reflecting on the peace within himself.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

For the monk whose mind is
peaceful, at peace,
whose cord is cut,¹
birth & the wandering on
are totally ended.
Freed is he
from Māra's bonds.

NOTE

1. The cord (to becoming) is craving.

5 : SONA THE ELDER

5:1 The King (Rājan Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion King Pasenadi Kosala had gone with Queen Mallikā to the upper palace. Then he said to her, "Mallikā, is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?"

"No, great king. There is no one dearer to me than myself. And what about you, great king? Is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?"

"No, Mallikā. There is no one dearer to me than myself."

Then the king, descending from the palace, 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, lord, when I had gone with Queen Mallikā to the upper palace, I said to her, 'Mallikā, is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?'

"When this was said, she said to me, 'No, great king. There is no one dearer to me than myself. And what about you, great king? Is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?'

"When this was said, I said to her, 'No, Mallikā. There is no one dearer to me than myself.'"

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Searching all directions
with your awareness,
you find no one dearer
than yourself.
In the same way, others

are thickly dear to themselves.
So you shouldn't hurt others
if you love yourself.

5:2 Short-lived (Appāyuka Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Ven. Ānanda, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, 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, "It's amazing, sir. It's astounding—how short-lived the Blessed One's mother was. Seven days after the Blessed One's birth she died and reappeared among the Contented [Tusita] (deva-) group."

"That's the way it is, Ānanda. That's the way it is, for the mothers of bodhisattas are short-lived. Seven days after the bodhisattas' birth, the bodhisattas' mothers pass away and reappear among the Contented (deva-) group."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Those who have come to be,
those who will be:
All
will go,
leaving the body behind.
The skillful person,
realizing the loss of all,
should live the holy life
ardently.

5:3 The Leper (Kuṭṭhi Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion in Rājagaha there was a leper named Suppabuddha, a poor, pitiful wretch of a person. And on that occasion the Blessed One was sitting surrounded by a large assembly, teaching the Dhamma. Suppabuddha the leper saw the large gathering of people from afar and thought to himself, "Without a doubt, someone must be distributing staple or non-staple food there. Why don't I go over to that large group of people, and maybe there I'll get some staple or non-staple food." So he went over to the large group of people. Then he saw the Blessed One sitting surrounded by a large assembly, teaching the Dhamma. On seeing this, he realized, "There's no one distributing staple or non-staple food there. That's Gotama the contemplative (sitting) surrounded, teaching the Dhamma. Why don't I listen to the Dhamma?" So he sat down to one side right there, [thinking,] "I, too, will listen to the Dhamma."

Then the Blessed One, having encompassed the awareness of the entire assembly with his awareness, asked himself, "Now who here is capable of understanding the Dhamma?" He saw Suppabuddha the leper sitting in the assembly, and on seeing him the thought occurred to him, "This person here is capable of understanding the Dhamma." So, aiming at Suppabuddha the leper, he gave a step-by-step talk, i.e., he proclaimed a talk on generosity, on virtue, on heaven; he declared the drawbacks, degradation, & corruption of sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then when the Blessed One knew that Suppabuddha the leper's mind was ready, malleable, free from hindrances, elevated, & clear, he then gave the Dhamma-talk peculiar to Awakened Ones, i.e., stress, origination, cessation, & path. And just as a clean cloth, free of stains, would properly absorb a dye, in the same way, as Suppabuddha the leper was sitting in that very seat, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose within him, "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation."

Having seen the Dhamma, reached the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, gained a foothold in the Dhamma, having crossed over & beyond doubt, having had no more perplexity, having gained

fearlessness & independence from others with regard to the Teacher's message, he got up from his seat and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "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 carry a lamp into the dark 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, and to the Community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life."

Then Suppabuddha the leper, having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One's Dhamma talk, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and left, circling him to the right. Not long after his departure he was attacked & killed by a cow with a young calf.

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, "Lord, the leper named Suppabuddha, whom the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with a Dhamma talk, has died. What is his destination? What is his future state?"

"Monks, Suppabuddha the leper was wise. He practiced the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma and did not pester me with issues related to the Dhamma. With the destruction of the first three fetters, he is a stream-winner, not subject to states of deprivation, headed for self-awakening for sure."

When this was said, one of the monks said to the Blessed One, "Lord, what was the cause, what was the reason, why Suppabuddha the leper was such a poor, pitiful wretch of a person?"

"Once, monks, in this very Rājagaha, Suppabuddha the leper was the son of a rich money-lender. While being escorted to a pleasure park, he saw Tagarasikhin the Private Buddha¹ going for alms in the city. On seeing him, the thought occurred to him, 'Who is this leper prowling

occasion, a large number of boys on the road between Sāvattthī & Jeta's Grove were catching fish. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. He saw the large number of boys on the road between Sāvattthī & Jeta's Grove catching little fish. Seeing them, he went up to them and, on arrival, said to them, “Boys, do you fear pain? Do you dislike pain?”

“Yes, lord, we fear pain. We dislike pain.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

If you fear pain,
if you dislike pain,
don't anywhere do an evil deed
in open or in secret.
If you're doing or will do
an evil deed,
you won't escape pain
 catching up
 as you run away.

5:5 Uposatha (Uposatha Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. And on that occasion, the Blessed One—it being the observance day—was sitting surrounded by the community of monks. Then Ven. Ānanda—when the night was far advanced, at the end of the first watch—got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, “Lord, the night is far advanced. The first watch has ended. The community of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to them.” When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a second time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the middle watch, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, “Lord, the night is far advanced. The second watch has ended. The community of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to them.” When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a third time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the last watch, as dawn was approaching and the face of the night was beaming, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, “Lord, the night is far advanced. The last watch has ended. Dawn is approaching and the face of the night is beaming. The community of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to the community of monks.”

“Ānanda, the gathering isn’t pure.”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna: “In reference to which individual did the Blessed One just now say, ‘Ānanda, the gathering isn’t pure?’” So he directed his mind, encompassing with his awareness the awareness of the entire community of monks. He saw that individual—unprincipled, evil, unclean and suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions, not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so, inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature—sitting in the midst of the community of monks. On seeing him, he got up, went over to that individual, and on reaching him said, “Get up, friend. You have been seen by the Blessed One. You have no affiliation with the community of monks.” Then the individual remained silent. A second time.... A third time, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, “Get up, friend. You have been seen by the Blessed One. You have no affiliation with the community of monks.” And for a third time the individual remained silent.

Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, grabbing that individual by the arm, having expelled him through the outside door of the porch and locking

the bolt, approached the Blessed One and on arrival said, “I have expelled that individual, lord. The gathering is now pure. Let the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to the community of monks.”

“Isn’t it amazing, Moggallāna. Isn’t it astounding, how that worthless man waited until he was grabbed by the arm.” Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “From now on I will no longer perform the observance or recite the Pāṭimokkha. From now on, you alone, monks, will perform the observance and recite the Pāṭimokkha. It is impossible, it cannot happen, that a Tathāgata would perform the observance or recite the Pāṭimokkha with an impure gathering.

“Monks, there are these eight amazing & astounding qualities of the ocean because of which, as they see them again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean. Which eight?

“[1] The ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch.¹ The fact that the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch: This is the first amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

[2] And furthermore, the ocean is stable and does not overstep its tideline.... This is the second amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.[3] And furthermore, the ocean does not tolerate a dead body. Any dead body in the ocean gets quickly washed to the shore and thrown up on dry land.... This is the third amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.[4] And furthermore, whatever great rivers there are—such as the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, the Mahī—on reaching the ocean, give up their former names and are classed simply as ‘ocean’.... This is the fourth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.[5] And furthermore, though the rivers of the world pour into the ocean, and rains fall from the sky, no swelling or diminishing in the ocean for that reason can be discerned.... This is the fifth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean

because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.[6] And furthermore, the ocean has a single taste: that of salt.... This is the sixth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.[7] And furthermore, the ocean has these many treasures of various kinds: pearls, sapphires, lapis lazuli, shells, quartz, coral, silver, gold, rubies, & cat's eyes.... This is the seventh amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.[8] And furthermore, the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas. There are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long. The fact that the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas; and there are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long: This is the eighth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"These are the eight amazing & astounding qualities of the ocean because of which, as they see them again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"In the same way, monks, there are eight amazing & astounding qualities of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see them again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya. Which eight?

[1] Just as the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch; in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch. The fact that this Dhamma & Vinaya has a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch: This is the first amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[2] And

furthermore, just as the ocean is stable and does not overstep its tideline; in the same way, my disciples do not—even for the sake of their lives—overstep the training rules I have formulated for them.... This is the second amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[3] And furthermore, just as the ocean does not tolerate a dead body—any dead body in the ocean getting quickly washed to the shore and thrown up on dry land—in the same way, if an individual is unprincipled, evil, unclean & suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions—not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so, inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature—the community has no affiliation with him. Having quickly gathered together, they suspend him from the community. Even though he may be sitting in the midst of the community of monks, he is far from the community, and the community far from him.... This is the third amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[4] And furthermore, just as whatever great rivers there are—such as the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, the Mahī—on reaching the ocean, give up their former names and are classed simply as ‘ocean’; in the same way, when members of the four castes—noble warriors, brahmans, merchants, & workers—go forth from home to the homeless life in this Dhamma & Vinaya declared by the Tathāgata, they give up their former names and clans and are classed simply as ‘contemplatives, sons of the Sakyan’.... This is the fourth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[5] And furthermore, just as the rivers of the world pour into the ocean, and rains fall from the sky, but no swelling or diminishing in the ocean for that reason can be discerned; in the same way, although many monks are totally unbound into the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining, no swelling or diminishing in the property of unbinding for that reason can be discerned.... This is the fifth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[6] And furthermore,

just as the ocean has a single taste—that of salt—in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has a single taste: that of release.... This is the sixth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[7] And furthermore, just as the ocean has these many treasures of various kinds—pearls, sapphires, lapis lazuli, shells, quartz, coral, silver, gold, rubies, & cat’s eyes—in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has these many treasures of various kinds: the four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.... This is the seventh amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.[8] And furthermore, just as the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas, and there are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long; in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya is the abode of such mighty beings as these: stream-winners & those practicing to realize the fruit of stream-entry; once-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of once-returning; non-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of non-returning; arahants & those practicing for arahantship. The fact that this Dhamma & Vinaya is the abode of such mighty beings as these—stream-winners & those practicing to realize the fruit of stream-entry; once-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of once-returning; non-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of non-returning; arahants & those practicing for arahantship: This is the eighth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“These are the eight amazing & astounding qualities of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see them again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

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.²

NOTES

1. *Na āyataken'eva papāto*: literally, "not for quite a long stretch a sudden drop-off." The Commentary, however, insists that this phrase means, "with no abrupt drop-off." There are three reasons for not accepting the Commentary's interpretation here. (a) The first is grammatical. The word *āyataka* means "long, drawn out; lasting a long time." To interpret *āyakena*, the instrumental of a word meaning "long, drawn out," to mean "abrupt" makes little sense. (b) The second reason is geographical. The continental shelf off the east coast of India does have a sudden drop-off after a long gradual slope. (c) The third reason is doctrinal. As noted in the interpretation of the simile, the shape of the ocean floor corresponds to the course of the practice. If there were no sudden drop-off, there would be no sudden penetration to awakening. However, there are many cases of sudden penetration in the Canon, Exhibit A being Bāhiya's attainment of arahantship in [Ud 1:10](#).

2. This verse also appears among the verses attributed to Ven. Sirimaṇḍa at Thag 6:13 (verse 447 in the PTS edition).

See also: AN 3:129

5:6 *Soṇa (Soṇa Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kaccāna was living among the people of Avantī on Pavatta Mountain near the Osprey Habitat. And at that time the lay follower Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa was Ven. Mahā Kaccāna's supporter. Then as Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to his awareness: "According to the Dhamma that Master Mahā Kaccāna teaches, it's not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my

hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

So he went to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna and on arrival, having bowed down to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, "Just now, venerable sir, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to my awareness: 'According to the Dhamma that Master Mahā Kaccāna teaches, it's not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?' Give me the going-forth, Master Mahā Kaccāna!"

When this was said, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna said to Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa, "It's hard, Soṇa, the life-long, one-meal-a-day, sleeping-alone holy life. Please, right there as you are a householder, devote yourself to the message of the Awakened Ones and to the proper-time [i.e., uposatha day], one-meal-a-day, sleeping-alone holy life." And so Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa's idea of going-forth subsided.

Then a second time as Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to his awareness: "According to the Dhamma that Master Mahā Kaccāna teaches, it's not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?"

So he went to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna and on arrival, having bowed down to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, "Just now, venerable sir, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to my awareness: 'According to the Dhamma that Master Mahā Kaccāna teaches, it's not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?' Give me the going-forth, Master Mahā Kaccāna!"

When this was said, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna said to Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa, "It's hard, Soṇa, the life-long, one-meal-a-day, sleeping-alone holy life. Please, right there as you are a householder, devote yourself to the

message of the Awakened Ones and to the proper-time, one-meal-a-day, sleeping-alone holy life.” And so Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa’s idea of going-forth subsided a second time.

Then a third time as Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to his awareness: “According to the Dhamma that Master Mahā Kaccāna teaches, it’s not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?”

So he went to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna and on arrival, having bowed down to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, “Just now, venerable sir, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to my awareness: ‘According to the Dhamma that Master Mahā Kaccāna teaches, it’s not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’ Give me the going-forth, Master Mahā Kaccāna!”

So Ven. Mahā Kaccāna gave Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa the going-forth.

Now at that time the southern country of Avantī was short of monks. So only after three years—having gathered from here & there with hardship & difficulty a quorum-of-ten community of monks¹—did Ven. Mahā Kaccāna give full admission to Ven. Soṇa. Then, after having completed the Rains retreat, as he was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to Ven. Soṇa’s awareness: “I haven’t seen the Blessed One face-to-face. I’ve simply heard that he is like this and like this. If my preceptor would give me permission, I would go to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

So, leaving seclusion in the late afternoon, he went to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, “Just now, venerable sir, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought appeared to my awareness: ‘I haven’t seen the Blessed One face-to-face. I’ve simply heard that he is like this and like this. If my preceptor would give me

permission, I would go to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

“Good, Soṇa. Very good. Go, Soṇa, to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened. You will see the Blessed One who is serene & inspires serene confidence, his senses at peace, his mind at peace, one who has attained the utmost tranquility & poise, tamed, guarded, his senses restrained, a Great One (*nāga*). On seeing him, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name,² ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, [saying: ‘My preceptor, lord, shows reverence with his head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.’”]³

Saying, “As you say, venerable sir,” Ven. Soṇa—delighting in & approving of Ven. Mahā Kaccāna’s words—got up from his seat, bowed down to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, circled him to the right, set his lodging in order, and—taking his bowl & robes—set off wandering toward Sāvathī. Wandering by stages, he arrived at Sāvathī, Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. He 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, “Lord, my preceptor, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, shows reverence with his head to the Blessed One’s feet and asks whether the Blessed One is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort.”

“Are you well, monk? Are you in good health? Have you come along the road with only a little fatigue? And are you not tired of alms-food?”

“I am well, Blessed One. I am in good health, Blessed One. I have come along the road, lord, with only a little fatigue and I am not tired of alms-food.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, saying, “Ānanda, prepare bedding for this visiting monk.”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “When the Blessed One orders me, ‘Ānanda, prepare bedding for this visiting monk,’ he wants to stay in the same dwelling with that monk. The Blessed One wants to stay in the same dwelling with Ven. Soṇa.” So he prepared bedding for

Ven. Soṇa in the dwelling in which the Blessed One was staying. Then the Blessed One, having spent much of the night sitting in the open air, washed his feet and entered the dwelling. Likewise, Ven. Soṇa, having spent much of the night sitting in the open air, washed his feet and entered the dwelling. Then, getting up toward the end of the night, the Blessed One invited Ven. Mahā Soṇa,⁴ saying, “Monk, I would like you to recite the Dhamma.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Soṇa chanted all sixteen parts of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga.⁵ The Blessed One, at the conclusion of Ven. Soṇa’s intonation, expressed high approval: “Good, monk. Very good. You have learned the Aṭṭhaka Vagga [verses] well, have considered them well, have borne them well in mind. You have a fine delivery, clear & faultless, that makes the meaning intelligible. How many Rains [in the monkhood] do you have?”

“I have one Rains, Blessed One.”

“But why did you take so long [to ordain]?”

“For a long time, lord, I have seen the drawbacks in sensuality, but the household life is confining with many duties, many things to be done.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Seeing the drawbacks of the world,
knowing the state without acquisitions,
a noble one doesn’t find joy in evil,
in evil

a clean one doesn’t find joy.⁶

NOTES

1. Originally, a quorum of at least ten monks was required to ordain a new monk. In the version of this story given in the Vinaya (Mv.V.13.1-13), Ven. Mahā Kaccāna sends a request to the Buddha via Ven. Soṇa that some of the Vinaya rules be relaxed outside of the middle Ganges valley, one of them being that the quorum required for ordination be reduced. As a result, the Buddha amended the relevant rule, stating that the quorum of ten was needed only

within the middle Ganges valley, and that outside of the middle Ganges valley a quorum of five would be sufficient to ordain a new monk, provided that at least one of the five be knowledgeable in the Vinaya.

2. The remainder of this paragraph does not appear in Mv.V.13.5. However, at this point in the story, Mv.V.13.5-7 inserts Ven. Mahā Kaccāna's request that Ven. Soṇa, in his name, ask the Buddha to rescind four of the monks' rules in the Southern region, and that he explain a procedure dealing with gifts of cloth that Ven. Mahā Kaccāna found unclear.

3. The passage in brackets appears in the PTS and Burmese editions, but not in the Thai and Sri Lankan editions.

4. This is the only point in the sutta where Ven. Soṇa has the prefix "Great" (Mahā) added to his name.

5. This is apparently the Aṭṭhaka Vagga as we now have it in Sn 4.

6. At Mv.V.13.10, the PTS version of this last line reads, "In the teaching a clean one finds joy." However, in the Thai, Burmese, and Sri Lankan versions of the same passage, the last line is the same as here.

5:7 Revata (Revata Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Revata the Doubter was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, reflecting on [his] purification through the overcoming of doubt. The Blessed One saw Ven. Revata the Doubter sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect, reflecting on [his] purification through the overcoming of doubt.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Any doubts,
about here or the world beyond,
about what is experienced
by/because of others,
by/because of oneself,¹
are abandoned—all—

by the person in jhāna,
ardent,
living the holy life.

NOTE

1. This relates to the question of whether pleasure and pain are self-caused or other-caused. As [Ud 6:5](#) and [Ud 6:6](#) show, this question was a hot topic in the time of the Buddha. However, in SN 12:20, SN 12:35, and SN 12:67 the Buddha refuses to get involved in the issue. See the discussion in *Skill in Questions*, chapter 8.

5:8 Ānanda (Ānanda Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' refuge. And on that occasion, early in the morning of the uposatha, Ven. Ānanda adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Rājagaha for alms. Devadatta saw Ven. Ānanda going for alms in Rājagaha and, on seeing him, went to him. On arrival, he said to him, “From this day forward, friend Ānanda, I will conduct the uposatha & community transactions apart from the Blessed One, apart from the community of monks.”

Then Ven. Ānanda—having gone for alms in Rājagaha, after the meal, returning from his alms round—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, lord, after adjusting my under robe early in the morning and carrying my bowl & robes, I went into Rājagaha for alms. Devadatta saw me going for alms in Rājagaha and, on seeing me, went up to me. On arrival, he said to me, ‘From this day forward, friend Ānanda, I will conduct the uposatha & community transactions apart from the Blessed One, apart from the community of monks.’ Lord, today Devadatta will split the community. He will conduct the uposatha & community transactions [apart from the community].”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The good, for the good, is easy to do.
The good, for the evil, is hard to do.
Evil, for the evil, is easy to do.
Evil, for the noble ones, is hard to do.

5:9 Jeering (*Sadhāyamāna Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was wandering among the Kosalans with a large community of monks. And on that occasion, a large number of youths passed by as if jeering¹ not far from the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw the large number of youths passing by as if jeering not far away.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

False pundits, totally muddled,
speaking in the range of mere words,
babbling as much as they like:
 led on by what,
 they don't know.

NOTE

1. Reading *sadhāyamāna-rūpā* with the Burmese edition. The Thai edition reads, *saddāyamāna-rūpā*—“as if making an uproar”—which doesn't make much sense. The Sri Lankan edition reads, *saddhāyamāna-rūpā*—“as if showing faith”—which makes even less sense.

5:10 Cūḷa Panthaka (*Panthaka Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Cūḷa Panthaka was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, with mindfulness established to the fore. The Blessed One saw Ven. Cūḷa Panthaka sitting not far away, his

legs crossed, his body held erect, with mindfulness established to the fore.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

With steady body,
steady awareness,
—whether standing, sitting, or lying down¹—
a monk determined on mindfulness
gains one distinction
after another.
Having gained one distinction
after another,
he goes where the King of Death
can't see.

NOTE

1. There's a slight paradox in this verse in that the word for "steady" (*ṭhita*) can also mean "standing." Thus when the body is steady and unmoving, it is "standing" regardless of its posture.

6 : BLIND FROM BIRTH

6:1 Relinquishment of the Life Force (Āyusama- osajjana Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. Then, early in the morning, he adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Vesālī for alms. Then, having gone for alms in Vesālī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Get a sitting cloth, Ānanda. We will go to the Pāvāla shrine for the day’s abiding.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda followed along behind the Blessed One, carrying the sitting cloth. Then the Blessed One went to the Pāvāla shrine and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena shrine, the Gotamaka shrine, the Sattamba shrine, the ManySon shrine, the Sāranda shrine, the Pāvāla shrine.¹

“Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power² are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.³ In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.”

But Ven. Ānanda—even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—wasn’t able to understand his meaning. He didn’t request of him, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon.

May the One-Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human and divine beings.” It was as if his mind was possessed by Māra.

A second time... A third time, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena shrine, the Gotamaka shrine, the Sattamba shrine, the ManySon shrine, the Sāranda shrine, the Pāvāla shrine.

“Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.”

But Ven. Ānanda—even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—wasn’t able to understand his meaning. He didn’t request of him, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One-Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human and divine beings.” It was as if his mind was possessed by Māra.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Go, Ānanda. Do what you think it is now time to do.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and—after circling him to the right—went to sit under a tree not far from the Blessed One.

Then, not long after Ven. Ānanda had left, Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing there he said to the Blessed One, “May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One-Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to confidence, desiring rest from the yoke, learned, maintaining the

Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’⁴

“But now, lord, the Blessed One’s monk disciples are experienced, trained, attained to confidence, desiring rest from the yoke, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One-Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my nun disciples... my male lay-follower disciples... my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to maturity, desiring rest from the yoke, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’

“But now, lord, the Blessed One’s female lay-follower disciples are experienced, trained, attained to maturity, desiring rest from the yoke, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One-Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as this holy life of mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are devas & human beings.’ But now, lord, the Blessed One’s holy life is powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are devas & human beings.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One-Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord.”

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Māra, the Most Evil One: “Relax, Evil One. It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.”

Thus at the Pāvāla shrine—mindful & alert—the Blessed One relinquished the fabrications of life.⁵ And as the Blessed One relinquished the fabrications of life, there was a great earthquake, frightening & hair-raising, along with cracks of thunder.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Comparing the incomparable⁶
with coming-into-being,
the sage relinquished
the fabrication of becoming.
Inwardly joyful,
centered,
he split his own
coming-into-being
like a coat of mail.⁷

NOTES

1. As DN 16 makes clear, there were several times in the past where the Buddha, at several different locations, had commented to Ven. Ānanda on how refreshing it was to be in the location where they were staying. This apparently was meant as a sign that living on would not be a burden, for in each case he had then given a broad hint—as he does here—for Ven. Ānanda to invite him to extend his life. As says in the narrative immediately following the events portrayed in this udāna, he would have refused the invitation if offered only twice, but would have accepted it on the third offer. But now that he has abandoned the will to live, he cannot take it on again, so Ven. Ānanda’s final opportunity to make the invitation is lost.

2. “And what is the base of power? Whatever path, whatever practice, leads to the attainment of power, the winning of power: That is called the base of power.

“And what is the development of the base of power? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *desire* & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *persistence*... concentration founded on *intent*... concentration founded on *discrimination* & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the development of the base of power.” – SN 51:26

3. An eon, in the Buddhist cosmology, is an immensely long stretch of time. According to the Commentary here, it can also mean the full lifespan of a human being in that particular period of the eon (Buddhist cosmology allows for a huge fluctuation in human lifespans over the course of an eon). The Commentary adopts this second meaning in this passage, and so takes the Buddha’s statement here as meaning that a person who has developed the bases of power could live for a full lifespan or for a little bit more. In this case, the Pali for the last part of this compound, *kappāvasesam*, would mean, “an eon plus a remainder.”

4. DN 11 defines the miracle of instruction as instruction in training the mind to the point of where it gains release from all suffering and stress.

5. In other words, the Buddha relinquished the will to live longer. It was this relinquishment that led to his total Unbinding three months later.

6. Reading *tulam* as a present participle.

7. The image is of splitting a coat of mail with an arrow.

6:2 Seclusion (*Paṭisalla Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattḥī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. And on that occasion the Blessed One, having emerged from his seclusion in the late afternoon, was sitting outside the doorway of the porch. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

Now on that occasion seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers—their nails, armpit-hair, & body-hair grown long, carrying containers on poles [over their shoulders]—walked past, not far from the Blessed One. King Pasenadi Kosala saw the seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers—their nails, armpit-hair, & body-hair grown long, carrying containers on poles [over their shoulders]—walking past, not far from the Blessed One. On seeing them, he got up from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt down with his right knee on the ground, paid homage to the seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers with his hands palm-to-palm in front his heart, and announced his name three times: "I am the king, venerable sirs, Pasenadi Kosala. I am the king, venerable sirs, Pasenadi Kosala. I am the king, venerable sirs, Pasenadi Kosala."

Then not long after the seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers had passed, King Pasenadi Kosala 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, "Of those in the world who are arahants or on the path to arahantship, are these among them?"

"Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures; living confined with children; using Kāsī fabrics & sandalwood; wearing garlands, scents, & creams; handling gold & silver, it's hard for you to know whether these are arahants or on the path to arahantship.

“It’s through living together that a person’s virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through trading with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through adversity that a person’s endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through discussion that a person’s discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.”

“Amazing, lord! Astounding!—how well that was put by the Blessed One! ‘Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures; living confined with children; using Kāsī fabrics & sandalwood; wearing garlands, scents, & creams; handling gold & silver, it’s hard for you to know whether these are arahants or on the path to arahantship.

“It’s through living together that a person’s virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through trading with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through adversity that a person’s endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through discussion that a person’s discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.’

“These men, lord, are my spies, my scouts, returning after going out through the countryside. They go out first, and then I go. Now, when they have scrubbed off the dirt & mud, are well-bathed & well-perfumed, have trimmed their hair and beards, and have put on white clothes, they will go about endowed and provided with the five strings of sensuality.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

One
should not make an effort everywhere,
should not be another’s hireling,
should not live dependent on another,
should not go about
as a trader in the Dhamma.¹

NOTES

1. SN 3:11 tells a nearly identical version of this story, although it replaces this verse with the following:

Not by appearance
is a man rightly known,
nor should trust be based
on a quick glance,
–for, disguised as well-restrained,
the unrestrained go through this world.
A counterfeit earring made of clay,
a bronze half-dollar coated in gold:
They go about in this world
hidden all around:
impure inside,
beautiful out.

The verse in SN 3:11 may seem more immediately relevant to the situation than the verse given here, but the verse given here is a more interesting and original response to what is happening.

See also: MN 95; MN 110; AN 4:192

6:3 It Was (Ahu Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One sat reflecting on the various evil, unskillful qualities that had been abandoned [in him] and on the various skillful qualities that had gone to the culmination of their development. Then as he realized the various evil, unskillful qualities that had been abandoned [in him] and the various skillful qualities that had gone to the culmination of their development, he on that occasion exclaimed:

Before, it was, then it wasn't.
Before, it wasn't, then it was.
It wasn't, won't be,
& now isn't to be found.¹

NOTE

1. The last half of this verse also appears as the last half a verse attributed to Ven. Kaṇhadinna at Thag 2:30 (verse 180 in the PTS edition). According to the Commentary, these lines refer to the moment of the path to arahantship, which occurs only once and is never repeated.

6:4 Sectarians (1) (Tittha Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion there were many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvathī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing

views. Some of the contemplatives & brahmins held this doctrine, this view: "The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

Some of the contemplatives & brahmins held this doctrine, this view: "The cosmos is not eternal" ... "The cosmos is finite" ... "The cosmos is infinite" ... "The soul is the same thing as the body" ... "The soul is one thing and the body another" ... "After death a Tathāgata exists" ... "After death a Tathāgata does not exist" ... "After death a Tathāgata both exists & does not exist" ... "After death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

And they kept on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, "The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this."

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Sāvattihī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattihī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, "Lord, there are many contemplatives, brahmins, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvattihī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views.... And they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'"

"Monks, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. They don't know what is beneficial and what is harmful. They don't know what is the Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. Not knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful, not knowing what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma, they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'

"Once, monks, in this same Sāvattihī, there was a certain king, and the king said to a certain man, 'Come, my good man. Gather together all the people in Sāvattihī who have been blind from birth.'"

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king, the man—having rounded up all the people in Sāvattthī who had been blind from birth—went to the king and on arrival said, ‘Your majesty, the people in Sāvattthī who have been blind from birth have been gathered together.’

“Very well then, I say, show the blind people an elephant.’

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king, the man showed the blind people an elephant. To some of the blind people he showed the elephant’s head, saying, ‘This, blind people, is what an elephant is like.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s ear, saying, ‘This, blind people, is what an elephant is like.’ To some of them he showed the elephant’s tusk... the elephant’s trunk... the elephant’s body... the elephant’s foot... the elephant’s hindquarters... the elephant’s tail... the tuft at the end of the elephant’s tail, saying, ‘This, blind people, is what an elephant is like.’

“Then, having shown the blind people the elephant, the man went to the king and on arrival said, ‘Your majesty, the blind people have seen the elephant. May your majesty do what you think it is now time to do.’

“Then the king went to the blind people and on arrival asked them, ‘Blind people, have you seen the elephant?’

“Yes, your majesty. We have seen the elephant.’

“Now tell me, blind people, what the elephant is like.’

“The blind people who had been shown the elephant’s head said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a jar.’

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s ear said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a winnowing basket.’

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s tusk said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a plowshare.’¹

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s trunk said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like the pole of a plow.’

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s body said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a granary.’

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s foot said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a post.’

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s hindquarters said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a mortar.’

“Those who had been shown the elephant’s tail said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a pestle.’

“Those who had been shown the tuft at the end of the elephant’s tail said, ‘The elephant, your majesty, is just like a broom.’

“Saying, ‘The elephant is like this, it’s not like that. The elephant’s not like that, it’s like this,’ they struck one another with their fists. That gratified the king.

“In the same way, monks, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. They don’t know what is beneficial and what is harmful. They don’t know what is the Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. Not knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful, not knowing what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma, they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, ‘The Dhamma is like this, it’s not like that. The Dhamma’s not like that, it’s like this.’”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

With regard to these things
they’re attached–
some contemplatives & brahmans.
They quarrel & fight–
people seeing one side.

NOTE

1. Reading *phālo* with the Thai and Sri Lankan editions. According to the PTS dictionary, this word can also mean “iron rod.” The Burmese edition reads, *khīlo*, “post” or “stake.” The Thai edition also includes another variant reading: *sallo*, “arrow.”

6:5 Sectarians (2) (*Tittha Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattḥī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion there were many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvattḥī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views. Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The self & the cosmos are eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The self & the cosmos are not eternal" ... "The self & the cosmos are both eternal and not eternal" ... "The self & the cosmos are neither eternal nor not eternal" ...

"The self & the cosmos are self-made" ... "The self & the cosmos are other-made" ... "The self & the cosmos are both self-made & other-made" ... "The self & the cosmos—without self-making, without other-making—are spontaneously arisen" ...

"Pleasure & pain, the self & the cosmos are self-made" ... "other-made" ... "both self-made & other-made" ... "Pleasure & pain, the self & the cosmos—without self-making, without other-making—are spontaneously arisen. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

And they kept on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, "The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this."

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Sāvattḥī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattḥī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, "Lord, there are many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvattḥī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views.... And they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The

Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this."

"Monks, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. They don't know what is beneficial and what is harmful. They don't know what is the Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. Not knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful, not knowing what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma, they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'"

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

With regard to these things
they're attached—
some contemplatives & brahmans.
Not reaching the footing,¹
they sink in mid-stream.

NOTE

1. This compound—*tamogadham*—is ambiguous in that it can be divided in two ways: *tam-ogadham*, "that footing"; or *tamo-gadham*, "a footing in darkness." The first is the meaning apparently intended here, with "that footing" referring to the deathless (the image is of the point, when crossing a river, where one comes close enough to the far shore that one can touch bottom—see AN 10:58). However, the Buddha was probably conscious that the compound could also be interpreted in the second way, which would have made the term memorable for its shock value. There are several other passages in Pali poetry where terms seem to have been intended to carry both positive and negative meanings for this reason. See, for example, Dh 97, Sn 4:10, and Sn 4:13.

See also: DN 2; SN 12:20; SN 12:35; SN 12:67; AN 3:62

6:6 Sectarians (3) (*Tittha Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattḥī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion there were many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvattḥī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views. Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The self & the cosmos are eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

Some of the contemplatives & brahmans held this doctrine, this view: "The self & the cosmos are not eternal" ... "The self & the cosmos are both eternal and not eternal" ... "The self & the cosmos are neither eternal nor not eternal" ...

"The self & the cosmos are self-made" ... "The self & the cosmos are other-made" ... "The self & the cosmos are both self-made & other-made" ... "The self & the cosmos—without self-making, without other-making—are spontaneously arisen" ...

"Pleasure & pain, the self & the cosmos are self-made" ... "other-made" ... "both self-made & other-made" ... "Pleasure & pain, the self & the cosmos—without self-making, without other-making—are spontaneously arisen. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

And they kept on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, "The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this."

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Sāvattḥī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattḥī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, "Lord, there are many contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers of various sects living around Sāvattḥī with differing views, differing opinions, differing beliefs, dependent for support on their differing views.... And they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The

Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this."

"Monks, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. They don't know what is beneficial and what is harmful. They don't know what is the Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. Not knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful, not knowing what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma, they keep on arguing, quarreling, & disputing, wounding one another with weapons of the mouth, saying, 'The Dhamma is like this, it's not like that. The Dhamma's not like that, it's like this.'"

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

People are intent on the idea of
 'I-making'
and attached to the idea of
 'other-making.'
Some don't realize this,
nor do they see it as an arrow.
But to one who,
having extracted this arrow,
 sees,
[the thought] 'I am doing,'¹ doesn't occur;
'Another is doing,' doesn't occur.
This human race is
 possessed by conceit
 bound by conceit,
 tied down by conceit.
Speaking hurtfully because of their views
they don't go beyond
 the wandering-on.

NOTE

1. See [Ud 1:1, note 3](#).

See also: SN 12:20; SN 12:35; SN 12:67; AN 3:62

courtesan, their minds enthralled. Arguing, quarreling, & disputing, they attacked one another with fists, attacked one another with clods of dirt, attacked one another with sticks, attacked one another with knives, so that they fell into death or death-like pain.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “At present, two factions in Rājagaha are infatuated with a certain courtesan, their minds enthralled. Arguing, quarreling, & disputing, they attack one another with fists, attack one another with clods of dirt, attack one another with sticks, attack one another with knives, so that they fall into death or death-like pain.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

What’s been attained, what’s to be attained,
are both strewn with dust
by one who trains
in line with the afflicted.

Any precept & practice life whose essence is training,
and the holy life whose essence is service:

This is one extreme.

Any who say, “There’s no harm in sensual desires”:

This, the second extreme.

Both of these extremes cause the growth of cemeteries,
and cemeteries cause views to grow.

Not directly knowing these two extremes,
some fall short,
some run too far.¹

But those who, directly knowing them,
didn’t exist there,
didn’t construe

by means of them:²

For them
there's no whirling through the cycle
to be described.

NOTES

1. See Iti 49, and the discussion of this point in *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapters 2 and 6.

2. For an example of “not existing there,” see the Buddha’s instructions to Bāhiya in [Ud 1:10](#). For an example of freeing oneself from construing, see the description of a sage at peace near the conclusion of MN 140.

6:9 Rushing (*Upāti Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now on that occasion, in the pitch-black darkness of the night, the Blessed One was sitting in the open air while oil lamps were burning. And on that occasion, many flying insects, flying into & around those lamps, were meeting their downfall, meeting their misfortune, meeting their downfall & misfortune in those oil lamps. The Blessed One saw those flying insects, flying into & around those lamps, meeting their downfall, meeting their misfortune, meeting their downfall & misfortune in those oil lamps.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Rushing headlong,
missing what’s essential,
bringing on one new bond
after another,
they fall, like insects into a flame:
those intent
on things seen,
things heard.

6:10 They Appear (Uppajjanti Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Ven. Ānanda 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, "Lord, as long as Tathāgatas—worthy & rightly self-awakened—do not appear in the world, that's when the wanderers of other sects are worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. But when Tathāgatas—worthy & rightly self-awakened—appear in the world, that's when the wanderers of other sects are not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage; nor are they recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. Now only the Blessed One is worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick—along with the community of monks."

"That's how it is, Ānanda. That's how it is. As long as Tathāgatas—worthy & rightly self-awakened—do not appear in the world, that's when the wanderers of other sects are worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. But when Tathāgatas—worthy & rightly self-awakened—appear in the world, that's when the wanderers of other sects are not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage; nor are they recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. Now only the Tathāgata is worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick—along with the community of monks."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The glowworm shines
as long as the sun hasn't risen.
But when that splendor rises,

the glowworm's light is destroyed.

It no longer shines.

Likewise, sectarians¹ shine
as long as those rightly awakened
don't appear in the world.

Those logicians² aren't purified,
nor are their disciples.

Those of bad views
aren't released
from stress.

NOTES

1. Reading *titthiyānaṃ* with the Thai edition. The Sri Lankan and Burmese editions read, *takkikānaṃ*, "logicians." The parallel passage in the Udānavarga (29.2) agrees with this latter version.

2. In DN 1, the Buddha criticizes the philosophies of many of his contemporaries for having been "hammered out by logic."

7 : THE MINOR SECTION

7:1 Bhaddiya (1) (Bhaddiya Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. At that time Ven. Sāriputta was—with a variety of approaches—instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf with Dhamma-talk. As Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf was—with a variety of approaches—being instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by Ven. Sāriputta with Dhamma-talk, his mind, through lack of clinging/sustenance, was released from the effluents.

The Blessed One saw that as Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf was—with a variety of approaches—being instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by Ven. Sāriputta with Dhamma-talk, his mind, through lack of clinging/sustenance, was released from the effluents.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Above, below, everywhere released,
he doesn’t focus on “I am this.”¹
Thus released, he crosses the flood
not crossed before,
for the sake of no further becoming.

NOTE

1. See [Ud 1:1, note 3](#).

7:2 Bhaddiya (2) (Bhaddiya Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. At that time Ven. Sāriputta was—with a variety of approaches—instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf with Dhamma-talk to an even greater extent, as he thought that Bhaddiya was still just a learner.

The Blessed One saw that Ven. Sāriputta was—with a variety of approaches—instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf with Dhamma-talk to an even greater extent, as he thought that Bhaddiya was still just a learner.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

He has cut the cycle,
has gone away
to freedom from longing.
The dried-up stream
no longer flows.
The cycle, cut,
no longer turns.
This, just this,
is the end of stress.

7:3 Attached to Sensual Pleasures (1) (Kāmesu Satta Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion, most of the people in Sāvathī were excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They lived infatuated with, greedy for, addicted to, fastened to, absorbed in sensual pleasures. Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Sāvathī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvathī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Most of

the people in Sāvattthī are excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They live infatuated with, greedy for, addicted to, fastened to, absorbed in sensual pleasures.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Attached to sensual pleasures,
attached to sensual ties,
seeing no blame in the fetter,
never will those attached to the fetter, the tie,
cross over the flood
so great & wide.

7:4 Attached to Sensual Pleasures (2) (Kāmesu Satta Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion, most of the people in Sāvattthī were excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They lived infatuated with, greedy for, addicted to, fastened to, absorbed in sensual pleasures. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. He saw that most of the people in Sāvattthī were excessively attached to sensual pleasures, that they live infatuated with, greedy for, addicted to, fastened to, absorbed in sensual pleasures.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Blinded by sensuality
covered by the net,
veiled with the veil of craving,
bound by the Kinsman of the heedless,¹
like fish in the mouth of a trap,²
they go to aging & death,
like a milk-drinking calf to its mother.

NOTES

1. Māra. There is an alliterative play here between the word “bound” (*bandhā*) and “by the Kinsman” (*bandhunā*).

2. This verse, up to this point, is identical with a verse attributed to Ven. Rāhula in Thag 4:8 (verse 297 in the PTS edition).

7:5 *The Dwarf (Lakuṇṭha Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf, following behind a large number of monks, was going to the Blessed One. From afar, the Blessed One saw Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf coming, following behind a large number of monks: ugly, unsightly, stunted, treated with condescension¹ by most of the monks. On seeing him, the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, do you see that monk coming from afar, following behind a large number of monks: ugly, unsightly, stunted, treated with condescension by most of the monks?”

“Yes, lord.”

“That, monks, is a monk of great power, great might. The attainment already attained by that monk is not of a sort easily attained. And by means of it he has reached & remains in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself right in the here-&-now.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Faultless,
canopied in white,
the single-spoked chariot rolls along.
See him coming, untroubled:
one whose stream is cut,
free from bonds.²

NOTES

1. The Commentary notes that misbehaving monks liked to stroke his hands and catch hold of his ears.

2. In SN 41:5, Citta the householder explains this verse as follows:

"Faultless stands for virtues.

"Canopied in white stands for release.

"Single-spoked stands for mindfulness.

"Rolls along stands for coming and going.

"Chariot stands for this body composed of the four elements....

"Passion is a trouble; aversion is a trouble; delusion is a trouble. These have been abandoned by a monk whose effluents have ended—their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That's why the monk whose effluents have ended is said to be *untroubled*.

"Him coming stands for the arahant.

"Stream stands for craving. That has been abandoned by a monk whose effluents have ended—its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That's why the monk whose effluents have ended is said to be *one whose stream is cut*.

"Passion is a bond; aversion is a bond; delusion is a bond. These have been abandoned by a monk whose effluents have ended—their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That's why the monk whose effluents have ended is said to be *free from bonds*."

SN 21:6 starts with the same prose passage as this udṅna but ends with a different verse:

Swans, cranes, & peacocks,
elephants & spotted antelope
all fear the lion
(though) in body there's no comparison.
In the same way, among human beings,
even if one is small
but endowed in discernment,
one is great for that—
not the fool endowed in physique.

See also: SN 21:5

7:6 *The Ending of Craving (Taṇhākhaya Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Aññāta Koṇḍañña¹ was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, reflecting on [his] release through the total ending of craving. The Blessed One saw Ven. Aññāta Koṇḍañña sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect, reflecting on [his] release through the total ending of craving.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

For someone with no root, no soil, no leaves
–how creepers?
Who's fit to criticize him?–
the enlightened one freed
from bonds.
Even devas praise him.
Even by Brahmā he's praised.

NOTE

1. The Buddha's first disciple. See SN 56:11.

7:7 *The Ending of Objectification (Papañcakhaya Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One was sitting, contemplating his own abandoning of the perceptions & categories of objectification.

Then the Blessed One, realizing his own abandoning of the perceptions & categories of objectification, on that occasion exclaimed:

One who
has no objectifications,¹
no standing-place,²
who has gone beyond
the tether & cross-bar:
The world, even with its devas,
doesn't look down on him—
he, going about without craving,
a sage.

NOTES

1. *Papañca*: A mode of thought that begins with the assumption, "I am the thinker," and develops its categories and perceptions—about self and world, about existence and non-existence—from there. For more on this topic, see the introduction to MN 18 and *Skill in Questions*, chapters 3 and 8.

2. On the teaching that the awakened person has no location, see *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapter 7.

7:8 *Kaccāna* (*Kaccāna Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvathī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time Ven. Mahā Kaccāna was sitting not far from the Blessed One, his legs crossed, his body held erect, having mindfulness immersed in the body well-established to the fore within. The Blessed One saw Ven. Mahā Kaccāna sitting not far away, his legs crossed, his body held erect, having mindfulness immersed in the body well-established to the fore within.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

If one were to have
mindfulness always
established, continually
immersed in the body,
(thinking,)

“It should not be,
it should not be mine;
it will not be,
it will not be mine”¹—
there,
in that step-by-step dwelling,
one in no long time
would cross over
attachment.

NOTE

1. This passage can also be translated as:

“It should not be,
it should not occur to me;
it will not be,
it will not occur to me.”

In AN 10:29, the Buddha recommends this view as conducive to developing dispassion for becoming. However, in MN 106 he warns that it can lead to the refined equanimity of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, which can become an object of clinging. Only if that subtle clinging is detected can all clinging be abandoned.

The Canon’s most extended discussion of this theme of meditation is in SN 22:55. See [Appendix Two](#).

For more on this topic, see *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapter 5.

7:9 *The Well (Udapāna Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was wandering among the Mallans, together with a large community of monks, and came to a brahman village of the Mallans named Thūna. The brahman householders of Thūna heard that “Gotama the Sakyan contemplative, gone forth from the Sakyan clan, is wandering among the Mallans together with a large community of monks, and has arrived at Thūna.”

So they filled the well all the way to the brim with grass & chaff, [thinking], “Don’t let these shaven-headed contemplatives draw drinking water.”

Then the Blessed One, going down from the road, went to a certain tree, and on arrival sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he said to Ven. Ānanda: “Please, Ānanda, fetch me some drinking water from that well.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda replied, “Just now, lord, the brahman householders of Thūna filled that well all the way to the brim with grass & chaff, [thinking], ‘Don’t let these shaven-headed contemplatives draw drinking water.’”

A second time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda: “Please, Ānanda, fetch me some drinking water from that well.”

A second time, Ven. Ānanda replied, “Just now, lord, the brahman householders of Thūna filled that well all the way to the brim with grass & chaff, [thinking], ‘Don’t let these shaven-headed contemplatives draw drinking water.’”

A third time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda: “Please, Ānanda, fetch me some drinking water from that well.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—taking a bowl—went to the well. As he was approaching the well, it expelled all the grass & chaff from its mouth and stood filled to the brim—streaming, as it were—with pristine water, undisturbed & clear. The thought occurred to him, “How amazing! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that, while I was approaching the well, it expelled all the grass & chaff from its mouth and stood filled to the brim—streaming, as it were—with pristine water, undisturbed & clear.”

Taking drinking water in his bowl, he went to the Blessed One and on arrival said, “How amazing, lord! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that, while I was approaching the well, it expelled all the grass & chaff from its mouth and stood filled to the brim—streaming, as it were—with pristine water, undisturbed & clear. Drink the water, O Blessed One! Drink the water, O One-Well-Gone!”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

What need for a well
if there were waters always?
Having cut craving
by the root,
one would go about searching
for what?

7:10 King Udena (Udena Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. And on that occasion the inner quarters of King Udena’s royal park had burned down, and 500 women, headed by Sāmāvatī, had died.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & robes—went into Kosambī for alms. Having gone for alms in Kosambī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the inner quarters of King Udena’s royal park have burned down, and 500 women, headed by Sāmāvatī, have died. What is the destination of those female lay followers? What is their future course?”

“Monks, among those female lay followers are stream-winners, once-returners, & non-returners. All of those female lay followers, monks, died not without [noble] fruit.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Bound round with delusion, the world
only appears to be competent.
Bound with acquisitions, foolish,
surrounded by darkness,

it seems eternal,
but for one who sees,
there is nothing.

8 : PĀṬALI VILLAGE

8:1 Unbinding (1) (*Nibbāna Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One was instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with Dhamma-talk concerned with unbinding. The monks—receptive, attentive, focusing their entire awareness, lending ear—listened to the Dhamma.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

There is that dimension, monks, where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor staying; neither passing away nor arising: unestablished,¹ unevolving, without support [mental object].² This, just this, is the end of stress.

NOTES

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

2. See SN 22:53.

See also: DN 11; MN 49; SN 35:117

8:2 *Unbinding (2) (Nibbāna Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One was instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with Dhamma-talk concerned with unbinding. The monks—receptive, attentive, focusing their entire awareness, lending ear—listened to the Dhamma.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

It's hard to see the unaffected,
for the truth is not easily seen.
Craving is pierced
 in one who knows;
 For one who sees,
there is nothing.

8:3 *Unbinding (3) (Nibbāna Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One was instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with Dhamma-talk concerned with unbinding. The monks—receptive, attentive, focusing their entire awareness, lending ear—listened to the Dhamma.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

There is, monks, an unborn¹—unbecome—unmade—
unfabricated. If there were not that unborn—unbecome—
unmade—unfabricated, there would not be the case that
escape from the born—become—made—fabricated would
be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn—

unbecome–unmade–unfabricated, escape from the
born–become–made–fabricated is discerned.²

NOTES

1. Some scholars have argued that the term “unborn” cannot be used to distinguish unbinding from transmigration, as there are discourses (such as SN 15:3) stating that transmigration itself has no beginning point, implying that it too is unborn. Thus they argue that in this passage the term *ajātaṃ*, although a past participle, should be translated as, “without birth.” However, this argument is based on two questionable premises. First, it assumes that unbinding is here being contrasted with transmigration, even though the passage simply contrasts it with the fabricated. Secondly, even assuming that the phrase “the born–the become,” etc., is a reference to transmigration, the scholars’ argument is based on a misreading of SN 15:3. There, transmigration is said to have an “inconceivable” or “undiscoverable” beginning point. This is very different from saying that it is unborn. If transmigration were unborn, it would be unfabricated (see AN 3:47), which is obviously not the case. Thus, in translating this term to describe unbinding, I have maintained the straight grammatical reading, “unborn.”

2. Iti 43 gives this exclamation as the synopsis of a Dhamma talk, followed by this verse:

The born, become, produced,
made, fabricated, impermanent,
fabricated of aging & death,
a nest of illnesses, perishing,
come-into-being through nourishment
and the guide [that is craving]–
is unfit for delight.

The escape from that
is
calm, permanent,
a sphere beyond conjecture,
unborn, unproduced,
the sorrowless, stainless state,

the cessation of stressful qualities,
stilling-of-fabrications bliss.

8:4 Unbinding (4) (Nibbāna Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion the Blessed One was instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with Dhamma-talk concerned with unbinding. The monks—receptive, attentive, focusing their entire awareness, lending ear—listened to the Dhamma.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

One who is dependent has wavering. One who is independent has no wavering. There being no wavering, there is calm. There being calm, there is no yearning. There being no yearning, there is no coming or going. There being no coming or going, there is no passing away or arising. There being no passing away or arising, there is neither a here nor a there nor a between-the-two. This, just this, is the end of stress.¹

NOTE

1. In MN 144 and SN 35:87, Ven. Cunda quotes this passage as a teaching of the Buddha and tells Ven. Channa to keep it firmly in mind.

See also: MN 140; SN 22:53

8:5 Cunda (Cunda Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, while the Blessed One was wandering among the Mallans with a large community of monks, he arrived at Pāvā. There he stayed near Pāvā in the mango grove of Cunda the silversmith.

Cunda the silversmith heard, “The Blessed One, they say, while wandering among the Mallans with a large community of monks and reaching Pāvā, is staying near Pāvā in my mango grove.”

So Cunda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma-talk. Then Cunda—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One’s Dhamma-talk—said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the community of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Cunda, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, and left, circling him to the right. Then, at the end of the night, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food—including a large amount of pig-delicacy¹—prepared in his own home, he announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went together with the community of monks to Cunda’s home. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he said to Cunda, “Cunda, serve me with the pig-delicacy you have had prepared, and the community of monks with the other staple & non-staple food you have had prepared.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Cunda served the Blessed One with the pig-delicacy he had had prepared, and the community of monks with the other staple & non-staple food he had had prepared. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Cunda, bury the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit. I don’t see anyone in the world—together with its devas, Māras, & Brahmas, with its people with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & commonfolk—in whom, when it was ingested, it would go to a healthy change, aside from the Tathāgata.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Cunda buried the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, after bowing down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the

Blessed One—after instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging him with Dhamma-talk—got up from his seat and left.

Then in the Blessed One, after he had eaten Cunda’s meal, there arose a severe illness accompanied with (the passing of) blood, with intense pains & deadly. But the Blessed One endured it—mindful, alert, & not struck down by it.

Then he addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, we will go to Kusinarā.”
“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

I have heard that,
on eating Cunda the silversmith’s meal,
the enlightened one was touched by illness—
fierce, deadly.
After he had eaten the pig-delicacy,
a fierce sickness arose in the Teacher.
After being purged of it,
the Blessed One said,
“To the city of Kusinarā
I will go.”²

Then the Blessed One, going down from the road, went to a certain tree and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will sit down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now 500 carts have passed through. The meager river—cut by the wheels—flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kukuṭa river is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water,³ with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A second time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ananda, “Ananda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

A second time, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now 500 carts have passed through. The meager water—cut by the wheels—flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kukuṭa River is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water, with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A third time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—taking a bowl—went to the river. And the meager river that, cut by the wheels, had been flowing turbid & disturbed, on his approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed. The thought occurred to him, “How amazing! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed!” Fetching water with the bowl, he went to the Blessed One and on arrival said, “How amazing! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed! Drink the water, O Blessed One! Drink the water, O One-Well-Gone!”

Then the Blessed One drank the water.⁴

Then the Blessed One, together with the community of monks, went to the Kukuṭa River and, after arriving at the Kukuṭa River, going down, bathing, drinking, & coming back out, went to a mango grove. On arrival, the Blessed One said to Ven. Cundaka, “Cundaka, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will lie down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Cundaka arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One, lying on his right side, took up the lion’s posture, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful, alert, and attending to the perception of getting up. Ven. Cundaka sat in front of him.

The awakened one,
–having gone to the little Kukuṭa river
with its pristine, pleasing water, clear–
the Teacher, seeming very tired,
the Tathāgata, unequalled in the world
went down, bathed, drank, & came out.

Honored, surrounded,
in the midst of the group of monks,
the Blessed One, Teacher,
proceeding here in the Dhamma,
the great seer,
went to the mango grove.

He addressed the monk named Cundaka,
“Spread it out, folded in four
for me to lie down.”

Ordered by the One of developed mind,
Cundaka quickly set it out, folded in four.
The Teacher lay down, seeming very tired,
and Cundaka sat down there before him.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, if anyone tries to incite remorse in Cunda the silversmith, saying, ‘It’s no gain for you, friend Cunda, it’s ill-done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, was totally unbound,’ then Cunda’s remorse should be allayed (in this way): ‘It’s a gain for you, friend Cunda, it’s well-done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, was totally unbound. Face to face with the Blessed One have I heard it, face to face have I learned it, “These two alms are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Which two? The alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening. And the alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata is unbound by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining.⁵ These are the two alms that are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Venerable⁶ Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to long life. Venerable Cunda the

silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to beauty. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to happiness. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to heaven. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to rank. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to sovereignty.” In this way, Ānanda, Cunda the silversmith’s remorse should be allayed.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

For a person giving,
merit increases.
For one self-restraining,
no animosity is amassed.
One who is skillful
leaves evil behind
and
–from the ending of
passion,
aversion,
delusion–
is totally unbound.

NOTES

1. The Commentary notes a wide range of opinions on what “pig-delicacy” means. The opinion given in the Mahā Aṭṭhakathā—the primary source for the Commentary we now have—is that pig-delicacy is tender pork. Other opinions include soft bamboo shoots or mushrooms that pigs like to nibble on, or a special elixir. Given that India has long had a history of giving fanciful names to its foods and elixirs, it’s hard to say for sure what the Buddha ate for his last meal.

2. This style of narrative—in which prose passages alternate with verses retelling parts of what was narrated in the prose—is called a *campū*. This sutta is one of the few instances of this type of narrative in the Pali Canon. Another is the Kuṇāla Jātaka (J 5:416-456). There are also some Vedic examples of this

form in the Brāhmaṇas, texts that apparently dated from around the same time as the Pali Canon. When the incidents portrayed in this sutta were included in DN 16, these alternating narrative verses were included. Aside from the Buddha's conversation with Pukkusa the Mallan (see note 4), these are the only incidents that DN 16 narrates in this style. This suggests that perhaps the version of the narrative given here was composed first as a separate piece and then later was incorporated into DN 16.

3. Ven. Ānanda's description of the water is alliterative in the Pali: *sātodakā sītodakā setodakā*.

4. At this point in the narrative, DN 16 inserts the account of the Buddha's encounter with Pukkusa the Mallan. There's no way of knowing which version of the events is earlier, as the focus of this sutta is not on telling everything that happened to the Buddha on his final day, but on recounting all the events related to Cunda's meal.

5. Unbinding as experienced by an arahant at death. The image is of a fire so thoroughly out that the embers are totally cold. This is distinguished from the unbinding property with fuel remaining—unbinding as experienced in this lifetime—which is like a fire that has gone out but whose embers are still glowing. See Iti 44, Thag 15:2, and the discussion in *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*, chapter 1.

6. *Āyasmant*: This is a term of respect usually reserved for senior monks. The Buddha's using it here was probably meant to emphasize the point that Cunda's gift of the Buddha's last meal should be treated as a very honorable thing.

See also: AN 10:176; Sn 1:5

8:6 Pāṭali Village (*Pāṭaligāma Sutta*)

I have heard that on one occasion, while the Blessed One was wandering among the Magadhans with a large community of monks, he arrived at Pāṭali Village. The lay followers of Pāṭali Village heard, "The Blessed One, they say, while wandering among the Magadhans with a large community of monks, has reached Pāṭali Village." So they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one

side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to (the use of) the rest-house hall.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Sensing his acquiescence, the lay followers of Pāṭali Village got up from their seats, bowed down to him, circled him to the right, and then went to the rest-house hall. On arrival, they spread it all over with felt rugs, arranged seats, set out a water vessel, and raised an oil lamp. Then they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, stood to one side. As they were standing there they said to him, “Lord, the rest-house hall has been covered all over with felt rugs, seats have been arranged, a water vessel has been set out, and an oil lamp raised. May the Blessed One do what you think it is now time to do.”

So the Blessed One, adjusting his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes¹—went together with a community of monks to the rest-house hall. On arrival he washed his feet, entered the hall, and sat with his back to the central post, facing east. The community of monks washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the western wall, facing east, ranged around the Blessed One.

The lay followers of Pāṭali Village washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the eastern wall, facing west, ranged around the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One addressed the lay followers of Pāṭali Village, “Householders, there are these five drawbacks coming from an unvirtuous person’s failure in virtue. Which five?”

“There is the case where an unvirtuous person, by reason of heedlessness, undergoes the loss/confiscation of great wealth. This is the first drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s failure in virtue.

“Furthermore, the bad reputation of the unvirtuous person, failing in virtue, gets spread about. This is the second drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s failure in virtue.

“Furthermore, whatever assembly the unvirtuous person, failing in virtue, approaches—whether of noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so without confidence & abashed. This

is the third drawback coming from an unvirtuous person's failure in virtue.

"Furthermore, the unvirtuous person, failing in virtue, dies confused. This is the fourth drawback coming from an unvirtuous person's failure in virtue.

"Furthermore, the unvirtuous person, failing in virtue—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, a hell. This is the fifth drawback coming from an unvirtuous person's failure in virtue.

"These, householders, are the five drawbacks coming from an unvirtuous person's failure in virtue.

"Householders, there are these five rewards coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue. Which five?

"There is the case where a virtuous person, by reason of heedfulness, acquires a great mass of wealth. This is the first reward coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue.

"Furthermore, the fine reputation of the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, gets spread about. This is the second reward coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue.

"Furthermore, whatever assembly the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, approaches—whether of noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so with confidence & unabashed. This is the third reward coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue.

"Furthermore, the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, dies unconfused. This is the fourth reward coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue.

"Furthermore, the virtuous person, consummate in virtue—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. This is the fifth reward coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue.

"These, householders, are the five rewards coming from a virtuous person's consummation in virtue."

Then the Blessed One—having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the lay followers of Pāṭali Village for a large part of the night with Dhamma-talk—dismissed them, saying, “The night is far gone, householders. Do what you think it is now time to do.”

So the lay followers of Pāṭali Village, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from their seats, bowed down to him, and left, circling him to the right. Then the Blessed One, not long after they had left, entered an empty building.

Now, on that occasion, Sunīdha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, were building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians. And on that occasion many devas by the thousands were occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence were inclined to build their homes.

The Blessed One, with the divine eye—purified and surpassing the human—saw many devas by the thousands occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence were inclined to build their homes.

Then, getting up in the last watch of the night, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, who is building a city at Pāṭali Village?”

“Sunīdha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, lord, are building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians.”

“Ānanda, it’s as if they had consulted the devas of the Thirty-three: That’s how Sunīdha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, are building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians.

“Just now, Ananda—with the divine eye—purified and surpassing the human—I saw many devas by the thousands occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence are inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence are inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence are inclined to build their homes.

“Ānanda, as far as the sphere of the Ariyans extends, as far as merchants’ roads extend, this will be the supreme city: Pāṭaliputta,² where the seedpods of the Pāṭali plant break open. There will be three dangers for Pāṭaliputta: from fire, from water, and from the breaking of alliances.”

Then Sunīdha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they stood to one side. As they were standing there, they said to him, “May Master Gotama acquiesce to our meal today, together with the community of monks.” The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Sunīdha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, went to their rest-house. On arrival, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in their rest-house, they announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, Master Gotama. The meal is ready.”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went together with the community of monks to the rest-house of Sunīdha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Sunīdha & Vassakāra, with their own hands, served & satisfied the community of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and rinsed his bowl & hands, Sunīdha & Vassakāra, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One gave his approval with these verses:

In whatever place
a wise person makes his dwelling,
–there providing food
for the virtuous,
the restrained,
leaders of the holy life–
he should dedicate that offering
to the devas there.

They, receiving honor, will honor him;
being respected, will show him respect.
As a result, they will feel sympathy for him,
like that of a mother for her child, her son.
A person with whom the devas sympathize
always meets with auspicious things.

Then the Blessed One, having given his approval to Sunīdha & Vassakāra with these verses, got up from his seat and left. And on that occasion, Sunīdha & Vassakāra followed right after the Blessed One, (thinking,) “By whichever gate Gotama the contemplative departs today, that will be called the Gotama Gate. And by whichever ford he crosses over the Ganges River, that will be called the Gotama Ford.”

So the gate by which the Blessed One departed was called the Gotama Gate. Then he went to the Ganges River. Now on that occasion the Ganges River was full up to the banks, so that a crow could drink from it. Some people were searching for boats, some were searching for floats, some were binding rafts in hopes of going from this shore to the other. So the Blessed One—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the near bank of the Ganges River and reappeared on the far bank together with the community of monks. He saw that some people were searching for boats, some were searching for floats, some were binding rafts in hopes of going from this shore to the other.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Those

who cross the foaming flood,
having made a bridge, avoiding the swamps
–while people are binding rafts–
have already crossed
: the wise.

NOTES

1. The translation here follows the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions of the text. The PTS and Thai editions state that the Buddha went to the rest-house hall in the morning—which, given the events that follow, doesn't seem right, for he would have spent the entire day teaching the lay followers of Pāṭali Village. The Burmese and Sri Lankan editions of the account of these events given in DN 16 state explicitly that the Buddha went to the rest-house hall in the late afternoon, which seems more reasonable. The PTS edition of that passage doesn't state the time of day, while the Thai edition states that he went in the morning.

2. Pāṭaliputta later became the capital of King Asoka's empire. The "breaking open of the seed-pods (*pūṭa-bhedana*)" is a wordplay on the last part of the city's name.

Archeological evidence from what may have been part of Asoka's palace in Pāṭaliputta shows burnt wooden posts buried in mud—perhaps a sign that the palace burned and then was buried in a flood.

See also: MN 108; AN 4:183

8:7 A Fork in the Path (Dvidhapatha Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was journeying along a road in the Kosalan country with Ven. Nāgasamāla as his junior companion. Ven. Nāgasamāla, while going along the road, saw a fork in the path. On seeing it, he said to the Blessed One, "That, lord Blessed One,¹ is the route. We go that way." When this was said, the Blessed One said, "This, Nāgasamāla, is the route. We go this way."

A second time... A third time, Ven. Nāgasamāla said to the Blessed One, "That, lord Blessed One, is the route. We go that way." And for a

third time, the Blessed One said, “This, Nāgasamāla, is the route. We go this way.”

Then Ven. Nāgasamāla, placing the Blessed One’s bowl & robes right there on the ground, left, saying, “This, lord Blessed One, is the bowl & robes.”

Then as Ven. Nāgasamāla was going along that route, thieves—jumping out in the middle of the road—pummeled him with their fists & feet, broke his bowl, and ripped his outer robe to shreds.

So Ven. Nāgasamāla—with his bowl broken, his outer robe ripped to shreds—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, “Just now, lord, as I was going along that route, thieves jumped out in the middle of the road, pummeled me with their fists & feet, broke my bowl, and ripped my outer robe to shreds.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

When traveling together,
mixed together
with a person who doesn’t know,
an attainer-of-wisdom,
on realizing that the person is evil,
abandons him
as a milk-feeding² heron,
a bog.

NOTES

1. Throughout the first part of this story, Ven. Nāgasamāla refers to the Buddha with this exaggerated form of address. Perhaps the compilers meant this as a linguistic hint of how inappropriate an attendant he was for the Buddha. (Suppavāsā uses it in Ud 2:8, but there it is appropriate as she is overcome with joy.) At the point in the present narrative where Ven. Nāgasamāla puts the Buddha’s bowl and robes on the ground, the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions correct his statement to the more appropriate: “This, lord, is the Blessed One’s bowl & robes.” However, to be in keeping with his

normal way of addressing the Buddha, and to stress the rudeness of the gesture, I felt it better to keep the sentence as it is in the Thai edition. Only after Ven. Nāgasamāla is chastened by his experience with the thieves does he revert to the using the simpler and more standard address: “lord.”

2. Milk-feeding = *khīrapaka*. This is a poetic way of saying “young and unweaned”—the “milk” here being the regurgitated food with which the mother heron feeds her young. Also—in the conventions of Indian literature—the reference to milk suggests that the heron is white. The Commentary has a fanciful way of explaining this term, saying that it refers to a special type of heron so sensitive that, when fed milk mixed with water, it drinks just the milk.

8:8 *Visākhā (Visākhā Sutta)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion a dear and beloved grandson of Visākhā, Migāra’s mother, had died. So Visākhā, Migāra’s mother—her clothes wet, her hair wet—went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As she was sitting there the Blessed One said to her: “Why have you come here, Visākhā—your clothes wet, your hair wet—in the middle of the day?”

When this was said, she said to the Blessed One, “My dear and beloved grandson has died. This is why I have come here—my clothes wet, my hair wet—in the middle of the day.”

“Visākhā, would you like to have as many children & grandchildren as there are people in Sāvattihī?”

“Yes, lord, I would like to have as many children & grandchildren as there are people in Sāvattihī.”

“But how many people in Sāvattihī die in the course of a day?”

“Sometimes ten people die in Sāvattihī in the course of a day, sometimes nine... eight... seven... six... five... four... three... two... Sometimes one person dies in Sāvattihī in the course of a day. Sāvattihī is never free from people dying.”

“So what do you think, Visākhā? Would you ever be free of wet clothes & wet hair?”

“No, lord. Enough of my having so many children & grandchildren.”

“Visākhā, those who have a hundred dear ones have a hundred sufferings. Those who have ninety dear ones have ninety sufferings. Those who have eighty... seventy... sixty... fifty... forty... thirty... twenty... ten... nine... eight... seven... six... five... four... three... two... Those who have one dear one have one suffering. Those who have no dear ones have no sufferings. They are free from sorrow, free from stain, free from lamentation, I tell you.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The sorrows, lamentations,
the many kinds of suffering in the world,
exist dependent on something dear.

They don't exist
when there's nothing dear.

And thus blissful & sorrowless
are those for whom nothing
in the world is anywhere dear.

So one who aspires
to the stainless & sorrowless
shouldn't make anything
dear

in the world
anywhere.

See also: MN 87; Thig 3:5; Thig 6:1

8:9 Dabba (1) (Dabba Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattihī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Ven. Dabba Mallaputta 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, “Now is the time for my total unbinding, O One-Well-Gone!”

“Then do, Dabba, what you think it is now time to do.”

Then Ven. Dabba Mallaputta, rising from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and, circling him on the right, rose up into the air and sat cross-legged in the sky, in space. Entering & emerging from the fire property, he was totally unbound. Now, when Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered & emerged from the fire property and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned. Just as when ghee or oil is burned and consumed, neither ashes nor soot can be discerned, in the same way, when Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered & emerged from the fire property and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

The body broke up,
perception ceased,
feelings went cold¹
 –all–²
fabrications were stilled,
consciousness
has come to an end.

NOTES

1. Following the reading *vedanā sītibhaviṃsu* from the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions. In support of this reading, see MN 140 and Iti 44. The Thai edition reads, *vedanā-pīti-dahaṃsu*: feeling & rapture were burned away.

2. The word “all” here functions as a lamp, modifying both “feelings” and “fabrications.” See [Ud 1:3, note 1](#).

See also: DN 11

8:10 Dabba (2) (Dabba Sutta)

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

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

The Blessed One said, "When Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered & emerged from the fire property and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned. Just as when ghee or oil is burned and consumed, neither ashes nor soot can be discerned, in the same way, when Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered & emerged from the fire property and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Just as the destination of a glowing fire
struck with a [blacksmith's] iron hammer,
gradually growing calm,
isn't known:¹
Even so, there's no destination to describe
for those rightly released
–having crossed over the flood
of sensuality's bond–
for those who've attained
unwavering bliss.

NOTE

1. For a discussion of the ancient Buddhist view of what happened to an extinguished fire, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*, Chapters 1 and 2.

See also: MN 72; SN 6:15; SN 22:86; AN 4:173; Thig 5:10

APPENDICES

Appendix One: History

ON THE HISTORY OF THE UDĀNA

Passages in the Canon mention udānas in a list of nine genres in which the Buddha's teachings and events in his life were memorized during his lifetime. There has been some speculation as to whether the Udāna we currently have is in any way related to the udānas mentioned in the list. The general consensus is that most of the exclamations at the end of our current udānas might possibly date from the Buddha's time, but that the stories are obviously a much later invention. There is, however, no proof for either position.

The question of how to prove through textual analysis whether the exclamations actually came from the Buddha is essentially uninteresting: There is no historical evidence to prove or disprove that *anything* in the Canon came from the Buddha; the only way to test the value of what the Canon contains is to put its teachings to the test.

It is interesting, however, to examine the arguments for assigning a late date to the stories in the Udānas, for when we examine these arguments we find that they teach us more about the assumptions of the people who present them than about the Udāna itself.

The arguments fall into two main classes: those based on the form of the text, and those on the content.

The first formal argument for the lateness of the stories is based on the fact that a fraction of the exclamations occur elsewhere in the major poetry anthologies of the Canon without any connection to the stories in the Udāna. I have noted some of these parallels in the notes. Here they are as a list:

- 1:9 (last half) = Dhp 393 (last half)
2:3 = Dhp 131-132
3:4 = Thag 14:1 (PTS v. 651); Thag 17:2 (PTS v. 1000)
3:6 (first part) = Sn 3:4 (PTS v. 469) (first part)
4:3 = Dhp 42
4:4 = near equivalent, Thag 2:36 (PTS vv. 191–192)
4:6 = Dhp 185
4:7 = Thag 1:68
4:9 = Sn 3:12 (PTS v. 746)
5:5 = Thag 6:13 (PTS v. 447)
6:3 (last half) = Thag 2:30 (PTS v. 180 — last half)
6:7 (first half) = Sn 1:1 (PTS v. 7 — last half)
7:4 (first part) = Thag 4:8 (PTS v. 297)

In addition to these parallels in the Pali Canon, variants of all the exclamations also appear, again without stories, in the Udānavarga, a compilation of verses in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit made by a Sarvāstivādin monk, Dharmatrāta, somewhere between 75 B.C.E and 200 C.E. From these facts the argument maintains that because these verses occur without a story in some places, but with a story in the Udāna, the stories must be later additions.

The problem with this argument is that it ignores the possibility that the compilers of the other texts might have had a different purpose than the compilers of the Udāna. They could have simply been interested in creating anthologies of verses shorn of any narrative frameworks. What's ironic is that this latter point is sometimes used to "prove" the lateness of the Dhammapada as a collection: Some of the Dhammapada verses occur associated with stories in other parts of the Pali Canon, and scholars have argued that the compilers of the Dhammapada simply lifted the verses from those passages and dropped the stories.

Because this argument can be used either way—to prove that collections of verses with stories are later than collections of verses without stories, and that collections of verses without stories are later than collections of verses with stories—it doesn't really prove either position.

A second set of arguments for the lateness of the Udāna is based on the fact that thirteen of the udānas—story and verse—also occur elsewhere in the Canon:

- 1:1 – Mv.I.1.1–3 (different details in the story)
- 1:2 – Mv.I.1.4–5 (different details in the story)
- 1:3 – Mv.I.1.6.7
- 1:4 – Mv.I.2
- 2:1 – Mv.I.3
- 2:10 – Cv.VII.1.5–6
- 4:5 – Mv.X.3–4 (different details in the story)
- 5:5 – Cv.IX.1, AN 8:20 (no verse)
- 5:6 – Mv.V.13.1–10 (different details in the story; the verse is also different in the PTS but not in the Thai, Sri Lankan, or Burmese editions)
- 5:8 – Cv.VII.3.17
- 6:1 – DN 16, SN 51:10, AN 8:77
- 8:5 – DN 16 (includes an intervening incident not narrated in 8:5)
- 8:6 – Mv.VI.28, DN 16

What's notable about these parallels is that seven of the thirteen occur in the two longest biographical accounts in the Canon: the account of the events leading from the Buddha's awakening to his gaining his two foremost disciples in Mv.I; and the account of his last year in DN 16. From this fact, scholars have argued that these udānas were simply lifted from these longer accounts. Because DN 16 is regarded as a late document, this would mean that the compilation of the Udāna was even later. Sometimes this argument is bolstered with another one: that originally the monks compiled a continuous narrative of the events in the Buddha's life, but for some reason the narrative was chopped up into the bits and pieces we now find in the early canons, whereas the narrative as a whole was forgotten or lost.

This latter argument, of course, is purely conjectural, based largely on the assumption that the early monks would have had a modern Western desire for a complete biography of their teacher. And it begs the

question, why would the monks have thrown away a perfectly good continuous narrative if they had had one?

As for the preceding argument, it is belied by two facts. The first is that the longer narratives containing parallels to the udānas lack a sense of flow. If anything, they read as if they were stitched together from preexisting materials, the udānas being among them. Second, one of the udānas with a parallel in DN 16—[8:5](#)—is composed in a style called *campū*, in which the narrative is told in both prose and verse. This style is rarely used in the Canon. If it was originally part of DN 16 before being chopped off into an udāna, we would reasonably expect that the rest of DN 16 would also be composed in this style. But it isn't. The events in 8:5, together with an intervening incident not included in 8:5, are the only parts of DN 16 narrated in the *campū* style. This suggests—even though it doesn't prove—that 8:5 was composed separately before it was included in DN 16.

Thus this second set of formal arguments proves nothing about the relative earliness or lateness of the Udāna.

A third set of formal arguments is based on the fact that neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan canons contain any text corresponding to the Udāna. Both canons contain versions of Dharmatrāta's Udānavarga mentioned above, with stories relegated to commentaries on the verses. Because these canons treat the stories as later additions, it has been argued that the Udāna in the Pali Canon was composed after the schools represented in the Chinese and Tibetan canons split off from the Theravāda.

This argument, however, is based on the assumption that these other two canons contain complete accounts of what was available in India at the time they were compiled. However, the Tibetan canon contains very few "Hīnayāna" texts, as its compilers were much more interested in the later vehicles, so the lack of the Udāna in this compilation proves nothing.

Similarly, the collection of "Hīnayāna" texts in the Chinese canon, while more complete than that in the Tibetan, is still fairly haphazard. There is no complete canon from any of the early schools; the different nikāyas (or āgamas as they are called in the Chinese collection)

apparently come from a variety of early schools. And the Chinese canon itself was a late attempt, during the early Sung dynasty, to gather whatever texts, through happenstance, had made their way to China and into Chinese translation by the time of the T'ang dynasty and had survived into the Sung.

We do know that some of the texts brought to China during the T'ang are not in the collection. In 645, the pilgrim-monk Hsüan-tsang returned to the Chinese capital with a hoard of more than 675 Buddhist texts, many of them new to China, that he had acquired during a long overland trip to India. The emperor at the time was impressed with Hsüan-tsang's achievement and provided him with the resources needed to set up an expert board of translators. However, most of the texts were never translated. After Hsüan-tsang's death and the death of the emperor, the emperor's successor, who had no interest in Buddhism, disbanded the board of translators and sequestered the texts in the imperial library, where they were eventually lost or destroyed. We know that at least one "Hīnayāna" text was in Hsüan-tsang's hoard, as there is a partial Itivuttaka among his translations. There may have been other similar texts as well.

Thus the lack of an Udāna in the Chinese canon does not prove that the Udāna as we have it was a late text. It simply may not have attracted the attention of the Chinese or their Central Asia teachers; or it may have been in Hsüan-tsang's collection but later lost.

So none of these three sets of arguments from the form of the text prove anything about the relative earliness or lateness of the Udāna we now have.

The two main arguments from content are similarly inconclusive.

The first of these arguments is that the stories of the Udāna contain too many supernatural elements to be genuine. This, of course, assumes that people close to the Buddha witnessed no supernatural events surrounding his teaching—an assumption that derives less from any knowledge about what actually happened in the Buddha's life, and more from a modern discomfort with the supernatural. Stories about people levitating, using clairvoyant powers, etc.—unless presented as fiction—offend modern materialistic sensibilities. Modern scholars like to assume

that the Buddha and his early disciples shared these sensibilities, and that religious and supernatural elements could have been added to the texts only after those who had directly known the Buddha had passed away. Yet the Canon consistently shows the Buddha to have been an opponent of materialism (DN 2; AN 3:138; MN 60). Thus there is no reason to assume that he or his direct disciples would have been disinclined to believe or report what, from a materialistic perspective, would count as supernatural powers or events.

As for the actual possibility of such powers, modern science has yet to disprove that they exist. Recent advances in sub-atomic physics and the study of the dynamics of complex non-linear systems show that the physical world is much stranger and less deterministic than the materialistic linear sciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would have allowed for, and yet a lot of modern thinking outside of the sciences has not caught up with this fact.

At the same time, there is no way that a fair assessment of the powers attainable through meditation could be made by anyone who has yet to master meditation. It would be like a future race of philosophers trying to assess modern scientific discoveries without having mastered the scientific method themselves. Just because there is no room in one's philosophy for a particular skill doesn't mean that such skills can't be acquired. Why make the limitations of one's imagination the measure of the actual world?

The second argument for the lateness of the Udāna based on its content focuses not on the stories, but on some of the exclamations themselves: those in [8:1](#), [8:3](#), and [8:4](#) describing unbinding as a dimension that can be experienced. The argument is this: Because the consciousness-aggregate ends with the attaining of unbinding, any description of unbinding as a dimension that can be experienced is suspect. Therefore these exclamations must be later additions to the Canon.

This argument is based on the assumption that there can be no consciousness outside of the consciousness-aggregate, inasmuch as the definition of that aggregate concludes with the phrase that it includes, "all consciousness, past, present, and future" (SN 22:59). However, the

Buddha elsewhere limits the term “all” to what can be known in conjunction with the six senses (SN 35:23). And there are other passages, aside from these passages in the Udāna, indicating that there can be something known outside of the six senses (DN 11, MN 49, SN 35:117). DN 11 and MN 49, in fact, refer to this awareness as “consciousness without feature” or “consciousness without surface” (*viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*). Because this consciousness lies outside of the dimension of time—it’s *akālika*—it is neither momentary nor eternal, and cannot be labeled as past, present, or future, for all such concepts have meaning only within the dimension of time. Thus it lies outside the definition of the consciousness-aggregate, and would not be ended when that aggregate ceases, either in the experience of awakening or after the death of the arahant.

(Another argument that there can be no consciousness outside of the consciousness-aggregate is based on a mistranslation of MN 38. Because the argument is technical, I will omit it here. If you are interested, you can find it in the notes to my translation of that discourse and in *Skill in Questions*, chapter 5, §72, note 2.)

All of this means that the exclamations in [8:1](#), [8:3](#), and [8:4](#) do not conflict with the rest of the Canon. In fact, Iti 43 also contains the exclamation in 8:3, and MN 144 and SN 35:87 cite the exclamation in 8:4 as a teaching of the Buddha. So there is no reason to dismiss these passages as late.

All of which means that the arguments for the lateness of the Udāna—whether based on form or on content—have yet to provide any compelling reason to regard the Udāna as a late addition to the Canon.

Appendix Two: Non-Udāna Exclamations

*Exclamations by the Buddha recorded elsewhere in the Canon
but not included in the Udāna:*

FROM MN 75: TO MĀGANDIYA (MĀGANDIYA SUTTA)

“Now what do you think, Māgandiya? Have you ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Very good, Māgandiya. Neither have I ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. But whatever contemplatives or brahmans who have dwelt or will dwell or are dwelling free from thirst, their minds inwardly at peace, all have done so having realized—as it has come to be—the origination & disappearance, the allure, the danger, & the escape from sensual pleasures, having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever.”

Then at that moment the Blessed One exclaimed,

“Freedom from disease:
the foremost good fortune.
Unbinding:
the foremost ease.
The eightfold:
the foremost of paths
going to the Deathless,
Secure.”

When this was said, Māgandiya the wanderer said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, Master Gotama. It’s astounding, how this, too, is well-stated by Master Gotama: ‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.’ We have also heard this said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of our teachers: ‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.’ This agrees with that.”

“But as for what you have heard said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of your teachers, Māgandiya—‘Freedom from disease: the

foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease'—which freedom from disease is that, which unbinding?"

When this was said, Māgandiya the wanderer rubbed his own limbs with his hand. "This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama," he said. "This is that unbinding. For I am now free from disease, happy, and nothing afflicts me."

"Māgandiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... or pink objects; who couldn't see even or uneven places, the stars, the sun, or the moon. He would hear a man with good eyesight saying, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' He would go in search of something white. Then another man would fool him with a grimy, oil-stained rag: 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on. Having put it on, gratified, he would exclaim words of gratification, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' Now what do you think, Māgandiya? When that man blind from birth took the grimy, oil-stained rag and put it on; and, having put it on, gratified, exclaimed words of gratification, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean': Did he do so knowing & seeing, or out of faith in the man with good eyesight?"

"Of course he did it not knowing & not seeing, Master Gotama, but out of faith in the man with good eyesight."

"In the same way, Māgandiya, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. Without knowing freedom from disease, without seeing unbinding, they still speak this verse:

"Freedom from disease:
the foremost good fortune.
Unbinding:
the foremost ease.'

This verse was stated by earlier worthy ones, fully self-awakened:

"Freedom from disease:
the foremost good fortune.

Unbinding:
the foremost ease.
The eightfold:
the foremost of paths
going to the Deathless,
Secure."

"But now it has gradually become a verse of ordinary people.

"This body, Māgandiya, is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction. And yet you say, with reference to this body, which is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction: 'This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama. This is that unbinding,' for you don't have the noble vision with which you would know freedom from disease and see unbinding."

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding."

"Māgandiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... pink... the sun, or the moon. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, but in spite of the medicine his eyesight would not appear or grow clear. What do you think, Māgandiya? Would that doctor have nothing but his share of weariness & disappointment?"

"Yes, Master Gotama."

"In the same way, Māgandiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma—'This is that freedom from disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part did not know freedom from disease or see unbinding, that would be wearisome for me; that would be troublesome for me."

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding."

"Māgandiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... pink... the sun, or the moon. Now suppose that a certain man were to take a grimy,

oil-stained rag and fool him, saying, 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on.

"Then his friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him: purges from above & purges from below, ointments & counter-ointments and treatments through the nose. And thanks to the medicine his eyesight would appear & grow clear. Then together with the arising of his eyesight, he would abandon whatever passion & delight he felt for that grimy, oil-stained rag. And he would regard that man as an enemy & no friend at all, and think that he deserved to be killed. 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by that man & his grimy, oil-stained rag!—'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.'"

"In the same way, Māgandiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma—'This is that freedom from Disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part were to know that freedom from Disease and see that unbinding, then together with the arising of your eyesight you would abandon whatever passion & delight you felt with regard for the five clinging-aggregates. And it would occur to you, 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by this mind! For in clinging, it was just form that I was clinging to... it was just feeling... just perception... just fabrications... just consciousness that I was clinging to. With my clinging as a requisite condition, there arises becoming... birth... aging-&-death... sorrow, lamentation, pains, distresses, & despairs. And thus is the origin of this entire mass of stress.'"

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might rise up from this seat cured of my blindness."

"In that case, Māgandiya, associate with men of integrity. When you associate with men of integrity, you will hear the true Dhamma. When you hear the true Dhamma, you will practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. When you practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, you will know & see for yourself: 'These things are diseases, cancers, arrows. And here is where diseases, cancers, & arrows cease without trace. With the cessation of that clinging of mine comes the cessation of becoming. With the cessation of becoming comes the

cessation of birth. With the cessation of birth then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.”

SN 22:55 EXCLAMATION (UDĀNA SUTTA)

At Sāvathī. There the Blessed One exclaimed this exclamation: “It should not be, it should not occur to me [should not be mine]; it will not be, it will not occur to me [will not be mine]: A monk set on this would break the [five] lower fetters.”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, “In what way would a monk set on this—‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me’—break the [five] lower fetters?”¹

“There is the case, monk, where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, inconstant form as ‘inconstant form.’ He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, inconstant feeling as ‘inconstant feeling’ ... inconstant perception as ‘inconstant perception’ ... inconstant fabrications as ‘inconstant fabrications’ ... inconstant consciousness as ‘inconstant consciousness.’

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, stressful form as ‘stressful form’ ... stressful feeling as ‘stressful feeling’ ... stressful perception as

'stressful perception' ... stressful fabrications as 'stressful fabrications' ... stressful consciousness as 'stressful consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, not-self form as 'not-self form' ... not-self feeling as 'not-self feeling' ... not-self perception as 'not-self perception' ... not-self fabrications as 'not-self fabrications' ... not-self consciousness as 'not-self consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, fabricated form as 'fabricated form' ... fabricated feeling as 'fabricated feeling' ... fabricated perception as 'fabricated perception' ... fabricated fabrications as 'fabricated fabrications' ... fabricated consciousness as 'fabricated consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, that 'form will stop becoming' ... 'feeling will stop becoming' ... 'perception will stop becoming' ... 'fabrications will stop becoming' ... 'consciousness will stop becoming.'

"Now, a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn't assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He doesn't assume feeling to be the self.... doesn't assume perception to be the self.... doesn't assume fabrications to be the self.... He doesn't assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

"He discerns, as it has come to be, inconstant form as 'inconstant form' ... inconstant feeling as 'inconstant feeling' ... inconstant perception as 'inconstant perception' ... inconstant fabrications as 'inconstant fabrications' ... inconstant consciousness as 'inconstant consciousness.'

"He discerns, as it has come to be, stressful form as 'stressful form' ... stressful feeling as 'stressful feeling' ... stressful perception as 'stressful perception' ... stressful fabrications as 'stressful fabrications' ... stressful consciousness as 'stressful consciousness.'

"He discerns, as it has come to be, not-self form as 'not-self form' ... not-self feeling as 'not-self feeling' ... not-self perception as 'not-self

perception' ... not-self fabrications as 'not-self fabrications' ... not-self consciousness as 'not-self consciousness.'

"He discerns, as it has come to be, fabricated form as 'fabricated form' ... fabricated feeling as 'fabricated feeling' ... fabricated perception as 'fabricated perception' ... fabricated fabrications as 'fabricated fabrications' ... fabricated consciousness as 'fabricated consciousness.'

"He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'form will stop becoming' ... 'feeling will stop becoming' ... 'perception will stop becoming' ... 'fabrications will stop becoming' ... 'consciousness will stop becoming.'

"From the non-becoming of form, from the non-becoming of feeling... of perception... of fabrications... of consciousness, a monk set on this—'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me'—would break the [five] lower fetters."

"Lord, a monk set on this would break the [five] lower fetters. But for one knowing in what way, seeing in what way, is there the immediate ending of fermentations?"

"There is the case where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person... falls into fear over what is not grounds for fear. There is fear for an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person [who thinks], 'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me.' But an instructed disciple of the noble ones does not fall into fear over what is not grounds for fear. There is no fear for an instructed disciple of the noble ones [who thinks], 'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me.'

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to form, supported by form [as its object], landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling [as its object], landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception [as its object], landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications [as its object], landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Were someone to say, ‘I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,’ that would be impossible.

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of form....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of feeling....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of perception....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of fabrications....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to release, it is steady. Owing to steadiness, it is contented. Owing to contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he [the monk] is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“For one knowing in this way, seeing in this way, monk, there is the immediate ending of fermentations.”

NOTE

1. The five lower fetters are self-identity views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual desire, and ill will.

FROM SN 56:11 THE TATHĀGATA (TATHĀGATA SUTTA)

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, there arose to Ven. Koṇḍañña the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

And when the Blessed One had set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, the earth deities cried out: “At Vārāṇasī, in the Game Refuge at Isipatana, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative, brahman, deva, Māra, Brahmā, or anyone at all in the cosmos.” On hearing the earth devas’ cry, the devas of the Four Kings took up the cry... On hearing the devas of the Four Kings’ cry, the devas of the Thirty-three... the devas of the Hours... the Contented devas... the Devas Who Enjoy Creation... the Devas Who Control the Creations of Others... the devas of Brahmā’s retinue took up the cry: “At Vārāṇasī, in the Game Refuge at Isipatana, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative, brahman, deva, Māra, Brahmā or anyone at all in the cosmos.”

So in that moment, that instant, the cry shot right up to the Brahma worlds. And this ten-thousand fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while a great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas.

Then the Blessed One exclaimed: “So you really know, Koṇḍañña? So you really know?” And that is how Ven. Koṇḍañña acquired the name Añña-Koṇḍañña–Koṇḍañña who knows.

Appendix Three: Saṃyutta Nikāya Passages

Sutta passages in Saṃyutta Nikāya 3 and 4 that may have originally been composed as udānas:

SN 3:8 = [UD 5:1](#)

SN 3:9 SACRIFICE (YAÑÑA SUTTA)

At Sāvattihī. Now on that occasion a great sacrifice had been arranged for King Pasenadi Kosala. five hundred bulls, five hundred bullocks, five hundred cows, five hundred goats, & five hundred rams had been led to the pillar for the sacrifice. And his slaves, servants, & workers–

threatened with punishment, threatened with danger—were making preparations, weeping, their faces stained with tears.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a great sacrifice has now been arranged for King Pasenadi Kosala. five hundred bulls, five hundred bullocks, five hundred cows, five hundred goats, & five hundred rams have been led to the pillar for the sacrifice. And his slaves, servants, & workers—threatened with punishment, threatened with danger—are making preparations, weeping, their faces stained with tears.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

The horse sacrifice, the human sacrifice,
*sammāpāsa, vājapeyya, niraggaḷa*¹
—great sacrifices, greatly violent—
bear no great fruit.

Where goats, rams, & cattle
of various kinds are killed:
Those of right conduct, great seers,
don't attend that sacrifice.

But sacrifices free from violence,
offered always in line with family custom,
where goats, rams, & cattle
of various kinds are not killed:
Those of right conduct, great seers,
attend that sacrifice.

The wise person should offer that.
This sacrifice bears great fruit.
For one who offers this,
things get better, not worse.

The sacrifice is abundant,
and the devatās are appeased.

NOTE

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

SN 3:10 BONDS (BANDHANA SUTTA)

At Sāvattthī. Now on that occasion a great group of people had been put into bondage by King Pasenadi Kosala—some with ropes, some with wooden shackles, some with chains.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a great group of people has now been put into bondage by King Pasenadi Kosala—some with ropes, some with wooden shackles, some with chains.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

That’s not a strong bond
—so say the enlightened—
the one made of iron, of wood, or of grass.

To be smitten, enthralled,
with jewels & ornaments,
longing for children & wives:

That’s the strong bond,
—so say the enlightened—
one that’s constraining,
elastic,
hard to untie.

But having cut it, they
—the enlightened—go forth,
free of longing, abandoning

sensual ease.¹

NOTE

1. These verses = Dhp 345—346.

SN 3:11 = UD 6:2 BUT WITH A DIFFERENT VERSE:

Not by appearance
is a man rightly known,
nor should trust be based
on a quick glance,
for, disguised as well-restrained,
the unrestrained go through this world.
A counterfeit earring made of clay,
a bronze half-dollar coated in gold:
They go about in this world
hidden all around—
 impure inside,
 beautiful out.

SN 3:14—15 A BATTLE (SAṄGĀMA SUTTAS)

Staying at Sāvattthī. Then King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videhā, raising a fourfold army, marched toward Kāsi against King Pasenadi Kosala. King Pasenadi heard, “King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videhā, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching toward Kāsi against me.” So King Pasenadi, raising a fourfold army, launched a counter-attack toward Kāsi against King Ajātasattu. Then King Ajātasattu & King Pasenadi fought a battle, and in that battle King Ajātasattu defeated King Pasenadi. King Pasenadi, defeated, marched back to his capital at Sāvattthī.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there,

they said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videhā, raising a fourfold army, marched toward Kāsi against King Pasenadi Kosala. King Pasenadi heard, ‘King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videhā, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching toward Kāsi against me.’ So King Pasenadi, raising a fourfold army, launched a counter-attack toward Kāsi against King Ajātasattu. Then King Ajātasattu & King Pasenadi fought a battle, and in that battle King Ajātasattu defeated King Pasenadi. King Pasenadi, defeated, marched back to his capital at Sāvattihī.”

“Monks, King Ajātasattu has evil friends, evil comrades, evil companions, whereas King Pasenadi has fine friends, fine comrades, fine companions. Yet for now, King Pasenadi will lie down tonight in pain, defeated.”

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

Winning gives birth to hostility.
Losing, one lies down in pain.
The calmed lie down with ease,
having set
winning & losing
aside.

Then King Ajātasattu of Māgadha, the son of Queen Videhā, raising a fourfold army, marched toward Kāsi against King Pasenadi Kosala. King Pasenadi heard, “King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videhā, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching toward Kāsi against me.” So King Pasenadi, raising a fourfold army, launched a counter-attack toward Kāsi against King Ajātasattu. Then King Ajātasattu & King Pasenadi fought a battle, and in that battle King Pasenadi defeated King Ajātasattu and captured him alive.

The thought then occurred to King Pasenadi, “Even though King Ajātasattu has wronged me when I have done him no wrong, still he is my nephew. What if I, having confiscated all his elephant troops, all his cavalry, all his chariots, & all his infantry, were to let him go with just

his life?" So King Pasenadi—having confiscated all his elephant troops, cavalry, chariots, & infantry—let King Ajātasattu go with just his life.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [reported these events to the Blessed One].

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

A man may plunder
as long as it serves his ends,
but when others are plundered,
 he who has plundered
 gets plundered in turn.

A fool thinks,
'Now's my chance,'
as long as his evil
has yet to ripen.
But when it ripens,
the fool
 falls
 into pain.

Killing, you gain
 your killer.
Conquering, you gain one
 who will conquer you;
insulting,
 insult;
harassing,
 harassment.

And so, through the cycle of action,
 he who has plundered
 gets plundered in turn.

SN 4:21 A LARGE NUMBER (SAMBAHULA SUTTA)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at Silāvati. And on that occasion a large number of monks were staying not far from the Blessed One: heedful, ardent, & resolute.

Then Māra the Evil One, assuming the appearance of a brahman—with a large coiled top-knot, clad in an antelope hide, aged, crooked like a roof support, wheezing, holding a staff of fig wood—went to the monks and, on arrival, said to them, “You have gone forth while young, masters—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality. Enjoy human sensuality, monks. Don’t drop what is visible here-&-now in pursuit of what’s subject to time.”

“Brahman, we’re not dropping what’s visible here-&-now in pursuit of what’s subject to time. We’re dropping what’s subject to time in pursuit of what’s visible here-&-now. For the Blessed One has said that sensuality is subject to time, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks; whereas this Dhamma is visible here-&-now, not subject to time, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves.”

When this was said, Māra the Evil One—shaking his head, wagging his tongue, raising his eyebrows so that his forehead was wrinkled in three furrows—left, leaning on his stick.

So the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they [told him what had happened].

“That wasn’t a brahman, monks. That was Māra the Evil One, come to blind you.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

One who has seen the cause
from which suffering comes:
How could that person
incline to sensuality?

Having realized
that acquisition is a tie
in the world,
a person should train
to subdue
just that.

Appendix Four: Disciples

Pre-eminent disciples of the Buddha mentioned in the Udāna, and the areas in which, according to AN 1:146-152 (as numbered in the Thai edition), they were pre-eminent:

(Those whose outstanding quality is depicted in the Udāna are marked with an asterisk.)

MONKS (22 OUT OF 40)

Ānanda: in being learned, being mindful, having powers of recall, having powers of retention, and being an attendant

Ānanda: in being learned, mindful, steadfast, in having wide understanding, and in being an attendant

Anuruddha: in the divine eye

Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth: in gaining quick realization*

Bhaddiya the Dwarf: in having a charming voice

Bhaddiya Kāḷigodhā's son: in coming from a prominent family

Dabba Mallaputta: in arranging lodgings

Kaccāna, Mahā: in explaining in detail the meaning of brief statements

Kappina, Mahā: in exhorting the monks

Kassapa, Mahā: in teaching strictness*

Koṇḍañña, Aññāta: in seniority

Koṭṭhita, Mahā: in attaining acumen
Moggallāna, Mahā: in having (psychic) power*
Nanda: in guarding the sense doors
Panthaka, Cūla: in creating a mind-made body and in being skilled in the evolution of awareness
Pilindavaccha: in being dear to devatas
Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja: in giving the lion's roar
Revata the Doubter: in possessing jhāna
Revata (Khadiravaniya = of the acacia grove): in living in the wilderness
Sāriputta: in having great discernment
Soṇa Koṭikaṇṇa: in having a fine delivery*
Subhūti: in living without conflict and in deserving offerings
Upasena Vaṅgantaputta: in being all-around inspiring

FEMALE LAY FOLLOWERS (3 OUT OF 10)

Sāmāvatī: in dwelling in good will
Suppavāsā: in donating exquisite gifts*
Visākhā, Migāra's mother: in being a donor

Glossary

Ariya: (1) Noble. (2) Pertaining to the race that ruled northern India.

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: Fermentation; effluent. 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.

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) 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.

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.

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*.

Parinibbāna: Total unbinding, which in some contexts denotes the experience of awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant. Sanskrit form: *parinirvāṇa*.

Pasāda: Confidence; clarity.

Pāṭimokkha: Basic code of monastic discipline, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns.

Samsāra: Transmigration; the process of wandering through repeated states of becoming, with their attendant death and rebirth.

Samvega: A sense of 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.

Sukha: Pleasure; happiness; bliss; ease; wellbeing.

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

<i>AN</i>	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
<i>Cv</i>	<i>Cullavagga</i>
<i>Dhp</i>	<i>Dhammapada</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
<i>Iti</i>	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
<i>Mv</i>	<i>Mahāvagga</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Sutta Nipāta</i>
<i>Thag</i>	<i>Theragāthā</i>
<i>Thig</i>	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
<i>Ud</i>	<i>Udāna</i>

References to DN, Iti, and MN are to discourse (*sutta*). Those to Dhp are to verse. Those to Mv and Cv are to chapter, section, and sub-section. References to other texts are to section (*saṃyutta, nipāta, or vagga*) and discourse.

All translations are based on the Royal Thai Edition of the Pali Canon (Bangkok: Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya, 1982), with variant readings occasionally taken from Sri Lankan and Burmese editions available online through the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* and the *Digital Pali Reader*.

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