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Te,vijja Sutta

The Discourse on Those With the Three Knowledges | D 13/1:235-252

Theme: Problems with the creator-god idea

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1 Sutta significance**1.1 SCOPE OF THE SUTTA**

1.1.1 The Tevijja Sutta (also translated as “the Discourse on the Three Knowledges”) is the last of the thirteen suttas of the first section or volume—the **Sīla-k,handha Vagga** (Chapter on the Group of Moral Virtue)—of the Dīgha Nikāya. In the Introduction to his translation of this Sutta (D:RD 1:298), T W Rhys Davids notes that this is the only sutta of the thirteen (Dīgha bk 1), whose teaching does *not* lead up to arhathood. It leads up only to the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).¹ [2.2.1.2]

1.1.2 It is interesting that the early Buddhist texts (the Nikāyas) do not at all mention the well-known neuter “Brahman,” the *summum bonum* of the Upanishads. In its place, we find the masculine *brahmā* (perhaps the only Pali masculine noun with a feminine -ā ending) and the adjective *brahma* (meaning “divine, perfect”). In the Pali Canon, such terms are characteristically used in the Buddhist sense of spiritual attainment or perfection. Due to the closed nature of Upanishadic transmission, the Buddha and early Buddhists probably regarded the “Brahman” concept as insignificant at this early stage of its development (when only “three Vedas” existed, that is, before the evolution of the fourth and final Veda, the Atharva). [2.1]

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE SUTTA. In the **Te,vijja Sutta** (D 13), the Buddha mentions only those teachings he deems applicable to level of his audience. In the **Udumbārikā Sihanāda Sutta** (D 25), for example, the Buddha stops his teaching at the “knowledge of the arising and disappearance of beings” (or karma), since his audience could only then understand up to that level (D 25.19). It is evident from the Te,vijja Sutta and from teachings like those in the **Mahā Govinda Sutta** (D 19) that “companionship [communion] with Brahmā” (*brahma, saavyatā*) [§37-39] simply means *rebirth amongst the host of Brahmā*, and not mystical union with Brahman, a notion that is totally alien to Indian Buddhism. Furthermore, “companionship with Brahmā” or rebirth in the brahma heaven, is never the final goal of Buddhist training (D 19.61).

This sutta is a good example of the spiritual turmoil and openness that were characteristic of the Buddha’s time. Not only was there a reform movement (Skt *nāstika*, P *n’atthika*), comprising the wandering recluses (Skt *śramaṇa*, P *samaṇa*) as against the established religion (Skt *āstika*, P *atthika*) of brahmins (*brāhmaṇa*) who had religious monopoly of the Vedas, but even within the Vedic system itself, there

¹ **Bodhi** makes this observation in his JBE review of **Gombrich**, *How Buddhism Began*, 1996: “Gombrich locates the Buddha’s most radical departure from brahminism in his decision to make action or kamma rather than being the key to understanding existential reality. He stresses the revolutionary nature of the Buddha’s teaching on kamma, which he says ‘turned the brahmin ideology upside down and ethicized the universe,’ thus marking ‘a turning point in the history of civilisation’ (p 51). Nevertheless, Gombrich carries his comparison between the two systems to an untenable conclusion. In an extended discussion of the Tevijja Sutta (D 13) he contrasts the Buddha’s description of the four divine abodes (*Brahma, vihāra*) as the ‘path to union with Brahmā’ with the Upanishadic dictum that the way to attain Brahman is through knowledge of the true self. This, he says, once again illustrates the distinction between the ethical standpoint of Buddhism and the ontological orientation of brahminism. So far, so good. But Gombrich then goes on to argue that for the Buddha ‘union with Brahmā’ is simply a metaphor for Nibbāna, and thus he concludes ‘the Buddha taught that kindness...was a way to salvation’ (p 62). Such an inference, however, cannot stand, for in many texts the Buddha declares the divine abodes to be inadequate for attaining Nibbāna (eg D 17, M 83, M 97, etc.); it would also mean that *paññā*, insight or wisdom, is not needed for final liberation. Gombrich is not unaware of the texts that contradict his position, but he casually dismisses them as the work of ‘the compilers of other suttas’ (p 61). The contrary evidence, however, is just too weighty to allow such an easy way out.” (JBE 4 1997:294; emphasis added)

were rumblings of spiritual discontent and uncertainty, as exemplified by Vāsetṭha and Bhāra,dvāja in this sutta.²

1.3 LIBERATING RELIGION. The Te,vijja Sutta is perhaps the earliest statement we know on the freedom of religion. Although the Sutta is a strong rebuttal of brahminical God-ideas (and also of their contemporary forms), its broader message is an even more vital one: we must take charge of our own spiritual development. It is too sacred and urgent a task to be placed into the hands of anyone else.

Religion, not matter how profound or inspiring, is a human construction of our faith in the potential of rising above our present predicaments. However, God-centred religions, as history has painfully witnessed repeatedly, tends to march on power so that when left to its own devices it wreaks terrible destruction and widespread pains.³

The Te,vijja Sutta advocates the practice of lovingkindness, especially for erstwhile God-believers who are turning to the Dharma for spiritual development. Even for those who practice *only* lovingkindness without cultivating insight meditations, they are capable of going to heaven, or having happy rebirths here in this world. In other words, through lovingkindness and a moral life, anyone can go to heaven. The Buddha's teaching, however, offers more, that is, the way to nirvana.⁴

2 Did the Buddha know the Vedas?

2.1 THE VEDAS

2.1.1 Most ancient brahminical texts. The Vedas are the oldest collection of Sanskrit literature, comprising religious brahminical texts, from approximately 1200 BCE and which form the foundation of the orthodox scriptures of Brahmanism and later, of Hinduism. The word *Veda* is derived from the Sanskrit root √VID, “to know,” and the texts are believed by the brahmins to be *the* store of ultimate truth as revealed by the devas [divine beings] to the ancient seers.

During the Buddha's time, there were only three Vedas:

- (1) the Ṛg-veda, hymns to Vedic deities; the oldest of which go back to 1500 BCE),
- (2) the Sāma-veda, sacred hymn-book for the Udgātṛ or Vedic cantor; and
- (3) the Yājur-veda, Vedic mantras and instructions on their proper usage in Vedic rituals.

By the Buddha's time, Vedic literature comprised several different classes:

- (4) the four collections (*saṃhitā*) of verses attributed to ancient seers (*isī*, Skt *ṛṣī*),
- (5) the ritual manuals (*brāhmaṇā*) on the elaborate Vedic sacrificial rituals, and
- (6) the “forest books” (*āraṇyaka*), explaining the esoteric meanings of such rituals.

2.1.2 UPANISADS

2.1.2.1 The Upanishads (*upaniṣad*), the last class of Vedic literature, containing further esoteric commentary on the rituals, were still in the formative stage. After the Buddha's time, a fourth class of brahminical texts was added, that is,

- (7) the Atharva-veda (mostly apotropaic spells and chants).⁵

2.1.2.2 Some of the great 19th century scholars of Buddhism (like Louis de la Vallée Poussin, *La morale bouddhique*, 1927:12) thought that the Buddha had no direct knowledge of the Vedas.⁶ The Te,vijja Sutta in fact mentions the names of some of the early Upanishads (still in their evolving stages)—Adhvaryu, Taittirīya, Chāndogya and Bahvr̥cā [§10]⁷ and also the names of early Vedic sages—Aṣṭaka,

² See **Doṇa Brāhmaṇa S** (A 5.192/3:223-230), SD 36.14 (1.1).

³ See eg **Kakacūpama S** (M 21) @ SD 38.1 (3.2).

⁴ See **Vāsetṭha S** (M 98 = Sn 3.9) @ SD 37.1 (1.3.5).

⁵ On the Vedas, see Dictionary of Buddhism: Veda, & Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 1989:27 f. For refs, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedas>.

⁶ On the Vedas, see prec n. On spirituality and the 4 classes, see **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8, esp (6).

⁷ These are the original Sanskrit forms of the Pali: *Addhariyā*, *Tittiriya*, *Chandokā*, *Chandāvā*, *Brahmacariyā*. According to TW Rhys Davids, the first three were skilled in liturgy generally and probably referred to those adept in the Yajur, Sāma and Ṛg Vedas respectively, and notes that “If we adopt the other reading [ie *Brahmacariyā*] for

Vāmaka, Vāma,deva, Viśvā,mitra, Jamad-agni, Aṅgi,rasa, Bhāra,dvāja, Vāsiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, Bhagu⁸ [§13].

2.1.2.3 Jayatilleke, in his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, gives the following concordance for the Adhvaryu, Taittirīya, Chāndogya and Bahvṛcā brahmins:⁹

<u>School</u>	<u>Text</u>
R̥gveda-bavhārijā Brāhmaṇā (Bahvṛcas)	Bahvṛvas Brāhmaṇa (lost) but incorporated in the Aitareya and Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇas.
Sāma,veda-chandogā Brāhmaṇa (Chandogās)	Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa.
Yajur,veda-tittiriyā Brāhmaṇā (Taittiriyas)	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.
Yajur,veda-addharyā Brāhmaṇa (Adhvaryus)	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

2.1.2.4 In closing his classic work on *The Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, Jayatilleke concludes

The above evidence, we believe, should suffice to show that the brāhmaṇical conceptions criticized in the Tevijja Sutta are not a fanciful creation of the Buddhists, but are the genuine Brāhmaṇical beliefs found in the main streams of the Vedic tradition. The conception of Brahmā (masc) is not a hypostatized version of the Upaniṣadic Brahman (neuter) as Oldenberg surmised, but the personal conception of Brahmā which emerges at a certain stage in the evolution of tradition of the Brāhmaṇas and is found in the Early Upaniṣads. Inasmuch as the Vedas were derived from this Brahmā in the Brāhmaṇical and Upaniṣadic tradition, the Buddhist criticism that none of the earlier seers or their successors had seen Brahmā amounts to a denial of the very foundations of the Vedic tradition. It seems to deny that the Vedic tradition can claim to be a revelation-traditional at all. (1963:480 f)

2.1.2.5 The Upanishads (“close-up sessions”) are speculative texts, numbering some 108, containing elaborations in prose and verse of the Vedas. They record the views of a succession of brahminical teachers and seers who were active as early as c1000 BCE and who flourished c600 BCE. They represent the final stage in the tradition of the Vedas, so the teaching based on them is known as the Vedānta (Skt “conclusion of the Veda”).

The special concerns of the Upanishads include “a spiritual ultimate reality underlying the phenomenal world, known as Brahman or Ātman; the individual soul is essentially one with this reality; we are in bondage due to ignorance of our true nature; and, finally, we can, and should, try to win liberation by attaining true insight.”¹⁰ Such ideas form the fundamentals of Hindu thought, but which early Buddhism strongly rejects.

2.1.3 The Buddha knew the brahminical texts. The Pali Commentaries (like those of Buddhaghosa and of Dhammapāla), however, make no mention of the Vedas or the Upanishads, or chose not to do so. Scholars like K R Norman¹¹ and his pupil, R S Gombrich,¹² have clearly shown again and again that the

the last in the list, then those priests who relied on liturgy, sacrifice or chant would be contrasted with those who had ‘gone forth’ as *religieux*, either as *Tāpasas* or as *Bhikshus*.” (D:RD 1:303 n2).

⁸ See V 1:245; D 1:104, 238, 242; A 3:224, 229; M 2:200. For identification of these seers’ names, see *Vinaya Texts* (tr Rhys Davids & Oldenberg) 2:130 n3 & V:H 4:337 nn5-9.

⁹ Jayatilleke 1963:479-481. See further Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 2005:132-136.

¹⁰ **Pratap Chandra**, “Was early Buddhism influenced by the Upaniṣads?” *Philosophy East and West* 21,3 1971: 317-324.

¹¹ See eg **K R Norman**, “Theravāda Buddhism and Brahmanical Hinduism: Brahmanical terms in a Buddhist guise,” 1991:193-200.

¹² See eg **R Gombrich**, “Recovering the Message of the Buddha,” 1990:5-20. Gombrich further discusses how the Buddha’s teachings are formulated as a response to certain Brahmanical teachings in: *Theravāda Buddhism*, 1988: 60-

Buddha was well aware of the brahminical texts.¹³ Here are some example of the Buddha's responses to the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads:

Brahminical sources

Ṛgveda 10.90.12 (Puruṣa,śūkta)

Ṛgveda 10.169.1

Chāndogya Upaniṣad & Bṛhad-
āraṇyaka Upaniṣad¹⁵

Bṛhad,āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.5

Bṛhad,āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.1-3

Bṛhad,āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.2.13

Manu,smṛti 2.231

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa; Gṛhya Sūtra

Buddhist responses

The brahmins originating from the mouth of cosmic Man:

D 27.3 f/3:81 = M 93.5/2:148.

Blessing for cows: A 7.44 (closing).¹⁴

Yajñavalkya's idea (6 wrong views): M 22.15-16; V 1:14, 19.
Puṇya, karman & pāpa, karman (as purifying ritual) becomes
“volitional act” (A 63.11/3:415).

Brahmā as creator of the universe:

D 1.2.2-6; M 49.4; S 6.581; J 405.

“Gautama, woman is a fire...”: A 7.44.¹⁶

The three fires: A 7.44; S 35.28 = V 1:23-25 (Āditta,pariyāya
Sutta).¹⁷

Worship of the six directions (Sigāl'ovāda Sutta, D 31).¹⁸

2.2 TE, VIJJA

2.2.1 The claims of the brahmins

2.2.1.1 THE 3 FALSE KNOWLEDGES. The Te,vijja Sutta is a declaration of a total and certain rejection of the Three Vedas [2.1] of the ancient brahmins. It disproves and denounces the *tri,vidyā*, the three “knowledges” or three Vedas¹⁹—Ṛg, Sāma and Yajur Vedas—of the brahmanical system, put together by the early seers basically as sort of speculation about the world, life and reality. The later brahmins, as ancient India became more urbanized, used these sacred texts as a justification for entrenching themselves as the dominant class to which all others are subservient. This is an example of how religious ideology (especially the God-idea) and religious institutions (especially rituals) and are used for social control and economic opportunism.

The Buddha rejects the Three Vedas as well as the Vedic brahmins, not only for these unwholesome and worldly uses of religion, but more so because of the speculative nature of the Vedas, and the ritualism and worldliness of the Vedic brahmins have nothing to true mental cultivation or real spiritual development. None of these teachings leads to nirvana.

2.2.1.2 SUTTA TITLE. The term Te,vijja in the Sutta title refers to either the Three Vedas [2.1] or to “those of the Three Vedas,” that is, the Vedic brahmins and their false and harmful claims. “The brahmins learned in the Three Vedas” (*te,vijjā brāhmaṇā*) are directly referred to early in the Sutta, where despite their claim to know God (Brahmā), have never seen him at all [§12]. They and the ancient teachers, as such are like the blind leading the blind [§15].

The Sutta climax is the Buddha's utter denunciation of the Three Vedas as “the threefold desert, the threefold jungle, the threefold misfortune” [§36]. They are a “desert,” because they have nothing to offer for spiritual liberation, but used by the brahmins to exploit society; they are a “jungle” because they are more forest than threes, and we could easily be lost on account of their speculative and religious nature;

86; “Recovering the Buddha's Message,” 1990: 5-20; “The Buddha's Book of Genesis?” 1992: 159-178. On the Brahman doctrine of the early Upanishads and the Tevijja S, see *How Buddhism Began*, 1996:58-62.

¹³ See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (3.2).

¹⁴ See Gombrich 1990: 19 f.

¹⁵ See Norman 1981: 20; Gombrich 1990: 14 f.

¹⁶ See Gombrich 1990: 17-20.

¹⁷ See Gombrich 1990: 16-20 where he gives his own tr of **Aggi (Uggata,sarīra) S** (A 4:41-46).

¹⁸ See CAF Rhys Davids in D:RD 3:170 for refs (Intro to her tr of **Sigāl'ovāda S**). Also Michel Clasquin, 1995.

¹⁹ After the Buddha, a fourth, the Atharva Veda, was added. On the Vedas, see Intro (1) n & Basham 1989: 27 f.

and they are a misfortune because ideologies based on such teachings will continue to blind priests and believers to exploit society, uphold a class system, demean women and drug the mind with grand falsities.

There is mention of neither the “3 direct knowledges” [2.2.2] nor of arhathood [1.1] in the Sutta. Instead, in the teaching section, we have the Buddha expounding only *two* of the three trainings, that is, that of moral virtue [§§43-63], and that of mental training [§§64-81]. In fact, only the first dhyana [§75] is mentioned, followed by a description of the 4 divine abodes [§76-81]. This is understandable as the audience—the two young brahmins, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja—are new to Buddhism. The Sutta closes with their refuge-going [§82].

2.2.2 The 3 direct knowledges. Unequivocally rejecting the Three Vedas of the brahmins [2.2.1], the Buddha elsewhere²⁰ teaches (by way of “symbolic adaptation”) the arhat’s *te,vijjā* of the 3 direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), namely,

- (1) the knowledge of the recollection of past lives (*pubbe.nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*),
- (2) the divine eye or knowledge of the arising and passing away of beings (according to their karma) (*cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*), and
- (3) the knowledge of the destruction of these mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*).²¹

One of the four types of arhats traditionally mentioned in the Suttas possesses these three knowledges, that is, the “three-knowledge arhat” (*te,vijja arahata*).

2.2.3 Four types of arhats. The four types of arhats are as follows:²²

- (1) The six-knowledge arhat (*cha-l-abhiññā arahata*), has attained, with samatha as basis, four or more dhyanas. The six knowledges are:²³
 1. psychic powers (*iddha,vidhā*);
 2. the divine ear (*dibba,sota*) or clairaudience;
 3. mind-reading (*paracitta,vijānana,ñāṇa*) or telepathy;
 4. retrocognition (*pubbe,nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;
 5. the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
 6. the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)
- (2) The three-knowledge arhat (*te,vijja arahata*), who, with samatha as basis, have attained 4 or more dhyanas. The three knowledges are:²⁴
 1. retrocognition (*pubbe,nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;
 2. the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
 3. the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)

²⁰ V 2:183; M 2.10/1:8, 9.70/1:55; D 33.1.10(58)/3:220, 34.1.4(10)/3:275; M 36.38-44/1:2478-249, 39.19-21/-1:278-280, 51.24-26/1:347 f, 65.18-21/1:441 f, 76.47-50/1:522, 79.41-44/2:38 f, 101.42-45/2:226 f; S 6.5/1:146*, 8.7/1:192*, 8.9/1:194*; A 3.59.2-4/1:166 f; Sn 656; cf M 9.70/1:55, 112.20/3:36 (only *āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa* mentioned).

²¹ The term *āsava* (lit “influx, outflow”; fig “canker”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is prob older and is found more freq in the suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these influxes (*āsava-k,khaya*) is equivalent to arhathood. See D 3:220, 275; A 2:163, 165; A 1:146, 192, 194; cf V 2:83; Sn 594, 656. See BDict: *āsava*.

²² See de Silva 1978:143 f.

²³ For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

²⁴ For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

- (3) The arhat freed both ways (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*), attained through direct experience and full mastery of the eight liberations (*vimokkha*)²⁵ or the “nine dhyanas.”²⁶ This kind of saint is fully accomplished in meditation. (M 1:160, 174, 204, 209; A 2:183)
- (4) The wisdom-liberated arhat (*paññā, vimutta*), any or all of the four dhyanas as samatha basis, and the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (M 3:36)

3 Parables of the Tevijja Sutta

The Buddha’s arguments against the Brahmanical claims about the nature of Brahmā and “companionship with Brahmā”²⁷ are entirely founded on 5 major parables (or sets of parables):

- | | |
|--|------------|
| (1) The file of blind men | [§15]; |
| (2) The sun and the moon | [§§16-18] |
| (3) The most beautiful woman in the land | [§§19-20]; |
| (4) The stairway to nowhere | [§§21-23]; |
| (5) The river Aciravatī | [§§24-26]. |

The Buddha’s dialogue with the two brahmin youths consists initially in the working of common grounds between the two systems: the brahminical and the Buddhist. The Buddha then points out their problems by using parables that evince the Buddha’s sense of humour.

The first parable—that of the file of blind men [§15]—is “a criticism of religion as traditional authority, or authoritarian tradition” (Kruger 1988:57). This argument is listed as the very first of “the ten positions of doubt” in **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65/1:189). Blind faith and unexamined belief are here rejected. This might be regarded as the “historical” argument.

The second parable—that of the sun and the moon—develop from the previous parable. In the parable of the file of blind men, none of them could see. None of the brahmins who speak of Brahmā have ever seen him. Not only are they helpless with the unseen, but they are also unable to help their believers (and themselves) with what is seen, namely, the sun and the moon, no matter how much they supplicate these distant heavenly bodies.²⁸

The third parable—that of the most beautiful woman (“the beauty queen”) in the land [§19]—is a criticism of religion as “desire” (Kruger 1988:57).²⁹ In this “psychological argument,” the Buddha implicitly points to religion as the desire for self-protection (“God” idea) and self-preservation (“soul” idea).³⁰ Human insecurities are often sublimated into religion, or more specifically, into a God-religion.

According to Jayatilleke (1963:326-328), here the *context* of such a statement as—“I desire and love the most beautiful girl of the country” [§19]—makes it meaningless. He argues that the X’s statement “I love Y” is meaningless since (i) one is not sure whether there is an instance of Y, and (ii) even if there is, it does not make sense for X to say that he loves Y unless he has some acquaintance direct or indirect with Y, such that he could specify at least one of the characteristics of Y. “In other words, there is no verifiable content to the statement from the point of view of X who is making it.” (1963:327).

The fourth parable—that of the stairway to nowhere [§21]—is a criticism of religion as “a pretentious construction” (Kruger 1988:58). The builder of the stairway does not even have a plan for his proposed

²⁵ On the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*), see **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15), SD 5.17 (10).

²⁶ Properly known as the 9 progressive abidings (*anupubba, vihāra*), comprising: the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless dhyanas (*arūpa jhāna*), and the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha* or *nirodha, samāpatti*) (D 3:265, 290; A 4:410). These are different from the 8 liberations (see prec n).

²⁷ See Jayatilleke 1963:182.

²⁸ For a related, more warm-hearted, story, see **Matṭha, kuṇḍali Vatthu** = DhA 1.2/1:25-35 ad Dh 2.

²⁹ There are at least 2 other canonical parables of a beautiful girl, but in different contexts: **Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 13.18/1:88 = SD 6.9) on decaying process, and **Janapada Kalyāṇi S** (S 47.20/5:169 f) on how a man carrying a bowl brimful of oil followed by another with a drawn sword would pay full attention to his action and not be distracted.

³⁰ See eg Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 1978:51.

building to which the stairway is to be connected to. In fact, he is not sure what he wants to build, if he is building anything at all. This may be called the “social” or “sociological argument” where religion is a social construct and society takes the place of “God.” Like the previous statement, Jayatilleke points out that “he claims to make a stairway to ascend a mansion which he has neither seen nor known. His statement is considered meaningless since he can attach no meaning or verification to the term ‘mansion’ which is one of the terms of his statement.” (1963:328)³¹

The fifth parable—that of the river Aciravatī—comes in three variations, all of which criticize religion “that is not authenticated by rigorous purity of existence” (Kruger 1988:58). The first variation of the parable [§24]—the man beseeching the farther bank to come over—is a parody of selfish and impossible prayer.³² The second variation [§25]—a man bound on the bank—is clearly suggestive of one, especially a blind follower or fanatic, who is imprisoned or stunted in growth by his own beliefs and devotion. The third variation [§26]—a man with his head covered and lying on the ground—represents a blind believer or misguided fanatic who is unable or unwilling to be open to other possible truths, especially those that liberate. These parables constitute the “existential argument.”

In §§31-35, the Buddha criticizes the brahmins who claim to be God’s ordained by pointing to how different the brahmins—with *their wives*—are from Brahmā (God) who have none of these. This is also a hint that the brahmins are “religious professionals,” exploiting religion as means of living, rather than taking it as a “calling” (“vocation”) or as right livelihood.

The sutta closes with the Buddha’s **demythologizing** of the brahminical God-idea into universal spiritual qualities³³—the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*)—that anyone can cultivate, and in due course attain the very spiritual qualities that constitute godliness. The Buddha, as such, has brought heaven down to earth.

4 Buddhism and theism

4.1 EMPTY CLAIMS BEHIND THE GOD-IDEA. The Buddha’s arguments against the brahminical notions of Brahmā or High God would today fall under the category of the philosophy of religion, that is, the arguments against the existence of God, or more exactly, logical arguments against the proofs of the existence of God. Since all we can have are ideas about God, they remain ideas. Whether such ideas contribute to moral and spiritual wellbeing or not is not the issue here (unless one discounts the freedom of thought and agrees that such wellbeing should be forced by one upon another).

The main argument that emerges from the various colourful parables of the Tevijja Sutta is that those who claim to point the way to God, have themselves neither seen him nor known him, and also that they lack the qualities of the very God that they claim to represent, very much like “sinners” who claim to speak for a sinless God. On a more subtle, yet more important, level is the fact that God is a mind-made idea, possible only with the existence of human language and discourse. Such a situation entails no problems as long as there is freedom of thought and expression. However, the problems and dangers become real and serious when the God defined by a dominant class or power is the only choice one has, and one could only deviate from such an ideology at a cost, even that of one’s freedom or life.

4.2 IN WHAT WAY IS BUDDHISM “NON-THEISTIC”? The Tevijja Sutta is the locus classicus for a non-theistic notion of Buddhism.³⁴ It is a common misconception amongst many western and westernized Buddhists that “non-theistic” here means that Buddhism has nothing to do whatsoever with beliefs in God or gods, and related practices. However, the early texts often refer to unseen worlds of devas, yakshas, pretas and various other non-humans, and the Mahāyāna pantheon is filled with cosmic Buddhas, Bodhi-

³¹ For a similar logical problem and the Buddha’s reply, see **Cūḷa Sakul’udayī S** (M 79.9-10/2:32 f). For a positive version of this parable, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.46/1:198).

³² On the Buddha’s criticism of selfish prayer, see **Iṭṭha S** (A 5.43/3:47-49); cf **Ṭhāna S** (A 5.48/3:54).

³³ For another example of demythologizing, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1.

³⁴ See eg Helmuth von Glasneapp, *Buddhism: a Non-theistic Religion*. Tr I Schloegl from the German. London: Allen & Unwin, 1970.

sattvas, deities and gurus. Even today, numerous Buddhists continually pray to these religious forms and beings, not only for inspiration, but even for more mundane help. On this level, Buddhist worshippers behave (perhaps also think) in a manner no different from the faithful of theistic religions.

There are two main ways of explaining this interesting and articulate development in Buddhism: the academic and the spiritual. **The academic explanation** (but not the only one) is based on Peter Brown's 1981 study of the rise and function of the cult of saints in Latin Christianity.³⁵ The basis for this idea is the lay-monastic dichotomy in Buddhism: *the monastics* give up the security and pleasures of household life for one of renunciation in quest of spiritual awakening, and dwelling in moral virtue and acting as spiritual teachers and exemplars, they are provided with the support of basic necessities (almsfood, robes, shelter and medical needs) by *the laity*, who in turn keep to a less regiment religious training by keeping to the five precepts, practising charity and other spiritual exercises within their ability and inclination.³⁶

The spiritual explanation is also a psychological one, that is, one's practices generally reflect one's perceptions and immediate needs. **Reginald Ray**, in a short useful Shambhala Sun article succinctly explains the Buddhist nature of being non-theistic, thus:

Briefly put, non-theism means that what is ultimately true and real cannot be found in any external god or being. Any such being has location, qualities and some kind of existence, and is therefore subject to causes and conditions. There is according to Buddhism, something more fundamental than this...

The Buddhist approach states that what is ultimately required for human fulfillment is a perfection of being that is found in who we already are. This is the meaning of the Buddha's advice given shortly before his death and recounted in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta [D 16], in which he counsels his followers to be lights unto themselves, to seek refuge in themselves, and to seek no other refuge, using the dharma as a means to that end.

Here the Buddha directs us to rely only on ourselves, using various methods to explore our own human nature as it exists right now. This exploration is not a one-sided introversion. Rather, it is looking at our present experiences of both the "internal" and "external" worlds to see what lies at their base, beneath the constant chatter of discursive thinking. Then from within our own experience is gradually uncovered what is ultimately real. This is our Buddha-nature—that which is open, clear, all-wise and limitlessly compassionate.

In fact, it is this very nature that is habitually projected onto "supernatural beings." It is in this sense that the Buddha, the prototype of the enlightened person, is called the devatideva in the early texts—the god above gods. The Buddha fully understands the deities—that while they may appear to exist on a relative level, they have no final reality. Instead, they are projections of the deepest qualities of our own human nature. This understanding is attained through the practice of meditation, in which the temporary defilements that obscure the buddha-nature are gradually stripped away.

(Ray, "Religion without God," *Shambhala Sun*, 2001)

5 Vāsettha and Bhāra,dvāja

The brahmin youths Vāsettha and Bhāra,dvāja are close friends. **Vāsettha** is an expert in the Three Vedas, who belongs to a very rich family, renouncing forty crores³⁷ when he goes forth. With his friend

³⁵ Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its rise and function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

³⁶ A good study here is **Reginald Ray**, *Buddhist Saints in India*, 1994:15-43 (ch 1). **ME Spiro** speaks of "apotropic," "kammatic," and "nibbanic" types of Buddhists in *Buddhism and Society*, 2nd ed, Berkeley, 1982. **Lewis Lancaster** sees a dichotomy based on social dominance, in "Elite and folk: Comments on the two-tiered theory," in *Religion and the Family in East Asia*, ed George A De Vos & Takao Sofue, Berkeley, 1984:87-95. However, the lay-monastic dichotomy is not always clear, as discussed in **Gregory Schopen**'s works, esp "On monks, nuns and 'vulgar' practices: The introduction of the image cult into Indian Buddhism," *Artibus Asiae* 49,1-2 1988:153-168.

³⁷ A crore (*koṭi*) = 10 million.

Bhāra,dvāja, he visits the Buddha and has discussions with him. These discussions are recorded in **the Vāsetṭha Sutta** (Sn 1.7),³⁸ **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13) and **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27). Buddhaghosa says that Vāsetṭha is the chief disciple of Pokkhara,sāti.³⁹ He adds⁴⁰ that Vāsetṭha's first visit to the Buddha is on the occasion of the Vāsetṭha Sutta, at the conclusion of which he takes refuge. His second visit—and taking refuge again, or probably only Bhāra,dvāja doing so, since Vāsetṭha has earlier done so—is when the Buddha expounds the Tevijja Sutta. Soon after, he enters the order, and at the conclusion of the Aggañña Sutta, he is given the higher ordination and in due course attains arhathood, as does Bhāra,dvāja (DA 3:860).

According to Buddhaghosa, **Bhāra,dvāja** belongs to a noble family worth forty five crores (DA 3:860). As a brahmin youth, he is a pupil of Tārukkha. A discussion between him and Vāsetṭha leads to the teaching of the Vāsetṭha Sutta and the Tevijja Sutta. Bhāra,dvāja later becomes the Buddha's follower (D 1:252; Sn p123). The Aggañña Sutta is given in connection with Bhāra,dvāja and Vāsetṭha when they are undergoing the probationary period prior to their becoming fully ordained monks (D 27/3:80). Buddhaghosa says that they accept the Buddha as their teacher at the conclusion of the Vāsetṭha Sutta and enters the order at the end of the Tevijja Sutta (DA 3:860). Later, while meditating on the teachings of the Aggañña Sutta, they become arhats (DA 3:872).

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The Discourse on Those with the Three Knowledges

D 13/1:235-252

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was wandering [peregrinating] in Kosala country by stages (on a teaching tour)⁴¹ with a large company of monks, some five hundred in number. He came to a brahmin village of the Kosalas called Manasākaṭa.⁴²

³⁸ Sn p115/594 ff; M 2:197/98.

³⁹ D 2:399; SnA 2:463; cf Sn p116.

⁴⁰ DA 2:406; cf 3:860, 872.

⁴¹ "Wandering...by stages," *cārikam caramāno*, lit "walking the walk," that is, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering to the people. This expression is found through the Nikāyas: **D** 1:88×3, 111×2, 112, 127×2, 128, 224×2, 235, 2:316, 317, 318, 3:207×2; **M** 1:146×2, 166, 171, 240×2, 285×2, 400, 401, 473, 2:49, 54, 55, 60, 61, 93, 96, 135, 136, 140, 141, 146, 164 (×3), 185, 210, 212, 3:201, 237, 269, 290 (×2); **S** 3:95, 4:63, 323, 5:352; **A** 1:180, 188, 236, 3:30, 341, 402, 274, 340, 5:122; **U** 25, 41, 58, 78, 81, 85; **Sn** pp 93 (**Sabhiya S**), 102 & 105 (**Sela S**). M:ÑB has "wandering by stages." Comy glosses as "going on a journey" (*addhāna,gamanam gacchanto*) (MA 1:239; UA 1:183). Two types of wanderings are noted: the "fixed" wandering or "the journeying" (*nibaddha*), ie towards a destination, and the "unfixed wandering" or simply "the wandering," ie without a destination (DA 1:243). A further classification is the "quick," ie short journey (*turita,cārika*) and the "slow," ie long journey (*aturita,cārika*). The Buddha makes short trips of compassion, thus: he travels 3 gāvutas "in a second" (*muhuttena*) to meet Mahā Kassapa; to meet the yaksha Ālavaka, 30 yojanas; to meet Aṅgulimāla, 30 yojanas; to meet Pukkusāti, 45 yojanas; Mahā Kappina, 120 yojanas; to meet Dhaniya, 170 yojanas; and Sāriputta travels 120 yojanas and 3 gāvutas to meet Tissa, the forest-dwelling novice (MA 1:239-244). 1 yojana = 11.25 km (7 mi) = 4 gāvutas.

⁴² Manasākaṭa was a brahmin village on the banks of the Acira,vatī, in Kosala. It was a beautiful place and well known brahmins would from time to time retire gather there in its quiet to perform their various rituals, such as reciting the Vedas (DA 2:399). The Buddha gave teachings, such as those recorded in **Tevijja S** (D 13/1:235-252) in a mango grove to the north of the village. In **Vāsetṭha S** (M 98 = Sn 3.9), these same brahmins are said have gathered in Icchā,naṅgala (M 98.1/2:196 = Sn p115).

And the Blessed One stayed there in a mango grove on the bank of the river Acira, vatī, to the north of Manasākaṭa.

Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra, dvāja

2 At that time, many very well known and wealthy brahmins were staying in Manasākaṭa, that is to say, the brahmin Caṅkī, the brahmin Tārukkha, the brahmin Pokkhara, sāti, the brahmin Jānussoṇi, the brahmin Todeyya, and other well known and wealthy brahmins [of the great halls].⁴³

3 Now, the brahmin youths Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra, dvāja, while walking back and forth, exercising their legs,⁴⁴ engaged in a debate on **what is the path and what is not the path (to salvation)**.⁴⁵

4 The brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said this:

“This is the only straight path, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā⁴⁶—this is taught by the brahmin Pokkhara, sāti!”

5 The brahmin youth Bhāra, dvāja said this:

“This is the only straight path, [236] the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā—this is taught by the brahmin Tārukkha!”

6 But neither was the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha able to convince the brahmin youth Bhāra, dvāja, nor was the brahmin youth Bhāra, dvāja able to convince the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha.

7 Then brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said to brahmin youth Bhāra, dvāja:

“Now, Bhāradvāja,⁴⁷ the⁴⁸ recluse Gotama, the son of the Sakyas, who went forth from the Sakya clan,⁴⁹ is now staying at Manasākaṭa in the mango grove on the bank of the river Aciravati, to the north of Manasākata.

Concerning this Blessed One, this fair report has been spread about, thus:⁵⁰

⁴³ Comy says that Caṅkī was from Opāsāda, Tārukkha from Icchā, naṅgala, Pokkhara, sāti from Ukkatṭha, Jānussoṇi from Sāvattṭhī, and Todeyya from Tudi, gāma (DA 2:399). It is said that they would gather once every 6 months, ie, twice a years: once at Pokkhara, sāti’s residence in Ukkatṭha to purify their birth (*jāti, sodhana*), and once at Icchā, naṅgala, to purify their “mantras,” ie the Vedas (MA 3:431). **Te, vijja S** (D 13) records them as having gathered in Manasākaṭa, a brahmin village on the banks of the Acira, vatī in Kosala, to “purify” (*sodhetum*), ie, ritually affirm, “the mantras.” (DA 2:399).

⁴⁴ Comy: After learning and memorizing mantras all day, in the evening, they went down to the river to bathe, and then walked up and down on the sand. (DA 2:399).

⁴⁵ *Maggāmagga* = *magga* + *amagga*.

⁴⁶ *Ayam eva uju, maggo, ayam añjas’āyano niyyāniko niyyāti tak, karassa brahma, sahavyatāya*. “companionship,” *sahavyatā*, also “fellowship, communion.” Rhys Davids has been accused of mistranslating *sahavyatā* here as “union,” thus implying a mystical union rather than merely being a part of Brahmā’s company. “But,” remarks Walshe, “the Brahmins had explained to the Buddha that they were puzzled because different teachers interpreted the path to Brahmā in different ways. Thus both interpretations may well be implied here.” (D:W 43)

⁴⁷ Buddhaghosa says that Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra, dvāja first meet the Buddha as recorded in **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98 = Sn 3.9), when they go for refuge (M 98.14 = Sn p123). They receive another long instruction from the Buddha in **Te, vijja S** (D 13), and again take refuge (D 13.82/1:252). **Aggañña S** (D 27) is given to them when they are probationers for full ordination (D 27/3:80). According to Buddhaghosa, they accept the Buddha as their teacher at the end of Vāseṭṭha S and join the order (as probationers) at the end of Tevijja S (DA 3:860). Later, while meditating on the teachings of Aggañña S, they become arhats (DA 3:872). It is noteworthy that here, Vāseṭṭha addresses Bhāra, dvāja by name *without* the brahmin appellative *bho* (“sir”), as earlier in Vāseṭṭha S (M 98.3 = Sn p115). This change prob reflects their gradual turning away from Brahmanism.

⁴⁸ *Ayam*.

⁴⁹ A stock passage speaks of the Buddha as “the recluse Gotama, a Sakya son who went forth from the Sakya clan” (*samaṇo...gotamo sakya, putto sakya, kulā pabbajito*): **Mv 22.2/V 1:35; D 4.1/1:111, 13.7/1:236; M 41.2/1:285; A 3.63.1/1:180; Sn p103**. On his renunciation, see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26.14/1:163), SD 1.11, **Soṇa, danḍa S** (D 4.6/1:115), SD 30.5, **Kūṭa, danta S** (D 5.7/1:131), SD 22.8(7a) & **Caṅkī S** (M 95.9/2:167), SD 21.15, the last three of which say that he is “from a high family” (*uccā kulā*”).

⁵⁰ *Evam kalyāṇo kitti, saddo abbhuggato*: **V 1:35; D 1:49, 116, 236, 2:317; M 1:285, 2:167; S 5:352; A 1:180, 3:58, 4:80 (kalyāṇo...abbhuggaccheyya); Sn p103; J 1:509**.

‘The Blessed One is such: arhat [worthy], fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, supreme guide of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’⁵¹

Come then, Bharadvaja, let us go to the place where the recluse Gotama is staying; and when we have reached there, let us ask the recluse Gotama about this matter, and whatever he tells us, we shall accept it.”

TALK ON WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT THE PATH

(*Maggâmagga Kathā*)

Meeting the Buddha

8 So the two of them approached the Blessed One, exchanged courtesies and sat down at one side. Seated thus, the brahmin youth Vāsetṭha said this to the Blessed One: [237]

“While we were walking back and forth, exercising our legs, we engaged in a debate on what is the path and what is not the path (to salvation). I said this:

‘This is the only straight path, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā—this is taught by the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti!’

The brahmin youth Bhāra,dvāja said this:

‘This is the only straight path, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā—this is taught by the brahmin Tārukkha!’

Regarding this matter, master Gotama, there is a quarrel, a dispute, a difference of opinion between us.”

9 “So, Vāsetṭha, you say that the way to companionship with Brahmā is the one taught by the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, and Bhāra,dvāja says that it is the one taught by the brahmin Tārukkha. What then is the dispute all about?”

10 “The true path and the false path, master Gotama. These brahmins, master Gotama, teach different paths: that is, the Adhvaryu, Taittirīya, Chāndogya and Bahvṛcā⁵² brahmins.

But, do all these bring salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā?⁵³

Master Gotama, just as near a village or a town there are many different paths, yet they all meet up in the village;

even so, there are the many different paths taught: those of the Adhvaryu, Taittirīya, Chāndogya and Bahvṛcā brahmins.

But, do all these bring salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā?”

11 “You say, ‘They lead,’ Vāsetṭha?”

“I say: ‘They lead,’ master Gotama.”

“You say, ‘They lead,’ Vāsetṭha?”

“I say: ‘They lead,’ master Gotama.”

“You say, ‘They lead,’ Vāsetṭha?”

“I say: ‘They lead,’ master Gotama.” [238]

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BRAHMANISM

Where is God?

12 “But, Vāsetṭha, is there even a single one of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who has himself seen Brahmā [God] face to face?”

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

“Then, is there even a single one of the teachers⁵⁴ of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who has himself seen Brahmā face to face?”

⁵¹ On this recollection of the Buddha, see **Buddhânussati**, SD 15.7b.

⁵² *Addhariyā brāhmaṇā tittiriyā brāhmaṇā chandokā brāhmaṇā bavhārijjhā brāhmaṇā*. See Intro (2.1).

⁵³ *Atha kho sabbāni tāni niyyānikāni niyyanti tak, karassa brahma, saavyatāya*.

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

“Then, is there even a single one of the pupils of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who has himself seen Brahmā face to face?”

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

“Then, is there any single one of the brahmins going back up to the seventh generation who has himself seen Brahmā face to face?”⁵⁵

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

13 “Well then, Vāseṭṭha, what about the ancient seers of the brahmins, mantra makers, mantra preachers—that is to say, Aṣṭaka, Vāmaka, Vāma,deva, Viśvā,mitra, Jamad-agni, Aṅgi,rasa, Bhāra,dvāja, Vāsiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, and Bhagu⁵⁶—whose ancient mantras and verses are chanted, uttered and collected by the brahmins of today, who sing them and recite them, and having sung them make others sing them, having recited them make others recite them⁵⁷—did they ever say:

‘We know and see when, how and where Brahmā appears?’⁵⁸

“No, master Gotama.”

14 “So, Vāseṭṭha, not one of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas has seen Brahmā face to face, nor has any of their teachers, nor teacher’s teachers, [239] nor even any of the predecessors going back seven generations of any teacher.

Nor could any of the ancient seers of the brahmins, mantra makers, mantra preachers, whose ancient mantras and verses are chanted, uttered and collected by the brahmins of today, who sing them and recite them, and having sung them make others sing them, having recited them make others recite them, say:

‘We know and see when, how and where Brahmā appears.’

So what these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas are saying is:

‘We teach this path to companionship with Brahmā that we do not know or see, this is the only straight path, the direct path that brings salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā.’

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Such being the case, does not what these brahmins who are well versed in the Three Vedas declare turn out to be groundless?”

“Yes, master Gotama, that being the case, what these brahmins who are well versed in the Three Vedas has declared is indeed groundless.”

⁵⁴ Alt tr: “Any teacher or teacher’s teacher,” here following Buddhadatta (*Concise Pali-English Dictionary*, 1968) who defines *pācariya* as “teacher’s teacher.” If the cpd resolved as *ek’ācariya-p-ācariyo*, it means “one teacher after teacher.” Childers (DPL) however defines *ek’ācariyo* as “having the same teacher,” and *pācariyo* as “a pupil,” which makes the reading *ek’ācariya-pācariya* = “a pupil following the same teacher.” Possible alt tr: “any teacher or pupil.”

⁵⁵ Cf **Caṅkī S** (M 95): “What then, Bhāra,dvāja, is there a single brahmin amongst those who are teachers of teachers, going back over seven generations of teachers [of the teacher], who says thus: ‘I know this, I see this: only this is true, everything is false!’?” (*Kim pana Bhāradvāja, atthi koci brāhmaṇānaṃ ek’ācariyo pi ek’ācariya’pācariyo pi yāva sattamā ācariyamaha,yugāpi, yo evam āha: aham etaṃ jānāmi, aham etaṃ passāmi, idam eva saccaṃ mogham aññan ti.*) (M 95.13b/2:169), SD 21.15

⁵⁶ See Intro (2.1).

⁵⁷ “The ancient seers... make others recite them,” ...[tevijjānaṃ]* *brāhmaṇānaṃ pubbakā isayo mantānaṃ kattāro mantānaṃ pavattāro, yesam idam etarahi brāhmaṇā porānaṃ manta,padaṃ gītaṃ pavuttaṃ samhitā, tad anugāyanti tad anubhāsanti, bhāsitaṃ anubhāsanti vācītaṃ anuvācenti, seyyath’idam—Aṭṭhako Vāmako Vāma,devo Vessā,mitto Yama-t-aggi [Ke Yama-d-aggi] Aṅgīraso Bhāra,dvājo Vāseṭṭho Kassapo Bhagu* [* only at D 13.13]: this is stock: Mv 35.2 = V 1:245; **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.2.8/1:104); **Tevijja S** (D 13.2.13/1:238 f, 13.2.18/1:241, 242, 243); **Caṅkī S** (M 95.13/2:169 f), **Subha S** (M 99.9/2:200); **Doṇa S** (A 5.192/3:223 f, 3:229 f,), (**Maha-p,phala**) **Dāna S** (A 7.49/4:61). For identification of the seers’ names, see *Vinaya Texts* (tr Rhys Davids & Oldenberg) 2:130 n3 & V:H 4:337 nn5-9.

⁵⁸ Cf **Kevaddha S** (D 11.80). This question is only briefly asked in **Caṅkī S** (M 95.13), SD 21.15.

The blind leading the blind

15 “Well, Vāseṭṭha, when these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas teach a path that they neither know nor see, saying,

‘This is the only straight road, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā,’ this cannot possibly be right.

Just as a file of blind men, Vāseṭṭha, one clinging to the other: the first one sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, and the last one sees nothing⁵⁹—so it is with the talk of these brahmins, for certain,⁶⁰ like the file of blind men holding onto the line, one clinging to the other: the first one [240] sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, the last one sees nothing.⁶¹

The talk of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas turns out to be only laughable, mere words, simply empty, utterly vain.”⁶²

The sun and the moon

16 “What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Do these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas see the sun and moon just as other people do, and facing the sun and moon as they rise and set, do they pray, sing praises and worship with clasped hands?”

“They do, master Gotama.”

17 “What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? These brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who can see the sun and moon just as other people do... can they show the way to companionship with the sun and moon, saying, ‘This is the only straight path, the direct path, that bring salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā?’”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

18 “So, Vāseṭṭha, these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas cannot show the way to companionship with the sun and moon that they have seen. And none of them, too, has seen Brahmā face to face. [241]

Nor have even the predecessors going back seven generations of any of the teachers.

Nor could any of the ancient seers say, ‘We know and see when, how and where Brahmā appears.’

Yet these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas say that they can show the way to companionship with that which they neither know nor have seen.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha, such being the case, does not what these brahmins declare turn out to be groundless?”

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

“Excellent, Vāseṭṭha, there is no basis for these brahmins to make such a claim.”

The country’s most beautiful girl

19 “Vāseṭṭha, it is just as if a man were to say, ‘I desire and love the most beautiful girl of the country.’⁶³

⁵⁹ *Seyyāthapi Vāseṭṭha, andha,veṇi paramparā,samsattā, purimo pi na passati majjhimo pi na passati pacchimo pi na passati.* This well known parable is found in **Te,vijja S** (D 13.15/1:239); **Caṅkī S** (M 95.13e/2:170), (**Brahma,-vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99.9/2:200). An even better known parable is that of the blind men and the elephant (U 6.4/68), SD 40.14: see Jayatilleke 1963:354 f, 378 f.

⁶⁰ “For certain,” *maññe*.

⁶¹ See Intro (3) & **Caṅkī S** (M 2:170/95.13).

⁶² *Tesam idam te,vijjānam brāhmaṇānam bhāsitaṃ hassakam yeva sampajjati, nāmakam yeva sampajjati, rittakam yeva sampajjati,tucchakam yeva sampajjati.* Cf **Te,vijja S** (D 13), where the wanderer vents his anger with these words, and where the reading is *lāmakam*, “frivolous,” instead of *nāmakam* (D 13.15/1:240), SD 1.8.

⁶³ “The most beautiful girl of the country,” *janapada,kalyāṇī*, alt tr “the beauty queen of the country,” Jayatilleke 1963:326 f. This parable recurs in **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.35/1:193), SD 7.14 & **Te,vijja S** (D 13.19/1:241 f), SD 1.8: see (3).

And if people were to ask him, ‘All right, then, do you know whether this most beautiful girl is a kshatriya lady [noble woman], a brahminee [brahmin woman], a vaishya [business-class woman] or a shudra [working-class woman]?’⁶⁴ he would answer, ‘No.’

And if people were to ask him, ‘All right, then, do you know the name or [242] the family name of this most beautiful woman? Is she tall or short or of medium height. Is her complexion black, dark or clear?’⁶⁵ Is she from a village, town or city?’ he would answer, ‘No.’

And if people were to ask him, ‘All right, then, do you desire and love for someone whom you neither know nor have seen?’ he would answer, ‘Yes!’⁶⁶

What do you think, Vāsetṭha, such being the case, does not what this person says turn out to be groundless?’⁶⁷

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

20 Even so, Vāsetṭha, though you say that the brahmins are unable to show the way to companionship with that which they have seen [ie the sun and the moon], and you further say that neither any of them, nor their pupils, nor their predecessors even to the seventh generation have ever seen Brahmā.

And you further say that even the ancient seers neither know nor see when, how or where Brahmā appears.

Yet these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas say they can show [243] the way to companionship with that which they know not nor have seen!

What do you think, Vāsetṭha, such being the case, does not what these brahmins declare turn out to be groundless?’

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

“Excellent, Vāsetṭha, there is no basis for these brahmins to make such a claim.”

The stairway to nowhere

21 “Vāsetṭha, it is just as if a man were to build a stairway to a mansion at a crossroads.⁶⁸ People might ask, ‘Hey there, this stairway to a mansion—do you know whether the mansion will face east, west, north or south, or whether it will be high, low or medium in height?’ and he would say, ‘No!’

And they might say, ‘You mean you neither know nor see what kind of mansion you are building this stairway for?’ and he would say, ‘No!’

What do you think, Vāsetṭha, such being the case, does not what this man declare turn out to be groundless?’

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”⁶⁹

22 Even so, Vāsetṭha, though you say that the brahmins are unable to show the way to companionship with that which neither they nor their predecessors even to the seventh generation have ever seen Brahmā.

And you further say that even the ancient seers neither know nor see when, how or where Brahmā appears.

Yet these brahmins declare, ‘We teach this path [244] to companionship with Brahmā that we do not know or see, this is the only straight path, the direct path that brings salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā.’

⁶⁴ These four were the classes (*vaṇṇa*) of ancient India: generally the kshatriya was a noble; the brahmin, a priest; the vaiśya, a merchant; the shudra (or helot), a menial worker. See **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8 (4).

⁶⁵ “Clear(-complexioned),” *maṅgura-c, chavī*, lit “golden-skinned.”

⁶⁶ See Intro (3).

⁶⁷ “Word...groundless,” *appāṭihīra, katam bhāsitaṃ*, as at **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.35/1:193), SD 7.14, **Te, vijja S** (D 13.14+21+22/1:239+243+244), SD 1.8; **Vekhanassa S** (M 80.3.4/2:41), SD 40a.15. Comy at M 79 explains *ap-pāṭihīra, katam* as “not leading to liberation, unrooted, without purpose” (*aniyyānikam amūlakam niratthakam*) (MA 3:273,10). Cf *appāṭihāriya* (M 2:9).

⁶⁸ For a positive version of this parable, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.46/1:198).

⁶⁹ See Intro 3.

What do you think, Vāsetṭha, such being the case, does not what these brahmins declare turn out to be groundless?”

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

23 “Excellent, Vāsetṭha. There is no basis for these brahmins to make such a claim.”

The Aciravatī parables

24 Vāsetṭha, it is just as if this river Aciravatī were brimful of water so that even a crow could drink from it. And a man, wishing to cross over to the other side, standing on this bank were to say, ‘Come over here, O farther bank, come over here!’

What do you think, Vāsetṭha, would the farther bank of the river Aciravatī, on account of the man’s invoking, praying, wishing, praising, come over to his side?”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

25 Even so, Vāsetṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, *neglecting what makes a brahmin, and taking up what makes a non-brahmin*,⁷⁰ were to say:

‘We call upon Indra, we call upon Soma, we call upon Varuṇa, we call upon Isāna, we call upon Prajāpati, we call upon Brahmā, we call upon Mahiddhi, we call upon Yama’—[**245**] and (yet) they hope that after death, they would attain companionship with Brahmā—indeed, this is not possible.

26 Vāsetṭha, it is just as if this river Aciravatī were brimful of water (and overflowing) so that even a crow could drink from it.

And a man, wishing to cross over to the other side, to get there, to land there, to cross over to the opposite bank. But he, on this bank, were to have his arms tightly bound behind him with a strong chain [fetter].⁷¹

What do you think, Vāsetṭha, would that man be able to get to the other side?”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”⁷²

The five cords of sensual pleasure

27 “Even so, Vāsetṭha, in the noble discipline these **5 cords of sensual pleasure**⁷³ are called shackles,⁷⁴ a bond.⁷⁵ What are the five?⁷⁶

(1) Forms cognized by *the eye* that are desirable, agreeable, pleasurable, lovable, connected with sensual desire, arousing lust;

(2) Sounds cognized by *the ear* that are desirable, agreeable, pleasurable, lovable, connected with sensual desire, arousing lust;

(3) Smells cognized by *the nose* that are desirable, agreeable, pleasurable, lovable, connected with sensual desire, arousing lust;

(4) Tastes cognized by *the tongue* that are desirable, agreeable, pleasurable, lovable, connected with sensual desire, arousing lust;

(5) Touches cognized by *the body* that are desirable, agreeable, pleasurable, lovable, connected with sensual desire, arousing lust.

—These are called a shackle, a bond in the noble discipline.

And, Vāsetṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas are enslaved, infatuated by these five cords of sensual desire that they enjoy with relish,⁷⁷ unaware of the danger, knowing no way out.

⁷⁰ *Ye dhammā brāhmaṇ, karaṇā te dhamme pahāya vattamaṇā; ye dhammā abrāhmaṇa, karaṇā te dhamme samādāya vattamaṇā.* On what a brahmin “should do and should not do,” see, eg, **Aggañña S** (D 27.22).

⁷¹ *So orima, tīre dalhāya anduyā pacchā, bāhaṃ gālha, bandhanaṃ baddho.*

⁷² See Intro 3.

⁷³ *Pañca kāma, guṇa.*

⁷⁴ “Shackles” or fetters (*andu*).

⁷⁵ “Bond” (*bandhana*).

⁷⁶ The fowl is a well known stock, esp in **Saḷ-āyatana Vagga** (S ch 4).

28 Even so, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, neglecting what makes a brahmin, and [246] taking up what makes a non-brahmin, infatuated by these five cords of sensual desire—and (yet) they hope that after death, they would attain companionship with Brahmā—indeed, this is not possible.

The 5 mental hindrances

29 PARABLE OF THE SHAWL-COVERED MAN. Vāseṭṭha, it is just as if this river Aciravatī were brimful of water (and overflowing) so that even a crow could drink from it. And a man, wishing to cross over to the other side, were to *lie down on this bank, covering his head with a shawl*.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha, would that man be able to get to the other side?”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

30 “Even so, Vāseṭṭha, in the noble discipline these **five mental hindrances**⁷⁸ that are said to be obstructions, hindrances, coverings, shrouds.⁷⁹ What are the five?

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) The hindrance of | sensual desire; | <i>kāma-c, chanda;</i> |
| (2) The hindrance of | ill will; | <i>avyāpāda;</i> |
| (3) The hindrance of | sloth and torpor; | <i>thīna, middha;</i> |
| (4) The hindrance of | restlessness and remorse; | <i>uddhacca, kukkuccha;</i> |
| (5) The hindrance of | doubt. | <i>vicikicchā.</i> |

These five are called obstructions, hindrances, coverings, shrouds.

And, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins, learned in the Three Vedas, are obstructed, hindered, covered over, shrouded up,⁸⁰ by these five mental hindrances, and they enjoy them, not seeing the danger, not knowing to escape.⁸¹

Truly, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, neglecting what makes a brahmin, and taking up what makes a non-brahmin, are obstructed, hindered, covered over, shrouded up, by these five mental hindrances, and they enjoy them, not seeing the danger, not knowing to escape—and (yet) they hope that after death, [247] they would attain companionship with Brahmā—indeed, this is not possible!

Possessing wives⁸²

31 BRAHMA’S QUALITIES. What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? What have you heard from these aged and elderly brahmins, the teachers of teachers when they are talking together?

Does Brahmā have wives or does he not? [Is Brahmā married or not?]⁸³”

⁷⁷ Read *ajjhopanno* (see CPD), “being addicted to, being enthralled by,” (to enjoy doing something) with relish. PTS has *ajjhāpanna*, “with guilt,” guiltily.

⁷⁸ *Pañca nīvaraṇā*.

⁷⁹ *Evam eva kho vāseṭṭha pañca ime nīvaraṇā ariyassa vinaye āvaranā ti pi vuccanti, nīvaranā ti pi vuccanti, onahā ti pi vuccanti, pariyonahā ti pi vuccanti*. The underscored words are the n parallels of adjs *āvuto nivuto ophuṭo pariyonaddho* below [foll n] (D 1:246, DA 404; M 2:203, MA 3:447, 131, 4:198; Nm 24 = Nc 146, NmA 1:273 = 249; Ap 371; SA 2:367). *Āvaranā nīvaraṇā*, like *āvuto nivuto ophuṭo* (read as *avuṭo*), are clearly formed from \sqrt{v} R, to cover (CPD: *ophuṭa* etc). *Pariyonahā* (*pari* + *onāha*, “drawing over, covering, shrouding”) (D 1:247; Dhs 1157; Miln 300); also related us *onaha* (vl *onāha*) (DA 1:135; DhsA 378) (CPD svv). See (**Brahma, vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99.15.2/2:203), SD 38.6.

⁸⁰ “Obstructed, hindered, covered over, shrouded up,” *āvatā* (vl *āvutā*) *nivutā ophutā* (vl *ophuṭā*) *pariyonaddhā*, which are the adj parallels of the nn above: see prec n.

⁸¹ *Ime kho, vāseṭṭha, pañca kāma, guṇe tevijjā brāhmaṇā gadhitā mucchitā ajjhopannā anādīnava, dassāvino anis-saraṇa, paññā paribhuñjanti*. From *gathito* on, D 1:245, 24 = M 1:173, 28 ≠ D 3:43, 29 = A 1:274, 21 ≠ S 3:332, 29.

⁸² The location of this parable immediately foll the section on mental hindrances [§30] is significant. Technically, with the letting go of the hindrances, dhyana (*jhāna*) arises. Once we have a taste of dhyana, we would no more be attached to sensual pleasures, so that we would be very contented to be celibate. The dhyana section follows below [§75]. It is possible that much, if not all, of the intervening materials, esp the *sāmañña, phala* passage (on the 3 trainings) have been inserted later. See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4. On the need of dhyana for attaining arhathood, see **Samatha & vipassana**, SD 41.1 (2.2.2.4).

“*He does not have wives*, master Gotama.”

“Has Brahmā hate in his heart or is he without hate?”

“*Without hate in his heart*, master Gotama.”

“Has Brahmā ill will in his heart or is he without ill will?”

“*Without ill will in his heart*, master Gotama.”

“Has Brahmā a defiled heart or is he one with undefiled hearted?”

“*With an undefiled heart*, master Gotama.”

“Is Brahmā one with self-mastery⁸⁴ or is he one without self-mastery?”

“He one *with self-mastery*, master Gotama.”

32 THE BRAHMINS’ QUALITIES. What do you think, Vāsetṭha?

Do these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas have wives or do they not?”

“*The have wives*, master Gotama.”

“Have they hate in their hearts or not?”

“They have *hate in their hearts*, master Gotama.”

“Have they ill will in their hearts or not?”

“They have *ill will in their hearts*, master Gotama.”

“Have they defiled hearts or not?”

“The have *defiled hearts*, master Gotama.”

“Do they have self-mastery or not?”

“They have *no self-mastery*, master Gotama.”

33 “Then you say, Vāsetṭha, that the brahmins have wives, and that Brahmā does not. Is there anything common or alike—these brahmins of the Three Vedas who have wives, and Brahmā who does not?”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

34 “Excellent, Vāsetṭha. Those brahmins of the Three Vedas *have wives*—and (yet) they hope that after death, [248] they would attain companionship with Brahmā, *who does not have wives*—indeed, this is not possible.

35 Then you say, too, Vāsetṭha, that

those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas have hate in their hearts but Brahmā does not;

those brahmins have ill will in their hearts but Brahmā has not;

those brahmins have impure hearts but Brahmā does not;

those brahmins lack self-mastery but Brahmā does not.

Is there anything common or alike—these brahmins of the Three Vedas who have wives, and Brahmā who does not?”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

Desert, jungle, misfortune

36 “Excellent, Vāsetṭha. Those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas *lack* self-mastery—and yet they hope that after death, they would attain companionship with Brahmā who *has* self-mastery—indeed, this is not possible.⁸⁵

⁸³ *Sa,pariggaho vā brahmā apariggaho vā*. A humorous word-play on *pariggaha* has the foll meanings: **1** (adj) wrapping around, enclosing (Tha 419). **2** (part) taking up, seizing on, acquiring, seizing, grasping (Sn 779 (= *tanhā* and *diṭṭhi*, Nm 57); Pm 1:172, 2:182 (*nekkhamma,pariggaha* etc); Nm 11 (*itthi,pariggaha*, finding a wife); J 6:259; Miln 244 (*āhāra,pariggaha*, abstinence from food), 313 (id). **3** possession(s), belonging(s), property (D 2:58, 3:289 = S 4:400; D 3:199 (*apariggaha*, without possession); M 1:137 (qu at Nm 122); S 1:32 (*sapariggaha*, along with one’s belongings), 1:93; A 4:396 (*apariggaha*); Sn 805; J 4:371, 6:259; PvA (*pariggaha,bhūta*, belonging to, the property of); VvA 213, 321). **4** a wife (ThaA 271; PvA (*kata,pari-ggaha*, wedded), 282; *sapariggaha* (married), *apariggaha* (unmarried), both are applicable to both men or women (D 1:247; J 4:190, 6:348, 364). **5** blessing, favour, grace, DA 1:241 (*āmisā,pariggaha*, material blessing).

⁸⁴ “Self-mastery,” *vasa,vatti*, The expression *vasam vatteti* (M 1:214) means “he [lets his mind] masters himself.”

As such, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, having sat down (on the river bank) would sink down (in the mire). And so sinking, they would only come to despair, wondering how to cross over (the river) without getting wet.⁸⁶

Therefore, these Three Vedas are called *the threefold desert, the threefold jungle, the threefold misfortune* of the brahmins learned in the Three Vedas!⁸⁷

THE BUDDHA'S WAY TO COMMUNION WITH BRAHMĀ

The man from Manasākaṭa

37 When he had spoken thus, the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said this to the Blessed One:

“This I’ve heard—that the recluse Gotama *knows* the way to companionship with Brahmā.”⁸⁸

“Now what do you think, Vaseṭṭha, is Manasākaṭa near here or far from here?”

“, master Gotama.”

“Now what do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Suppose there were a man here who was born and raised in Manasākaṭa. And someone who until then [249] had never entered Manasākaṭa, were to ask him the way. Would this man, born and bred in Manasākaṭa, be slow or lost [hesitant or at a loss]?”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

“And why not?”

“Because, master Gotama, being born and bred here, he would very well know all the paths.”

38 “Vāseṭṭha, that man, born and bred in Manasākaṭa, on being asked the way, might indeed be slow or lost,

but the Tathāgata on being asked about the Brahmā world and how to get there, would certainly not be slow or lost.

For, Vāseṭṭha, I know Brahmā, too, and the Brahmā world, and the path to the Brahmā world, and the way of practice whereby one arises in the Brahmā world.⁸⁹

39 When this was said, the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said this to the Blessed One:

“This I’ve heard—that the recluse Gotama *shows* teaches] the way to companionship with Brahmā.”⁹⁰

It would be good if master Gotama were to teach the way to companionship with Brahmā. Let master Gotama save the brahmin race!⁹¹

“In that case, Vāseṭṭha, listen, pay close attention, I will speak.”

“Yes, good sir,” the brahmin youth replied in assent to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

THE FRUITS OF RECLUSESHIP

Sāmañña,phala

The going-forth

40 “Here, Vāseṭṭha, the Tathāgata arises in the world, an arhat, the fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tamable persons, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.

⁸⁵ *Sādhu, vāseṭṭha, te vata, vāseṭṭha, avasa, vattī tevijjā brāhmaṇā kāyassa bheda para) marañā vasa, vattissa brahmuno saḥavyūpagā bhavissanti ti, n’etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati.*

⁸⁶ *Idha kho pana te, vāseṭṭha, tevijjā brāhmaṇā āsīditvā saṃsīdanti, saṃsīditvā visāraṃ pāpuṇanti, sukkha, taram maññe taranti.* “Cross over without wetting themselves,” *sukkha, taram*, lit “crossing over dry.”

⁸⁷ The parables—the desert (*īriṇa*)...the jungle (*vipīna*)...misfortune (*vyasana*)—appear to be a play on the words *Iru-b, beda* (the Pali word for Rgveda, but a late term) and *veda*.

⁸⁸ This sentence also at (**Brahma, vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99.22/2:206), SD 38.6; but cf below §39.

⁸⁹ *Brahmānaṃ p’ahaṃ, vāseṭṭha, pajānāmi brahma, lokaṃ ca brahma, loka, gāminiṃ ca paṭipadaṃ, yathā paṭipanno ca brahma, lokaṃ upapanno, taṃ ca pajānāmi ti.*

⁹⁰ This sentence spoken above [§37] with “knows” (*jānāti*) instead “shows” here.

⁹¹ *Ullumpatu bhavaṃ gotamo brahmaṇiṃ pajam*, lit “Raise up, master Gotama, the brahmin generation!” DA takes this as “Save *me* from the brahmin race!”

Having realized by his own direct knowledge this world with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and priests, its rulers and people, he makes it known to others. He teaches the teaching, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure. [250]

41 A householder or householder's son, hearing the Dharma, gains faith⁹² in the Tathāgata and reflects: 'The household life is stifling, a dusty path. The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life completely, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

So after some time he abandons all his wealth and relatives, shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the saffron robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

42 When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code,⁹³ possessed of proper conduct and resort.⁹⁴ Having taken up the rules of training, he trains himself in them, seeing danger in the slightest faults. He comes to be endowed with wholesome bodily and verbal deeds, his livelihood is purified, and he is possessed of moral virtue. He guards the sense-doors, is possessed of mindfulness and full awareness, and is content.

(A) MORAL DEVELOPMENT⁹⁵

THE SHORT SECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE

[The moralities §43-62⁹⁶ = Brahmā,jāla Sutta, D 1.8-27/1:4-11]⁹⁷

Perfection of moral virtue

Right bodily conduct [D 1.8]

43 And how, Vāseṭṭha, is a monk accomplished in moral virtue? [D 1:4]

⁹² "Faith," *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) "rootless faith" (*amūlika, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) "faith with a good cause" (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p, pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). "Wise faith" is syn with (2). *Amūlika* = "not seen, not heard, not suspected" (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Gethin** speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): "Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith in its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary." (Gethin 2001:207; my emphases).

⁹³ Pāṭimokkha.

⁹⁴ Resort (*gocara*), lit "the cow's routine path or pasture." Here it refers to two aspects of the renunciate's life. In the Canon, it refers to places that are regarded as suitable for collecting almsfood (V 2:208). In this sense, *agocara* refers to places that are unsuitable for renunciates to resort to (whether for alms or otherwise) (D 1:63 = It 118 M 1:33 S 5:187 It 96; cf Dh 22). In Comys, *gocara* refers to places suitable for meditation (Vism 127). We can also take *gocara* here in the psychological sense of *ārammana*, that is, sense-objects. In other words, one "possessed of proper conduct and resort" means "accomplished in proper conduct of body and of mind."

⁹⁵ For a summary of this whole section on moral virtue, see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2), SD 8.10 (3).

⁹⁶ These 3 sections (comprising 13 items or groups) on moral virtue occur verbatim (in whole or with some omissions) in all of the first 13 suttas and may once have formed a separate "tract" (D:RD 1:3 n1). See Gethin 2001: 195 f. See Intro (3) above.

⁹⁷ These three sections (comprising 13 items or groups, totalling some seven A4 pages at 10 points) on moral virtue occur verbatim (in whole or with some omissions) in all of the first 13 suttas and may once have formed a separate "tract" (RD).

(1) Here, Vāsetṭha, having abandoned the destruction of life, a monk⁹⁸ abstains from destroying life. He dwells with rod and weapon laid down, conscientious,⁹⁹ merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings.

This is part of his moral virtue.¹⁰⁰

(2) Having abandoned the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a pure mind.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

(3) Having abandoned incelibacy, he lives a celibate life, living apart, abstaining from the sexual act,¹⁰¹ the way of the village.¹⁰²

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

Right Speech [D 1.9]

44 (4) Having abandoned false speech, he abstains from false speech. He¹⁰³ speaks the truth, keeps to the truth as his bond, trustworthy, reliable, no deceiver of the world.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

(5) Having abandoned divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there.

Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or consolidating those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks words of concord.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

(6) Having abandoned abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are humane, soothing, loving, touching, urbane, and delightful and pleasant to the multitude.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

(7) Having abandoned idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is true, what is beneficial. He speaks on the Teaching [the Dharma] and the Discipline [the Vinaya]. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, [D 1:5] backed by reason, measured, connected with the goal.¹⁰⁴

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

General [D 1.10]

45 (8) He abstains from damaging seeds and plant life.¹⁰⁵

Sāmaṇera, sikkhā 6-10 [D 1:6]

(9) He eats only once a day, abstaining from the evening meal and from food at improper times.¹⁰⁶

(10) He abstains from dancing, singing, music and from watching shows.

(11) He abstains from wearing garlands and from beautifying himself with scents and make-up.

(12) He abstains from high and luxurious beds and seats.

(13) He abstains from accepting gold and silver [money].

⁹⁸ *Bhikkhu*: in **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1.8-28/1:3-13 = SD 25.2) the reading is *samaṇo Gotamo* throughout.

⁹⁹ *lajjī*, “feel shame, modest,” explain in the Comy on S 1:73 as “one who has moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*).” Opp *alajjī*, shameless.

¹⁰⁰ **Brahma, jāla S** refrains: *Thus, bhikshus, would the worldling speak when praising the Tathagata* (D 1.8).

¹⁰¹ *Brahma, cariya* is the supreme conduct or holy life, ie celibacy. DA points out that it involves abstaining from other forms of erotic behaviour besides intercourse.

¹⁰² *Gāma, dhamma*, ie the way of the householder, vulgar (in the sense of being associated with the masses).

¹⁰³ PTS ed has *samaṇo Gotamo* here, which seems rather abrupt.

¹⁰⁴ *attha, samhitam*.

¹⁰⁵ Curiously, this replaces the precept against intoxicants which is omitted.

¹⁰⁶ “Improper times” here means between noon and the following dawn (V 1:83).

General

- (14) He abstains from accepting uncooked grain; raw meat; women and girls; male and female slaves; goats and sheep, fowl and pigs; elephants, cattle, horses, and mares.
- (15) He abstains from accepting fields and lands [property].¹⁰⁷
- (16) He abstains from running messages [errands].
- (17) He abstains from buying and selling.
- (18) He abstains from dealing with false scales, false metals, and false measures.
- (19) He abstains from bribery, deception, and fraud.
- (20) He abstains from wounding, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plunder, and violence. This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

THE MEDIUM SECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE

46¹⁰⁸ [D 1.11] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on damaging seeds and plant life such as these: plants propagated from roots, stems, joints, buddings, and seeds [65]—he abstains from damaging seeds and plant life such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue. [D 1:6]

47 [D 1.12] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on consuming stored-up goods such as these: stored-up food, stored-up drinks, stored-up clothing, stored-up vehicles, stored-up bedding, stored-up scents, and stored-up meat—he abstains from consuming stored-up goods such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

48 [D 1.13] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on watching shows such as these: dancing, singing, music, plays, ballad recitations, hand-clapping, cymbals and drums, painted scenes,¹⁰⁹ acrobatic and conjuring tricks,¹¹⁰ elephant fights, horse fights, buffalo fights, bull fights, goat fights, ram fights, cock fights, quail fights; fighting with staves, boxing, wrestling, war-games, roll calls, battle arrays, and troop movements—he abstains from watching shows such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

49 [D 1.14] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on heedless and idle games such as these—eight-row chess, ten-row chess, chess in the air, hopscotch, spillikins [or jackstraws], dice, stick games, hand-pictures,¹¹¹ ball-games [marbles], blowing through toy pipes [playing whistling games with folded leaves], playing with toy ploughs, turning somersaults [acrobatics], playing with toy windmills, toy measures, toy chariots, toy bows, guessing letters drawn in the air or on one's back, guessing thoughts, mimicking deformities—[D 1:7] he abstains from heedless and idle games such as these.

¹⁰⁷ The Buddha however accepted land from rajahs like Bimbisāra and Pasenadi, and others like Anāthapiṇḍaka and Visākhā, which were received in the name of the Sangha. What is connoted here is accepting land on a personal basis.

¹⁰⁸ From here on, the numberings of PTS ed & Bodhi's tr (1989) agree. See §17a n.

¹⁰⁹ *Sobha, nagarakam*, “of the city of Sobha” (the city of the Gandharvas or heavenly musicians). RD thinks it refers to a ballet with fairy scenes. Bodhi: “art exhibitions.”

¹¹⁰ *Caṇḍālaṃ vaṃsam dhopanam*, an obscure phrase. The performers were presumable of the lowest caste. DA thinks of an iron ball (used for juggling?). Cf **Citta Sambhūta J** (J 4:390) where the phrase appears.

¹¹¹ The hand is dipped in paint or dye, then struck on the ground or a wall, so that the player creates the figure of an elephant, a horse, etc. In classical Thai literature, the artful tricksters Sī Thanonchai (Skt, Śrī Dhanañjaya) is well known for this skill.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

50 [D 1.15] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on high and luxurious furnishings such as these—over-sized couches, couches adorned with carved animals, long-haired coverlets, multi-colored patchwork coverlets, white woollen coverlets, woollen coverlets embroidered with flowers or animal figures, stuffed quilts, coverlets with fringes, silk coverlets embroidered with gems; large woollen carpets; elephant, horse, and chariot rugs, antelope-hide rugs, deer-hide rugs; couches with awnings, couches with red cushions for the head and feet—he abstains from using high and luxurious furnishings such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

51 [D 1.16] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, enjoy scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these: rubbing powders into the body, massaging with oils, bathing in perfumed water, kneading the limbs, using mirrors, ointments, garlands, scents, creams, face-powders, mascara [darkening one's eye-lashes], bracelets, head-bands, decorated walking sticks, ornamented water-bottles, swords, fancy sunshades, decorated sandals, turbans, gems, yak-tail whisks, long-fringed white robes—he abstains from using scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

52 [D 1.17] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on low chatter,¹¹² such as these: talking about kings, robbers, ministers of state; armies, dangers and wars; food and drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, and scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women [D 1:8] and heroes; the gossips of the street and at the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity [philosophical discussions of the past and the future], the creation of the world and of the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not [or, talk about gain and loss]¹¹³—he abstains from talking about low topics such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

53 [D 1.18] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on debates such as these—

‘You do not understand this Dharma and Vinaya [this Teaching and Discipline]. I understand this Dharma and Vinaya. What could you understand of this Dharma and Vinaya? You are practising wrongly. I am practising rightly. I am being consistent. You are inconsistent. What should be said first you said after. What should be said after you said first. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your viewpoint has been overthrown. You are defeated. Go and try to salvage your viewpoint; extricate yourself if you can!’¹¹⁴—he abstains from debates such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

54 [D 1.19] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on relaying messages and running errands for people such as these: kings, ministers of state, warrior nobles, brahmins, householders, or youths (who say),

‘Go here, go there, take this there, fetch that here’—he abstains from running messages and errands for people such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

¹¹² *Tiracchāna, kathā*, lit animal talk. As animals mostly walk parallel to the earth, so this kind of talk does not lead on upwards. Cf **Lohicca S** (D 1:228).

¹¹³ *Iti, bhavābhāva, kathā*, may be rendered as “being and non-being” or as “profit and loss,” but according to Walshe, the philosophical sense (as in Horner and Ñānamoli translations of **Sandaka S**, M 76) is preferable.

¹¹⁴ This is stock: **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1:8), **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 1:66), **Pāsādika S** (D 3:117), **Saṅgīti S** (D 3:210), **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 2:3), **Sāmagāma S** (M 2:245), **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 3:12), **Viggāhika Kathā S** (S 5:418) and **Mahā Niddesa** (Nm 1:173). See **Brahma, jāla S**, D 1:2 f. Cf **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22) where a similar statement is made regarding the wrong reason for learning the Dharma (M 22.10/1:133).

55 [D 1.20] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, engage in deceitful pretensions (to attainments), flattery (for gain), subtle insinuation or hinting (for gain), pressuring (for offerings), and pursuing gain with gain—he abstains from such pretensions and flattery.¹¹⁵

This, too, is part of his moral virtue. [D 1:9]

THE GREAT SECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE¹¹⁶

56 [D 1.21] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as:

- reading marks on the limbs [eg, palmistry, sole-reading];
- reading omens and signs;
- interpreting celestial events [lightning, falling stars, comets];
- interpreting dreams;
- reading marks on the body [eg, physiognomy, phrenology];
- reading marks on cloth gnawed by mice;
- offering fire oblations, oblations from a ladle, oblations of husks, rice powder, rice grains, ghee, and oil;
- offering oblations using oral spells;
- offering blood-sacrifices;
- making predictions based on the fingertips;
- determining whether the site for a proposed house or garden is propitious or not [geomancy];
- making predictions for officers of state;
- laying demons in a cemetery;
- laying spirits;
- reciting house-protection charms [or using charms recited by those living in an earthen house];
- snake charming, treating poisoning, curing scorpion-stings and rat-bites;
- interpreting animal and bird sounds and the cawing of crows;
- foretelling the remaining duration of life;
- reciting charms for protection against arrows;
- reciting charms to understand the calls of birds and animals

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

57 [D 1.22] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as:

- determining lucky and unlucky gems, staffs, garments, swords, arrows, bows, and other weapons;
- determining lucky and unlucky women, men, boys, girls, male slaves, female slaves;
- determining lucky and unlucky elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, fowl, quails, lizards [or iguana], long-eared rodents,¹¹⁷ tortoises, and other animals

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

58 [D 1.23] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as forecasting thus: [D 1:10]

the leaders [rajahs]¹¹⁸ will march forth [advance];

¹¹⁵ For details, see Vism 1.61-82.

¹¹⁶ For Pali listing and nn, see **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1.21-27), SD 25.2.

¹¹⁷ *Kaṇṇika, lakḥaṇam*, from *kaṇṇa*, “ear.” DA thinks it means either ear-rings or house-gables, both of which do not fit here. Walshe follows the Thai tr which, probably following an old tradition, has *tun*, “bamboo-rat” (see McFarland, *Thai-English Dictionary*, p371). Franke says “an animal that is always mentioned with the hare” and considers that it must mean an animal with long ears.

¹¹⁸ *Rañṇam* (gen pl), ie the joint leaders (rajah) of a republican state in ancient India.

the leaders will return [retreat];
 our leaders will attack, and their leaders will retreat;
 their leaders will attack, and our leaders will retreat;
 there will be triumph for our leaders and defeat for their leaders;
 there will be triumph for their leaders and defeat for our leaders;
 thus there will be triumph, thus there will be defeat

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

59 [D 1.24] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as forecasting thus:

there will be a lunar eclipse;
 there will be a solar eclipse;
 there will be an occultation of an asterism;
 the sun and moon will go their normal courses;
 the sun and moon will go astray;
 the asterisms will go their normal courses;
 the asterisms will go astray;
 there will be a meteor shower;
 there will be a darkening of the sky;
 there will be an earthquake;
 there will be thunder coming from a clear sky;
 there will be a rising, a setting, a darkening, a brightening of the sun, moon, and asterisms;
 such will be the result of the lunar eclipse, of the solar eclipse *and so on*

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these. [D1:11]

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

60 [1.25] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as forecasting thus:

there will be abundant rain; there will be a drought;
 there will be plenty; there will be famine;
 there will be rest and security; there will be danger;
 there will be disease; there will be health [freedom from disease];
 or they earn their living by counting, accounting, calculation,
 composing poetry, or teaching hedonistic arts and doctrines

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

61 [D 1.26] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as:

calculating auspicious dates for marriages (where the bride is brought home or leaves the house),
 betrothals, divorces;
 calculating auspicious dates for collecting debts or making investments and loans; reciting charms for becoming attractive or unattractive;
 curing women who have undergone miscarriages or abortions [or, reviving the fetuses of abortive women];¹¹⁹
 reciting spells to bind a man's tongue, to paralyze his jaws, to make him lose control over his hands, or to bring on deafness;
 getting oracular answers to questions addressed to a mirror, to a young girl, or to a spirit medium;
 worshipping the sun, worshipping Mahā Brahmā, bringing forth flames from the mouth, invoking the goddess of luck

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.

¹¹⁹ *Viruddha, gabbha, karaṇam.*

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

62 [D 1.27] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as:

promising gifts to deities in return for favors; fulfilling such promises;

demonology;

teaching house-protection spells;

inducing virility and impotence;

consecrating sites for construction;

giving ceremonial mouthwashes and ceremonial bathing;

offering sacrificial fires;

preparing emetics, purgatives, expectorants, diuretics, headache cures;

preparing ear-oil, eye-drops, oil for treatment through the nose, collyrium [eye-wash] and counter-medicines;

curing cataracts, practising surgery, practising as a children’s doctor, administering medicines and treatments to cure their after-effects

—he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.¹²⁰ [D 1.27 ends here.]¹²¹ [D1:12]

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

Confidence through practising the above moralities

63 A monk, Vāseṭṭha, thus accomplished in moral virtue sees no danger anywhere owing to his restraint through moral virtue. Just as a head-anointed noble kshatriya rajah who has defeated his enemies sees no danger anywhere from his enemies, [1:70] in the same way the monk thus accomplished in moral virtue sees no danger owing to his restraint through moral virtue.

Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, he experiences within himself a joy that is blameless. This is how a monk is accomplished in moral virtue.

(B) MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Sense-restraint (Custody of the senses)

64 And how, Vāseṭṭha, does a monk guard the sense-doors?

¹²²(1) Here, Vāseṭṭha, when a monk sees a form with the eye, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,¹²³

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that eye-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure¹²⁴ might overwhelm him,

¹²⁰ It is the practice of medicine for gain that is here condemned. (Walshe)

¹²¹ Hereon until §74b, follows the parallel passages in **Sāmañña-phala S** (D 2.63-76/1:69-73), SD 8.10.

¹²² This whole para: *Idha mahārāja bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā na nimitta-g, gāhī hoti nānuyyañjana-g, gāhī. Yatvādhikaraṇaṃ enaṃ cakkhundriyaṃ asaṃvutaṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhā, domanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā an-vāssaveyyuṃ, tassa saṃvarāya paṭipajjati, rakkhati cakkhundriyaṃ, cakkhundriye saṃvaraṃ āpajjati.* On *Na nimitta-g, gāhī hoti nānuyyañjana-g, gāhī*, lit “he is not one who grasps at a sign, he is not one who grasps at a detail (feature),” see SD 19.14. Comys say that “**sign**” (*nimitta*) here refers to a grasping arising through one’s sensual lust (*chanda, rāga, vasena*) or on account of merely one’s view (*ditṭhi, matta, vasena*); “**detail**” (*anuyyañjana*) here refers to finding delight by grasping at another’s limb or body part (eyes, arms, legs, etc) (Nm 2:390; Nc 141, 141; DhA 400, 402; cf MA 1:75, 4:195; SA 3:4, 394; Nc 1:55; DhA 1:74). On other meanings of *nimitta*, see SD 13 §3.1a.

¹²³ See **Nimitta & anuyyañjana**, SD 19.14.

¹²⁴ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā, domanassā*, which Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders as “hankering and fretting for the world”; alt tr “covetousness and displeasure” or “longing and loathing.” MA says that longing and displeasure signify the first two hindrances—sensual desire and ill will—principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed. They thus represent the contemplation of mind-objects, which begins with the five hindrances. Cf M 1:274/39.13; see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.13) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36) on how to

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.

He guards the restraint of the eye-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the eye-faculty.

(2) When he hears a sound with the ear, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that ear-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.

He guards the restraint of the ear-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the ear-faculty.

(3) When he smells a smell with the nose *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that nose-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.

He guards the restraint of the nose-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the nose-faculty.

(4) When he tastes a taste with the tongue, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that tongue-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.

He guards the restraint of the tongue-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the tongue-faculty.

(5) When he feels a touch with the body *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that body-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.

He guards the restraint of the body-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the body-faculty.

(6) When he cognizes a mind-object with the mind, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that mind-faculty so that covetousness and displeasure, evil unwholesome states, might overwhelm him,

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.

He guards the restraint of the mind-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the mind-faculty.¹²⁵

Possessing this noble restraint over the sense-faculties, he experiences within himself a joy that is blameless.

This, Vāsetṭha, is how a monk guards the sense-doors.

Mindfulness and full awareness¹²⁶

65 And how, Vāsetṭha, is a monk possessed of mindfulness and full awareness?

Here, Vāsetṭha, when going forward and returning, he acts with full awareness:

(1) while going forward or back, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;

(2) while looking forward or back, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;

deal with the hindrances in one's meditation. The monk effects the abandoning of the hindrances by the contemplations of impermanence, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering) and letting go (of defilements), and thus comes to look upon the object with equanimity. On *abhijjhā,domanassa*, there is an interesting related passage from **Pubba or Pubb'eva Sambodha S** (A 3.101): "Bhikshus, before my awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, this thought occurred to me... 'Whatever physical and mental joy (*sukha, somanassa*) there is in the world, that is the gratification (*assāda*) in the world; that the world is impermanent, suffering and of the nature to change, that is the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) in the world—the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world, that is the escape from the world.'" (A 3.101/1:258, pointed out to me by Robert Eddison).

¹²⁵ **D 2.64/1:70, 10.2.2/1:207, 33.1.11(10)/3:225; M 27.15/1:180, 33.20/1:223, 38.35/1:269, 51.16/1:346, 53.8/1:355, 94.18/2:162, 101.33/2:226; S 35.120/4:104, 35.239/4:176; A 3.16/1:113, 4.14/2:16, 4.37/2:39, 4.164/2:152 (×4), 4.198.11/2:210, 5.76.12/3:99 f, 5.140.11/3:163, 10.99.6/5:206, 11.18.23/5:351.** For a study, see SD 9.14.

¹²⁶ *Sati, sampajañña* = *sati*, "mindfulness," *sampajañña*, "full awareness." In **Satipatṭhānas Ss**, however, this section is "full awareness" (*sampajañña*); "mindfulness" (*sati*) See SD 13 (3.6abc).

- (3) while bending or stretching, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (4) while carrying his upper robe, outer robe and bowl, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (5) while eating, drinking, chewing and tasting, he is clearly knowing of what he is doing;
- (6) while voiding or peeing, he is clearly aware of what he is doing;
- (7) while walking, while standing, while sitting, while asleep, while awake,¹²⁷ while talking, or while remaining silent, he is clearly aware of what he is doing.

This, Vāsetṭha, is how [1:71] a monk is possessed of mindfulness and full awareness.

Contentment

66 And how, Vāsetṭha, is a monk content?

Here, Vāsetṭha, he is content with robes to protect his body and with almsfood to sustain his belly, and wherever he goes he sets out only with these with him.

Here, just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden; so too is he content with robes to protect his body and with almsfood to sustain his belly, and wherever he goes, he takes only these with him.

This, Vāsetṭha, is how a monk is content.

Abandoning the mental hindrances

67 Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and full awareness, and this aggregate of noble contentment,

he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gully [gorge], a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw.¹²⁸

Returning from his almsround, after his meal, he sits down, crosses his legs, keeps his body erect, and establishes mindfulness before him.¹²⁹

68 (1) Abandoning covetousness¹³⁰ with regard to the world, he dwells with a mind devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness.

(2) Abandoning ill will and anger, he dwells with a mind devoid of ill will, compassionate in the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will and anger.

(3) Abandoning sloth and torpor, he dwells with a mind devoid of sloth and torpor, mindful, alert, perceiving light. He cleanses his mind of sloth and torpor.

¹²⁷ “When asleep, when awake” *sutte jāgarite*. Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, “lying down, sleeping.” See Intro (3.6c).

¹²⁸ *So iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,samvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajāññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanam bhajati, araññam rukkhā,mūlam pabbatam kandaram giri,guhāni susānam vana,pattham abbhokāsam palāla,puñjam.* This stock phrase of 9 places conducive to meditation are found at D 1:72, 207, 2:242, 3:49; M 1:181, 269, 274, 346, 440, 441, 2:162, 226, 3:3, 35, 115-117; A 2:210, 3:92, 100, 4:436, 5:207; Nm 1:26, 140, 2:341; Miln 369. A shorter list, probably later, is mentioned in **Anāpāna,sati S** (M 118): “Here, monks, a monk who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty abode, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.” (M 118.17/3:82).

¹²⁹ Comy. He applies mindfulness towards his meditation subject; or he sets it up in the region of the mouth. As such, it is said in the Vibhaṅga: “This mindfulness is set up, set up well, at the tip of the nose or at the sign of the mouth” (Vbh §537/252). Comys: The “sign of the mouth” (*mukha,nimitta*) is the middle region of the upper lip, against which the air strikes when it comes out of the nose (VbhA 368); or for one long-nosed, at the nose-tp; one short-nosed, on the upper lip (PmA 2:479).

¹³⁰ *Abhijjhā*, here is synonymous with “sense-desire” (*kāma-c,chanda*), which is the usual term in the set of 5 mental hindrances. *Kāma-c,chanda* is almost identical with “a lustful mind” (*sa,rāgam cittam*) (M 10.12(1a)). Both refer to sensual desire in general, and arises from wrong reflection on a sensually attractive sense-object. The exercise in §12 is simply that of noting the presence of such a state of mind. Here, one goes on to investigate how it arises, how it can be removed, etc (through right effort). See eg **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36(1)/1:60), SD 13.3 (5D.2).

(4) Abandoning restlessness and remorse, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness and remorse.

(5) Abandoning spiritual doubt, he dwells having crossed over doubt, with no perplexity with regard to wholesome mental states. He cleanses his mind of doubt.

Parables for the hindrances

69 (1) Suppose, Vāsetṭha, that a man, taking a loan, invests it in his businesses. His businesses succeed. He repays his old debts and there is a surplus for maintaining his wife. The thought would occur to him,

‘Before, taking a loan, I invested it in my businesses. [1:72] Now my businesses have succeeded. I have repaid my old debts and there is a surplus for maintaining my wife.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

70 (2) Suppose, Vāsetṭha, suppose that a man falls sick, in pain and seriously ill. He does not enjoy his meals, and there is no strength in his body. As time passes, he recovers from that sickness. He enjoys his meals and there is strength in his body. The thought would occur to him,

‘Before, I was sick. Now, I have recovered from that sickness. I enjoy my meals and there is strength in my body.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

71 (3) Suppose, Vāsetṭha, suppose that a man is bound in prison. As time passes, he eventually is released from that bondage, safe and sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him,

‘Before, I was bound in prison. Now, I am released from that bondage, safe and sound, with no loss of my property.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

72 (4) Suppose, Vāsetṭha, that a man is a slave, subject to others, not subject to himself, unable to go where he likes. As time passes, he eventually is released from that slavery, subject to himself, not subject to others, free, able to go where he likes. The thought would occur to him,

‘Before, I was a slave... Now I am released from that slavery, subject to myself, not subject to others, freed, able to go where I like.’ [1:73] Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

73 (5) Suppose, Vāsetṭha, that a man, carrying money and goods, is journeying on a road through the wilderness. As time passes, he eventually emerges from the wilderness, safe and sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him,

‘Before, carrying money and goods, I was journeying on a road through the wilderness. Now I have emerged from the wilderness, safe and sound, with no loss of my property.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

74 In the same way, Vāsetṭha, when these five hindrances are not abandoned in himself, the monk regards it as a debt, a sickness, a prison, slavery, a journey on a road through the wilderness.¹³¹

74a When he knows that these five mental hindrances are abandoned in him, he regards it as solvency, good health, release from prison, emancipation, a place of security.¹³²

Resultant joy and peace

74b Seeing that they have been abandoned within him, he becomes glad. For one who is glad, zest arises. For one whose mind zestful, the body becomes tranquil. One tranquil in body becomes happy. For one who is happy, the mind concentrates.¹³³

¹³¹ MA 2:318-321 explains this section in some detail: see Appendix to **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39) tr in Sutta Discovery, 2004.

¹³² *Ānaṇyaṃ yathā ārogyaṃ yathā bandhanā mokkhaṃ yathā bhujissaṃ yathā khem’anta, bhūmiṃ*. This well known positive set of parables—embedded in the *peyyāla*—for one who has overcome the mental hindrances is also found in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.69-73/171-73), **Subha S** (D 1:207) and **Mahā Assapura S** (M 39.14/1:275 f). MA 2:318-321 gives a detailed account of each of the 5 parables. See Nyanaponika, *The Five Mental Hindrances*, BPS Wheel 26, 1961:27-34.

The 1st dhyana

75 Quite detached from sensual pleasures, detached from unwholesome mental states, he enters and remains in the first dhyana, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of detachment [ie samādhi]. He permeates and pervades, floods and fills this very body with the zest and happiness born of detachment.¹³⁴

The cultivation of the divine abodes¹³⁵

76 (1) With a heart of **lovingkindness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, [251] the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will.

77 Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation,¹³⁶ Vāseṭṭha, by this liberation of the mind through lovingkindness, any karma done in a limited way¹³⁷ neither remains nor persists there.

This, Vāseṭṭha, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

(2) Then with a heart of **compassion** he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with compassion that is vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will.

Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this liberation of the mind through compassion, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

This, too, Vāseṭṭha, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

¹³³ *Tass 'ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīṇe attani samanupassato pāmojjaṃ jāyati. Pamuditassa pīti jāyati. Pītimanassa kāyo passambhati. Passaddha,kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti. Sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati.* This important stock passage is found throughout the Nikāyas: see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.76/1:73), SD 8.10 n for refs.

¹³⁴ Dhyana-factors: *vitakka vicāra pīti sukhasa ek'aggatā.*

¹³⁵ This whole “divine abode” passage, which incl the conch-blower parable and the “limited karma” statement, is perhaps the most detailed of the divine abodes passages, and is found at **Te,vijja S** (D 13.76-79/1:250 f), SD 1.8; **(Brahma,vihāra) Subha S** (M 99.24-27/2:207 f), SD 38.6, **Saṅkha,dhama S** (S 42.8/4:322), SD 57.9. On limiting karma through the divine abodes, see **Karaja,kāya Brahma,vihātra S** (A 10.208.1-3/5:300 f) + SD 2.1 (2). The basic pericope *without parable*: **Cakka,vatti Siha.nāda S** (D 26.28a(4)/3:48), SD 36.10 (said to be “in the wealth for a monk (*bhikkhuno bhogasmim*)”), **Saṅgiti S** (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223); **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.31/1:297), SD 35.1, **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52.8-11/1:351 f), SD 41.2 (leading to either arhathood or non-return), **Jīvaka S** (M 55.6/-1:369), SD 43.4, **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.32-33/2:195), SD 4.9, **Subha S** (M 99.24-27/2:207 f), SD 38.6, **Anuruddha S** (M 127.7/3:146), SD 54.10; **Go,datta S** (S 41.7/4:296), SD 60.4; **(Saṅgha) Uposatha S** (A 4.190.4/2:184), SD 15.10b, **Dasama Gaha,pati S** (A 11.17.5-6/5:344), SD 41.2; **Pm** 2:39; **Vbh** 13.1-2/272, 699/282, see 272-284 for comy. See further **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5.

¹³⁶ “By this cultivation,” *bhāvitāya*. Alt tr “by this meditation.”

¹³⁷ “Karma done in a limited way” or “limited karma,” *pamāṇa,kataṃ kammaṃ*. As in **Saṅkha(dhama) S** (S 42.8-4:322) & **Brahma,vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299), SD 2.10. Comys on Brahma,vihāra S says that “limited karma” refers to sense-sphere karma (*kāmāvacara,kamma*)” (AA 5:77), and “unlimited karma” (*appamāṇa,kataṃ kammaṃ*) refers to form-sphere karma. It is called “unlimited” because it is done by transcending the limit, for it is developed by way of specified, unspecified and directional pervasion (DA 2:406; MA 3:450; cf J 2:62). SA on Saṅkha S explains that “When (simple) lovingkindness is said, this can be interpreted either as access concentration or dhyana, but when it is qualified as ‘liberation of mind’ (*ceto,vimutti*) it definitely means dhyana or meditation dhyana (*jhāna*).” (SA 3:105). The point is that if a person masters the “liberation of mind by lovingkindness” at the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this dhyana attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm. See **Brahmavihāra**, SD 38.5 (8.2) & Vism 309-311/9.49-58. (S:B 1149 n346; A:B 315 n73).

(3) Then with a heart of **gladness** he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with gladness that is vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will.

Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this liberation of the mind through gladness, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

This, too, Vāseṭṭha, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

(4) Then with a heart of **equanimity**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with equanimity that is vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will.

79 Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this liberation of the mind through equanimity, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

This, too, Vāseṭṭha, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

The nature of Brahmā

80 What do you think, Vāseṭṭha?

Does a monk dwelling thus have wives, or does he not?”

“*He does not have wives*, master Gotama.”

“Is he one with hate in his heart, or without hate in his heart?”

“He is one *without hate in his heart*, master Gotama.”

“Is he one with ill will in his heart, or without ill will in his heart?”

“He is one *without ill will in his heart*, master Gotama.”

“Is he one with defiled heart, or one with an undefiled heart?”

“He is one *with an undefiled mind*, master Gotama.”

“Is he one with self-mastery, or one without self-mastery?”

“He is one *with self-mastery*, master Gotama.” [252]

81 “So you say, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk has no wives, and that Brahmā, too, has no wives.

Is there anything common or alike between the monk who has no wives, and Brahmā who, too, has no wives?”

“Certainly, master Gotama.”

“Excellent, Vāseṭṭha, the monk not having any wife would, after death, attain companionship with Brahmā who too does not have any wife—indeed, this is possible.

And so you say, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk’s mind is *free from hate*, and that Brahmā’s mind is also free from hate.

And so you say, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk’s mind is *free from ill-will*, and that Brahmā’s mind is also free from ill-will.

And so you say, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk’s mind is *undefiled*, and that Brahmā’s mind is also undefiled.

And so you say, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk has *self-mastery*, and that Brahmā too has self-mastery.

Is there anything common or alike between the monk’s self-mastery and Brahmā’s self-mastery?”

“There is, master Gotama.”

“Excellent, Vāseṭṭha. Then certainly, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk with self-mastery should after death, when the body has broken up, attains companionship with Brahmā, who too has self-mastery—this is possible.”

Refuge-going

82 When this was said, the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha and the brahmin youth Bhāra,dvāja said to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, master Gotama, excellent! Just as if one

were to place upright what had been overturned, or
 were to reveal what was hidden, or
 were to show the way to one who was lost, or
 were to hold up a lamp in the dark
 so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been made
 clear by master Gotama.

We go to master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May master
 Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge from this day forth, for life.”

— evaṃ —

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