

# Selected Discourses from The Saṃyuttanikāya



by  
Bhikkhu Pesala



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Bhikkhu Pesala

Association for Insight Meditation

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## Foreword

These translations are my own. They differ on some key points from those of Bhikkhu Bodhi, Ajahn Thanissaro, and other translators. Translation from Pāli to English is an art rather than a science. My aim has always been to make them easy to understand rather than being literal. The meaning sometimes only becomes clear on knowing the context of the discourse.

*My comments on the translation use a different font and indented paragraph settings to distinguish them from the translation of the actual text. I have also added footnote references and hyperlinks for further study. Footnote references to the Pāli texts refer to the Roman script edition of the Pali Text Society — in the translations these page numbers are given near the spine or in the body of the text within square brackets.*

In several places I have added the Pāli term in parenthesis. An index serves as a glossary of Pāli terms used in the translation.

This update corrects the reference for the Jaṭā Suttaṃ, which should be S.I.165, not Sn.165.

# Anāthapiṇḍika Suttaṃ

## (S.i.55)

### Anāthapiṇḍika Devaputta Visits the Buddha

**101.** Thus have I heard — at one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti in the Jeta grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then a certain deity at midnight, having illuminated the whole Jeta grove with surpassing splendour, came to the presence of the Blessed One. Having worshipped the Blessed One, the young deity Anāthapiṇḍika, in the presence of the Blessed One, spoke in verse:—

“This is the Jeta grove, the resort of the community of sages.  
Dwelt in by the king of Dhamma, a place that gives me joy.

“Deeds, vision, truthfulness, morality, and an excellent life.  
By these are mortals purified, not by lineage nor wealth.

“Therefore a person who is wise, who considered their own welfare [56]  
Should systematically investigate the truth, thereby becoming purified.

“Sāriputta is truly wise, virtuous, and inwardly at peace.  
Whatever monk has crossed the stream, can at best equal him.”

Thus spoke the young deity Anāthapiṇḍika, and having spoken thus, paid homage to the Blessed One, and keeping him on his right, disappeared at once.

Then, when the night had passed, the Blessed One addressed the monks:  
“Last night, monks, a certain deity at midnight, having illuminated the whole Jeta grove with surpassing splendour, came into my presence. Having worshipped me, he stood at one side. Standing there, the young deity spoke in verse:—

“This is the Jeta grove, the resort of the community of sages.  
Dwelt in by the king of Dhamma, a place that gives me joy.

“Deeds, vision, truthfulness, morality, and an excellent life.  
By these are mortals purified, not by lineage nor wealth.

“Therefore a person who is wise,  
who considered their own welfare  
Should systematically investigate the truth,  
thereby becoming purified.

“Sāriputta is truly wise, virtuous, and inwardly at peace.  
Whatever monk has crossed the stream, can at best equal him.”

“Monks, thus spoke that young deity, and having spoken thus, he paid homage to me, and keeping me on his right, disappeared at once.”

When this was said, the Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, that young deity must have been Anāthapiṇḍika, for the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had great faith in the Venerable Sāriputta.”

“Well said, Ānanda, well said! You have drawn the correct conclusion through reasoning. That young deity, Ānanda, was indeed Anāthapiṇḍika.”



# Dahara Suttaṃ

(S.i.68)

## The Young

### *Introduction*

**112.** Thus have I heard:— At one time the Blessed one was dwelling at Prince Jeta's grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Blessed One; having approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side. Sitting there, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Does the venerable Gotama claim, 'I have attained to incomparable and perfect enlightenment'?"

"Indeed, great king, whoever would say, 'He has attained to incomparable and perfect enlightenment,' speaking of me, would speak correctly. Indeed, great king, I have attained to incomparable and perfect enlightenment."

"Venerable Gotama, even those recluses and brahmins who are leaders of groups, well-known, famous, and regarded as holy by many people, namely: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, Saṅcaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Ajita Kesakambala do not claim, 'We have attained to incomparable and perfect enlightenment.' What, then, of the Venerable Gotama who is young and recently gone forth?"

"These four, great king, though young, should not be disregarded. What four? A warrior noble, great king, though young, should not be disregarded. A snake, great king, though young, should not be disregarded. A fire, great king, though young, should not be disregarded. A monk, great king, though young, should not be disregarded. These four, great king, though young, should not be disregarded."

Thus spoke the Blessed One. Having said this, the Fortunate One, the teacher said further:—

"A warrior noble endowed with the fame of noble birth.  
Though young, should not be disregarded by any man.

"This warrior noble may gain the throne.  
In anger, he may inflict a royal punishment,  
Therefore one should avoid him, guarding one's own life.

"In the village or the forest, if one by chance should see a cobra,  
Though young, a man should not disregard it.  
Of various types, going by crawling along.

Its poisonous bite is powerful; whether a man or a woman  
Should avoid it, guarding one's own life.

"A voracious fire, leaving a blackened trail,  
Though young, a man should not disregard it.  
Acquiring more fuel it may become a massive blaze,  
Engulfing the fool, whether a man or a woman.  
Therefore one should avoid it, guarding one's own life.

"When a fire burns down a forest, leaving a blackened trail,  
New shoots spring to life once more.  
But if a monk endowed with virtue, burns with his virtue,<sup>1</sup>  
One does not gain sons and cattle,  
nor do one's heirs acquire wealth.  
One becomes childless and heirless,  
Cut off like the stump of a palmyra tree.

"Therefore a person who is wise, perceiving their own welfare,  
A cobra, a fire, a warrior of fame,  
and a monk endowed with virtue,  
Should always treat these with great respect."

When this was said, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One:  
"It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May the Blessed One regard me as a disciple who has taken refuge from today for as long as I shall live."

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<sup>1</sup> A virtuous monk wishes no harm to anyone. However, the effect of harming another human being is proportional to the virtue of the person harmed. For example, killing a robber in self-defence is still unwholesome kamma, but much less potent than killing a virtuous person in order to rob them. Killing an Arahant is heavy kamma that gives the inevitable result of rebirth in hell after death. Cf., the discourse on [An Exposition of Gifts](#), which gives the increasing benefit of gifts to others.

# Issatta Suttaṃ

S.i.98

## The Archer

The Sāvatti introduction.<sup>1</sup> Sitting at one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One:—

“Where, venerable sir, should donations be given?”

“Wherever, great king, the mind is pleased.”

“Where, venerable sir, is a gift of great fruit?”

“This is one question, great king, ‘Where should a gift be given?’ and ‘Where given is a gift of great fruit?’ is another question. A gift given to the virtuous, great king, is of great fruit, not that given to the immoral. Then I will ask a counter-question, great king. Please answer it as you see fit.

“What do you think, great king, if you were at war and a great battle was imminent, if a warrior (*khattiya*)<sup>2</sup> youth came who was untrained (*asikkhito*), unpractised (*akatahattho*), undisciplined (*akatayoggo*), unskilled in archery (*akatūpāsano*), a coward (*bhiru*), petrified (*chambhi*), fearful (*utrāsi*), and liable to flee (*palāyi*), would you enlist that man, would he be of any use to you?”

“No, venerable sir, I would not enlist that man, he would not be of any use to me.”

“What do you think, great king, if a brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*) youth ... a merchant (*vessa*) youth ... a worker (*sudda*) youth came who was untrained, unpractised, undisciplined, unskilled in archery, a coward, petrified, fearful, and liable to flee, would you enlist that man, would he be of any use to you?”

“No, venerable sir, I would not enlist that man, he would not be of any use to me.”

“What do you think, great king, if you were at war and a great battle was imminent, if a warrior youth came who was well-trained, practised, disciplined, skilled in archery, brave, not petrified, fearless, and not liable to flee, would you enlist that man, would he be of any use to you?”

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<sup>1</sup> The first discourse in the second chapter of the Kosala Saṃyutta (the Sattajaṭṭila Sutta) was given to King Pasenadi while the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti at the Eastern Monastery, in the Palace of Migāra’s mother (Visākhā). The remainder, including this one just say “Sāvattihinidānaṃ,” i.e. with the same introduction. The first discourse in the first chapter was given while the Blessed One was staying at Sāvatti in Prince Jeta’s grove at Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. The remaining discourses in the first chapter also just say “Sāvattihinidānaṃ.” without elaborating, so presumably they were also all given in Prince Jeta’s grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

<sup>2</sup> There were four castes at the time of the Buddha: He himself was of the warrior or ruling caste. Those who were hunters, fishermen, and butchers, were regarded as outcastes (*vasala*). The Buddha ordained anyone who was suitable, whatever his family background.

“Yes, venerable sir, I would enlist that man, he would be of use to me.”

“What do you think, great king, if a brahmin youth ... a merchant youth ... a worker youth came who was well-trained, skilled, disciplined, brave, not petrified, fearless, and not liable to flee, would you enlist that man, would he be of any use to you?”

“Yes, venerable sir, I would enlist that man, he would be of use to me.”

“In the same way, great king, from whatever family one goes forth from the household life to the homeless life, who has abandoned five factors and is endowed with five factors, whatever is given to them is of great fruit. What five factors are abandoned? Sensual desire is abandoned, ill-will is abandoned, sloth and torpor are abandoned, restless and remorse are abandoned, doubt is abandoned. These five factors are abandoned. With what five factors are they endowed? They are endowed with the aggregate of morality (*sīlakkhandhehi*) of an Arahant (*asekkhena*), the aggregate of concentration of an Arahant, the aggregate of wisdom of an Arahant, the aggregate of liberation of an Arahant, the aggregate of knowledge and vision of liberation of an Arahant. They are endowed with these five factors. Thus having abandoned five factors and being endowed with five factors, what is given to them is of great fruit.”

Thus said the Blessed One. After the Fortunate One had spoken these words, the Teacher added:—

“An archer who is strong and energetic, a youth skilled in archery  
A king preparing for battle would enlist, not a coward, on  
account of his birth.

“Who is patient and obedient, established in those states  
Noble and wise, one should prefer even one of low birth.

“Build delightful retreats and invite the learned to dwell therein,  
Build water tanks in the wilderness and bridges over difficult terrain.

“Food and drink and eatables, clothes, beds, and seats,  
Give to those of upright character, with a bright clear mind.

“As the storm with a hundred clouds thunders and flashes lightning  
On hills and valleys, rains down on the earth, flooding them all.

“So the wise and learned with confidence, having prepared a meal,  
Satisfying those who beg for alms, with food and drink.  
Rejoicing he scatters gifts saying ‘Give, give!’

“That is his thundering, like the rain of the gods,  
An abundant torrent of merit will rain down on the giver.”

# Somā Suttaṃ

(S.i.129)

## Bhikkhuni Somā Rebukes Māra

**163.** Thus have I heard — On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Prince Jeta's grove, in the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika. At that time, Bhikkhuni Somā, having put on the lower and upper robe, taking the almsbowl and double robe, she wandered for alms in Sāvatti. Have wandered for alms, after the meal she approached the Blind Man's grove<sup>1</sup> to spend the day. Having entered the Blind Man's grove, she sat down at a certain tree to spend the day. Then Māra, the evil one, wishing to arouse fear, trembling, and horripilation to make her fall away from concentration approached Bhikkhuni Somā, and having approached spoke this verse to her:—

“The state that is hard to attain, which can be attained by sages,  
Cannot be attained by a woman, with her two-fingered<sup>2</sup>  
wisdom.”

Then it occurred to Bhikkhuni Somā: “Is this a human being or a non-human being who utters this verse?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra, the evil one, who recited this verse, wishing to arouse fear, trembling, and horripilation to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood: “This is Māra, the evil one,” Bhikkhuni Somā uttered this verse in reply:—

“What does it matter being a woman, when the mind is well  
composed?

Knowledge flows on with perfect insight into the truth.

“Whoever thinks thus, ‘I am a woman or a man,

Or I am anything at all,’ it is proper for Māra to address.”

Then Māra, the evil one, realising: “Bhikkhuni Somā knows me,” being disappointed and depressed, disappeared from there at once.

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<sup>1</sup> The Blind Man's grove was so called because it was so thick that it was hard to see into or out of it.

<sup>2</sup> With two fingers a woman makes a thread by twisting cotton fibres.

# Vajirā Suttam

(S.i.135)

## Bhikkhunī Vajirā Rebukes Māra

**171.** Thus have I heard — On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattṭhi, in Prince Jeta's grove, in the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika. At that time, Bhikkhunī Vajirā, having put on the lower and upper robe, taking the almsbowl and double robe, she wandered for alms in Sāvattṭhi. Have wandered for alms, after the meal she approached the Blind Man's grove<sup>1</sup> to spend the day. Having entered the Blind Man's grove, she sat down at a certain tree to spend the day. Then Māra, the evil one, wishing to arouse fear, trembling, and horripilation to make her fall away from concentration approached Bhikkhunī Vajirā, and having approached spoke this verse to her:—

“By whom was this being created? Where is the creator of this being?

Where has this being arisen? Where does this being cease?

Then it occurred to Bhikkhunī Vajirā: “Is this a human being or a non-human being who utters this verse?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra, the evil one, who recited this verse, wishing to arouse fear, trembling, and horripilation to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood: “This is Māra, the evil one,” Bhikkhunī Vajirā uttered this verse in reply:—

“What is this being of which you speak, Māra, is that your speculative view?”

There is merely a heap of formations, no being can be found.

“As indeed by its parts, the sound ‘chariot’ is heard.<sup>2</sup>

Thus by the presence of the aggregates, a being is said to exist.

“Suffering alone comes to be, continues, and passes away.

Nothing else besides suffering comes to be, nothing but suffering ceases.”

Then Māra, the evil one, realising: “Bhikkhunī Vajirā knows me,” being disappointed and depressed, disappeared from there at once.

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<sup>1</sup> The Blind Man's grove was so called because it was so thick that it was hard to see into or out of it.

<sup>2</sup> This famous simile of the chariot is quoted by Venerable Nāgasena at the beginning of his Debate with King Milinda, in the chapter A Question on Concepts.

# Brahmāyācana Suttaṃ

(S.i.136)

## Brahma's Request

**172.** Thus have I heard — At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Uruvela in the banks of the river Nerañjarā at the root of the goat-herd's banyan tree, just after attaining Enlightenment. Then while the Blessed One was dwelling alone this thought occurred to him: "This truth that I have realised is profound, difficult to see, hard to understand, peaceful, lofty, not accessible to reasoning or intellect, subtle, to be realised only by the wise. However, this generation of people is attached to pleasure, enjoyment, and delight. For people who are attached to pleasures, enjoyment, and delight, this fact is hard to see, namely conditional relations and dependent origination. This fact is also hard to see, namely the calming of all formations, the relinquishment of all becoming, the destruction of craving, the passionless cessation of nibbāna. If I were to teach this Dhamma and if others were unable to understand it, it would be tiresome to me, this would be a vexation to me." Thereupon this verse, not heard before, spontaneously occurred to him:—

"That which I gained with so much hardship, what is the use of teaching it? Those overcome with lust and anger, will not understand the truth properly.

"Going against the stream, subtle, profound, difficult, and intricate. Those afflicted by passion will not see it, being obstructed by darkness."

Reflecting thus, the Blessed One inclined to abiding in comfort, not to teaching the Dhamma.

Then to Brahma Sahampati, knowing the thoughts of the Blessed One, it occurred: "Alas, the world is lost! Alas the world will be destroyed because the Tathāgata, the worthy, fully enlightened Buddha inclines to abiding in comfort, not to teaching the Dhamma!"

Then Brahma Sahampati — like a strong man would stretch out his bent arm or bend his stretched out arm — disappeared from the Brahma realm and appeared in front of the Blessed One. Then Brahma Sahampati, having arranged his robe over one shoulder, knelt with his right knee on the ground, raised his joined palms towards the Blessed One in salutation and spoke thus: "Venerable sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma, let the Fortunate One teach the Dhamma. There are beings in the world with little

dust in their eyes, who are deteriorating due to not hearing the Dhamma. There will be some who will understand the Dhamma.” Having said this, Brahma Sahampati said further:–

“Formerly there arose among the Magadhans an impure teaching devised by the defiled. Open the doors to the deathless, let them listen to the teaching of the undefiled Buddha.

“Like one standing on a mountain peak, can see the people below, The wise sage having ascended the palace of truth, the seer of all, Not being afflicted by grief, and freed from grief, Consider the people oppressed by birth and decay.

“Stir yourself, hero, the victor in battle!

The caravan leader, freed from debt, wander in the world.

Teach the Dhamma Blessed One.

There will be some who can understand it.”

Then the Blessed One having understood the Brahma’s request, out of compassion for being, surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha. The Blessed One, having observed the world with the eye of the Buddha, saw beings with few or many defilements, with keen or dull mental faculties, with good or bad dispositions, easy or difficult to instruct, some dwelling with dread and shame regarding the other realms, some dwelling without dread and shame regarding the other realms. Just as in a pond of blue, red, or white lotuses, some might be born, grow, and thrive in the water, but remain submerged, others might reach the surface, while others might stand clear clear of the water. Similarly, the Blessed One, having observed the world with the eye of the Buddha, saw beings with few or many defilements, with keen or dull mental faculties, with good or bad dispositions, easy or difficult to instruct, some dwelling with shame and fear regarding the other realms, some dwelling without shame and fear regarding the other realms. Having seen this he replied to Brahma Sahampati:–

“The doors to the deathless are open, let those who have ears repose confidence. Perceiving hardship I did not speak the sublime Dhamma among human beings.”

Then Brahma Sahampati, thinking: “The Blessed One has given his consent to teach the Dhamma,” having paid homage to the Blessed One, disappeared from there at once.



# Akkosa Suttam

(S.i.161)

## A Discourse on Abuse

188. On one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha at the Squirrels' Sanctuary, in the Bamboo Grove. Then an abusive brahmin heard — "A brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan has just gone forth in the presence of the Blessed One." Being angry and displeased, the brahmin approached the Blessed One, and having approached, rudely abused and scolded him with harsh speech.

When he had spoken, the Blessed One said this to the abusive brahmin — "What do you think, brahmin? Do friends, associates, and relatives sometimes visit you as guests?"

"Sometimes, good Gotama, friends, associates, and relatives visit me as guests."

"What do you think, brahmin? Do you offer them hard and soft food, and delicious snacks?"

"Sometimes, good Gotama, I offer them hard and soft food, and delicious snacks."

"If, brahmin, they do not accept them, to whom do they belong?"

"If, good Gotama, they do not accept them, they remain my property."

"In the same way, brahmin, your abuse of one who is not abusing, your offence of one who is not offending, your scolding of one who is not scolding, I do not accept it. That is yours brahmin; that is yours."

"Whoever, brahmin, abuses in return one who abuses, who offends in return one who offends, who scolds in return one who scolds, is said to be eating together with his guest. We do not eat together with you as your guest. That is yours brahmin; that is yours."

"The king and his court know the Venerable Gotama as an Arahant, but he still gets angry."<sup>1</sup>

"Whence could anger arise in one without anger,  
who is self-controlled and lives rightly?

One freed by perfect knowledge, firmly established in peace?

"One only makes it worse for oneself  
by returning anger with anger.

---

<sup>1</sup> The brahmin thought that the Blessed One was cursing him by saying "That is yours, brahmin; that is yours." However, the Buddha merely stated it as a fact that any bad kamma remains the property of one who utters harsh words.

By not returning anger with anger,  
one wins a victory hard to win.

“He conducts himself for the welfare of both;  
himself and the other.

Knowing that the other person is angry,  
he mindfully maintains his peace.

“By healing both; himself and the other.

Those who regard him as a fool, are unskilled in the Dhamma.”

When this was said, the abusive brahmin said to the Blessed One — “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May I obtain the going forth in the presence of the good Gotama, may I receive the higher ordination.”

Then the abusive brahmin obtained the going forth in the presence of the Blessed One, he received the higher ordination. Not long after his ordination, dwelling alone (*eko*), withdrawn (*vūpakaṭṭho*), heedful (*appamatto*), strenuous (*ātāpi*), and resolute (*pahitatto*), before long he attained that incomparable goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of good families rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness, having realised it in this very life and abided in it, knowing “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what should be done has been done, there will be no more of this again.” Then the brahmin became another of the Arahants.

# Jaṭā Suttaṃ

(S.i.165)

## The Tangle

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Prince Jeta's grove, in the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika. Then the matted-hair brahmin<sup>1</sup> approached the Blessed One, and having approached exchanged friendly greetings. Having engaged in polite conversation, he sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the tangled hair brahmin addressed the Blessed One in verse:–

“The inner tangle the outer tangle, this generation is entangled  
in a tangle.

I ask Gotama about that, who disentangles this tangle?”

“When a wise man, established well in virtue,  
Develops the mind and understanding,  
Then as a bhikkhu ardent and wise,  
He succeeds in disentangling this tangle.”<sup>2</sup>

“Whoever is disentangled from lust, anger, and ignorance,  
The Arahant who has destroyed the outflows,  
they disentangle this tangle.

“Where mind and matter cease without remainder,  
And the stimulus and perception of form,  
here the tangle is cut.”<sup>3</sup>

When this was said, the matted-hair brahmin said to the Blessed One:  
“It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the

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<sup>1</sup> **Jaṭābhāradvājo brāhmaṇo:** *Jaṭā* means tangled or plaited, *Bhāradvāja* is the name of a clan of Brahmins. It was a custom of the brahmins to retire from household life after raising a family and become celibate priests. Perhaps this clan wore their hair in plaits or left it unkempt.

<sup>2</sup> This verse forms the foundation for the *Visuddhimagga*. Buddhaghosa explains at length in chapters on morality (*sīla*), concentration (*citta*), and wisdom (*paññā*), how the mind is developed to disentangle the practitioner from lust, anger, and delusion. *Citta* is often translated as “consciousness,” but in this context development of the mind through exercises in concentration is clearly meant. The chapter on the development of *citta* elucidates the manifold meditation objects for the cultivation of concentration and insight.

<sup>3</sup> The verses, without the introduction and conclusion, are repeated at S.i.13.

Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. May I obtain the going-forth in the presence of the Venerable Gotama, may I obtain the higher ordination?"

The matted-hair brahmin obtained the going-forth in the presence of the Blessed One, he obtained the higher-ordination. Before long, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, striving energetically and resolute, he realised by direct knowledge in this very life the goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of good families rightly go forth from the household life to homelessness, and abided in it, knowing: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what ought to be done has been done, there will be no more of this." The Venerable Bhāradvāja become another of the Arahants.

# Nakhasikhā Suttam

S.ii.133

## The Tip of a Fingernail

74. Thus have I heard — At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvātthi in Prince Jeta’s grove at the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika. Then the Blessed One picked up a small amount of dust on the tip of his fingernail and said to the monks: “What do you think, monks, which is greater? This small amount of dust on my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“Venerable sir, the great earth is far greater. The small amount of dust on the Blessed One’s fingernail is insignificant. The small amount of dust on the Blessed One’s fingernail is not even a hundredth, a thousandth, or even a hundred thousandth the amount of the great earth.”

“Even so, monks, a noble disciple endowed with right-view, an individual who has gained realisation, the suffering that is totally destroyed and exhausted is far greater; while that remaining is insignificant. Not even a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the former mass of suffering that has been totally destroyed and exhausted remains in a maximum of seven lifetimes. Thus, monks, realisation of the Dhamma is of such great benefit, that is the great benefit of gaining the eye of the Dhamma (*Dhammacakkhu*).”

## The Tip of a Fingernail (2)

(S.ii.263)

224. Thus have I heard — At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvātthi in Prince Jeta’s grove at the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika. Then the Blessed One picked up a small amount of dust on the tip of his fingernail and said to the monks: “What do you think, monks, which is greater? This small amount of dust on my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“Venerable sir, the great earth is far greater. The small amount of dust on the Blessed One’s fingernail is insignificant. The small amount of dust on the Blessed One’s fingernail is not even a hundredth, a thousandth, or even a hundred thousandth the amount of the great earth.”

“Even so, monks, few are those reborn again as human beings, those reborn elsewhere are far more numerous.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘I will dwell heedfully.’ Thus, monks, you should train yourselves.”

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<sup>1</sup> There are several similar passages in the Book of Ones (A.i.35ff) emphasising how rebirth in the human or celestial realms is extremely rare. See [A Precious Human Rebirth](#).

# Okkhā Suttaṃ

S.ii.264

## Pots of Food

**226.** Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Prince Jeta's grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then the Blessed One said to the monks:—

“Monks, if someone gave a hundred pots of food in charity<sup>1</sup> in the morning, a hundred at mid-day, and a hundred in the evening; and another person were to develop a mind of loving-kindness — even for the time it takes to pull a cow's udder — in the morning, again at mid-day, and again in the evening, the latter would be of greater fruit than the former.

“Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will cultivate the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness,<sup>2</sup> we will develop it, make much of it, make it a vehicle, make it a base, establish it as a foundation, practice it and perfect it.’”

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<sup>1</sup> This theme that giving charity is inferior to other wholesome deeds is expounded in the Kūṭadanta Sutta of the Dīghanikāya. Of course, one can also give food in charity while cultivating loving-kindness to make merit in both ways, and in most cases those who donate charity do so. The importance of the mental state in making merit should be stressed. Even if giving only a little or poor quality alms, if the mind is wholesome the merit is great. Even if giving a lot of good quality gifts, if the mind is full of pride then the merit is less. See also the last section of the Pāyāsi Sutta, where the ideal manner of giving gifts is explained: “Give alms respectfully (*sakkaccaṃ dānaṃ detha*), give alms with your own hand (*sahatthā dānaṃ detha*), give alms thoughtfully (*cittikataṃ dānaṃ detha*), give alms not as if discarding something (*anapaviddhaṃ dānaṃ detha*).

<sup>2</sup> When the practice of loving-kindness (*mettā bhāvanā*) is well developed after breaking down the barriers discriminating between loved ones and enemies, without any limits to its extent, or direction, then it is very powerful.

# Anattalakkhaṇa Suttam

## S.iii.66

### The Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self

59. Thus have I heard: At one time the Blessed One was staying at the Deer Park at Isipatana, near Benares. Then he addressed the group of five monks:

“Material form, monks, is not self. If material form were self, material form would not lead to affliction. It would be possible to say regarding material form, ‘Let material form be like this. Let material form not be like that.’ However, since material form is not self, material form leads to affliction. And it is not possible to say regarding material form, ‘Let material form be like this. Let material form not be like that.’

“Feeling is not self. If feeling were self, feeling would not lead to affliction. It would be possible to say regarding feeling, ‘Let feeling be like this. Let feeling not be like that.’ However, since feeling is not self, feeling leads to affliction. And it is not possible to say regarding feeling, ‘Let feeling be like this. Let feeling not be like that.’

“Perception is not self. If perception were self, perception would not lead to affliction. It would be possible to say regarding perception, ‘Let perception be like this. Let perception not be like that.’ However, since perception is not self, perception leads to affliction. And it is not possible to say regarding perception, ‘Let perception be like this. Let perception not be like that.’

“Mental formations are not self. If mental formations were self, mental formations would not lead to affliction. It would be possible to say regarding mental formations, ‘Let mental formations be like this. Let mental formations not be like that.’ However, since mental formations are not self, mental formations lead to affliction. And it is not possible to say regarding mental formations, ‘Let mental formations be like this. Let mental formations not be like that.’

“Consciousness is not self. If consciousness were self, consciousness would not lead to affliction. It would be possible to say regarding consciousness, ‘Let my consciousness be like this. Let my consciousness not be like that.’ However, since consciousness is not self, consciousness leads to affliction. And it is not possible to say regarding consciousness, ‘Let my consciousness be like this. Let my consciousness not be like that.’

“What do you think, monks? “Is material form permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, Venerable sir.”

“Is that which is impermanent pleasant or unpleasant?”

“Unpleasant, Venerable sir.”

"Is it fitting to regard what is impermanent, unpleasant, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir."

Is feeling permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable sir."

"Is that which is impermanent pleasant or unpleasant?"

"Unpleasant, Venerable sir."

"Is it fitting to regard what is impermanent, unpleasant, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir."

"Is perception permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable sir."

"Is that which is impermanent pleasant or unpleasant?"

"Unpleasant, Venerable sir."

"Is it fitting to regard what is impermanent, unpleasant, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir."

"Are mental formations permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable sir."

"Is that which is impermanent pleasant or unpleasant?"

"Unpleasant, Venerable sir."

"Is it fitting to regard what is impermanent, unpleasant, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir."

"Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable sir."

"Is that which is impermanent pleasant or unpleasant?"

"Unpleasant, Venerable sir."

"Is it fitting to regard what is impermanent, unpleasant, and subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. I am this'?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir."

"Thus, monks, any material form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: every material form is to be seen as it really is with wisdom as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. I am not this.'

"Any feeling whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: every feeling is to be seen as it really is with wisdom as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. I am not this.'



“Any perception whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: every perception is to be seen as it really is with wisdom as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. I am not this.’

“Any mental formations whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: every mental formation is to be seen as it really is with wisdom as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. I am not this.’

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: every consciousness is to be seen as it really is with wisdom as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. I am not this.’

“Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the Noble Ones grows disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with feelings, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with mental formations, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is freed. With freedom, there is the knowledge, ‘I am free.’ He knows ‘Birth has been destroyed, the holy life has been fulfilled, what should be done has been done. There is nothing further to be done here.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Delighted, the group of five monks rejoiced in what the Blessed One had said; and while this exposition was being given, the minds of the five monks were fully released from the corruptions, without any remainder.

# Vāsijaṭa Suttaṃ

S.iii.152

## The Adze Handle

**101.** Thus have I heard — On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattṭhi in Prince Jeta’s grove at the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika. Then the Blessed One addressed the monk: “Monks.”

“Venerable sir,” the monks replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said —

“The destruction of the outflows (*āsavā*),<sup>1</sup> monks, I declare is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know and does not see. Knowing what, and seeing what, monks are the outflows destroyed? ‘Thus is matter, thus is the arising of matter, thus is the cessation of matter. Thus is feeling ... Thus is perception ... Thus are mental formations ... Thus is consciousness, thus is the arising of consciousness, thus is the cessation of consciousness — knowing thus, monks, seeing thus the outflows are destroyed.

“A monk who dwells not devoted to mental development, monks, might wish thus: ‘Oh, if only my mind could be free from outflows without any grasping,’ nevertheless his mind would not become free from the outflows without grasping. What is the reason? It should be said, ‘Due to his lack of mental development.’ What is undeveloped? The four foundations of mindfulness are undeveloped, the four right efforts are undeveloped, the four bases of success are undeveloped, the five controlling faculties are undeveloped, the five powers are undeveloped, the seven factors of enlightenment are undeveloped, the Noble Eightfold Path is undeveloped.<sup>2</sup>

“It is like, monks, a hen that has laid eight, ten, or twelve eggs. If that hen does not sit on them properly, does not hatch them properly, does not incubate them properly. Even though that hen might wish: ‘Oh, may my chicks break through the shells with their claws and beaks,’ it is not possible for those chicks to break through the shells with their claws and beaks. What is the reason? Because the hen did not sit on them properly, hatch them properly, and incubate them properly. Similarly, monks, even though a monk who does not dwell devoted to mental development might wish thus: ‘Oh, if only my mind could be free from outflows without any grasping,’ it is not possible. What is the reason? Because that monk has not properly developed the four

<sup>1</sup> See [note 4 to the Kīṭāgiri Sutta](#). The four outflows are sensuality (*kāmāsava*), becoming (*bhavāsava*), views (*diṭṭhāsava*), and ignorance (*āvijjāsava*).

<sup>2</sup> These spiritual qualities that should be developed are collectively known as the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment. See [“A Manual of the Requisites of Enlightenment”](#) for details.

foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of success, the five control faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, he has not properly developed the Noble Eightfold Path.

“A monk who dwells devoted to mental development, monks, might not wish thus: ‘Oh, if only my mind could be free from outflows without any grasping,’ nevertheless his mind would become free from the outflows without grasping. What is the reason? It should be said, ‘Due to his mental development.’ What is developed? The four foundations of mindfulness are developed, the four right efforts are developed, the four bases of success are developed, the five controlling faculties are developed, the five powers are developed, the seven factors of enlightenment are developed, the Noble Eightfold Path is developed.

“It is like, monks, a hen that has laid eight, ten, or twelve eggs. If that hen sits on them properly, hatches them properly, incubates them properly. Even though that hen might not wish: ‘Oh, may my chicks break through the shells with their claws and beaks,’ it is possible for those chicks to break through the shells with their claws and beaks. What is the reason? Because the hen sits on them properly, hatches them properly, and incubates them properly. Similarly, monks, even though a monk who dwells devoted to mental development might not wish thus: ‘Oh, if only my mind could be free from outflows without any grasping,’ it is possible that his mind would become free from the outflows without grasping. What is the reason? Because that monk has developed the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of success, the five control faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, he has developed the Noble Eightfold Path.

“It is like, monks, a mason (*palagaṇḍa*)<sup>1</sup> or a mason’s apprentice who, having looked at the handle of his adze, would see the wear made by his fingers and thumbs, but would not know: ‘This much was worn away today, that much was worn away yesterday, or that much on the day before yesterday.’ Nevertheless, he knows that it has become worn away. In the same way, monks, a monk who dwells devoted to mental development does

<sup>1</sup> The PTS Dictionary gives “*Palagaṇḍa*” as a mason, bricklayer, or plasterer, but the Commentary explains this word as “*vaḍḍhakissa*,” which is a carpenter, builder, architect, or mason. He shapes wood with his adze (*vāsijāṭa*). The key point is that it is a craftsman who uses the same hand-tool all day in his work so that the handle becomes worn to the shape of his hand. To remove the fetters and outflows from mind requires constant daily work and is a gradual process requiring great persistence and patience. If diligence is lacking, progress will be slow. Even with persistent practice, progress is barely perceptible after one day or one week. It may take years for signs of progress to become obvious, so meditators should never despair, but just work harder and more effectively if they wish to see results.

not know: 'Today so many outflows were worn away, yesterday so many were worn away, or so many were worn away on the day before yesterday.' Nevertheless, he knows that they are worn away when they are worn away.

"It is like, monks, an ocean-going ship,<sup>1</sup> rigged with masts and ropes, after six months or a year (*vassamāsāni*) on the ocean, is pulled up on shore for the winter, where it stays, weathered by the sun and wind, moistened by the storms of the rainy season, easily withers and rots away. In the same way, monks, when a monk dwells devoted to mental development, his fetters easily wither and rot away."

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<sup>1</sup> This last simile accounts for the alternative title of this discourse as the Nava Sutta.

# Āditta Suttaṃ

S.iv.19

## The Fire Sermon

**128.** At one time the Blessed one was living near Gayā, at Gayā's head, with a thousand bhikkhus. Then the Blessed One addressed them:

"Everything, monks, is burning. What, monks, is everything that is burning? The eye, monks, is burning, form is burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning. The feeling that arises dependent on eye-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, that also is burning. With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, the fire of hatred, the fire of delusion. I declare that it is burning with the fire of birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair.

The ear, monks, is burning, sound is burning, ... and despair.

The nose, monks, is burning, odour is burning, ... and despair.

The tongue, monks, is burning, taste is burning, ... and despair.

The body, monks, is burning, touch is burning, ... and despair.

The mind, monks, is burning, thought is burning, ... and despair.

Seeing thus, monks, the well-informed noble disciple is disgusted with the eye, is disgusted with forms, is disgusted with eye-consciousness, disgusted with eye-contact. He is disgusted with the feeling that arises dependent on eye contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. He is disgusted with the ear ... with the nose ... with the tongue ... with the body ... with the mind, with thoughts, with mind-contact, with the feeling that arises dependent on mind-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Being disgusted, he is dispassionate, being dispassionate he is freed. Being freed, he knows he is free, and he knows, "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been fulfilled, what should be done has been done, there is no more of this."

Thus spoke the Blessed One. Those monks delighted in what the Blessed One had said. And while this discourse was being delivered the minds of those one thousand monks were liberated from defilements without any remainder.

### *About the Fire Sermon*

*This important discourse was given by the Buddha to a thousand fire-worshipping ascetics early in his dispensation. The account of the Buddha's meeting with the Kassapa brothers at Uruvela is told in the Vinaya Mahāvagga. After giving his first discourse — the Dhammacakkha Sutta — and the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the discourse on not-self, to his first five disciples they all attained Arahantship after the first Rains Retreat.*

The Buddha spent the second Rains Retreat at Uruvela, during which time he performed numerous feats of psychic power to humble the pride of the fire-worshipping ascetics, so that they gained faith in him and became his disciples. After the Buddha taught them the Ādittapariyāya Sutta, all one thousand of these bhikkhus became Arahants.

The Ādittapariyāya Sutta of the Vinaya Mahāvagga is called the Āditta Sutta in the Saḷāyatanavaggo of the Saṃyuttanikāya. “*Pariyāya*” means “instruction.” The Ādittapariyāya Sutta in the Saḷāyatanavaggo of the Saṃyuttanikāya (S.iv.168) is a different discourse on the fiery nature of the six senses.

All six sense spheres — the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and touches, the mind and thoughts — are the basis for contact, feeling, and craving. Craving is like a fire that burns everything with which it comes into contact. If we are mindful of the feeling at the moment of sense contact, before feeling gives rise to craving, we can break the link between feeling and craving.

See also the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw’s Discourse on the Mālukiya Sutta. The knowledge of disgust (*nibbidā-nāṇa*) is an advanced stage of insight knowledge where the mind sees nothing desirable in any sense object. This leads on to the higher stage of equanimity about formations or dispassion regarding pleasant and unpleasant sense objects, and finally to the realisation of nibbāna.

The early discourses like the Dhammacakka, Anattalakkhaṇa, and Āditta Sutta, seem very simple, but only those with well developed insight knowledge were able to gain the final goal on listening to them. Nowadays, meditators will need to practise insight meditation diligently for many months or years to gain similar realisations. For most of us, the objects of the six senses do not seem to be on fire, nor disgusting. On the contrary, our minds still takes delight in them, pursue them, and cling to them constantly. Unless we can change our perception through gaining insight, we cannot become aware of the danger that lies dormant therein.

# Mālukyaputta Suttaṃ

S.iv.71

## A Discourse to Mālukyaputta

95. Then the Venerable Mālukyaputta approached the Blessed One, having approached he paid homage and sat down at one side. Sitting there the Venerable Mālukyaputta said to the Blessed One: “It would be good, venerable sir, if you would teach me the Dhamma in brief. Having heard the essence of Dhamma, I will practise it in solitude, abiding vigilant, strenuous, and with single purpose.”

“Then what shall I say to other bhikkhus when you are making such a request? You are old, having reached the latter part of your life. Even so you ask for just the gist of the Dhamma from me.”

“Venerable sir, although I am old, having reached the latter part of my life, nevertheless please teach me the Dhamma in brief, perhaps I will understand the meaning of the Blessed One’s teaching. Perhaps I will become an heir to the teaching of the Blessed One.”

“What do you think, Mālukyaputta? There are certain visible objects that you have never seen before, do not see now, nor hope to see in the future. Could such objects arouse desire, lust, or affection in you?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Mālukyaputta? There are certain sounds that you have never heard before, do not hear now, and do not hope to hear in the future. Could such objects arouse desire, lust, or affection in you?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Mālukyaputta? There are certain odours that you have never smelled before, do not smell now, and do not hope to smell in the future. Could such odours arouse desire, lust, or affection in you?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Mālukyaputta? There are certain flavours that you have never tasted before, do not taste now, and do not hope to taste in the future. Could such flavours arouse desire, lust, or affection in you?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Mālukyaputta? There are certain tangible objects that you have never touched before, that you are not touching now, and do not hope to touch in the future. Could such objects arouse desire, lust, or affection in you?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Mālukiya-putta? There are certain mind objects that you have never thought of before, which you do not think of now, and do not hope to think of in the future. Could such object arouse desire, lust, or affection in you?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir.”

“Mālukiya-putta! As phenomena are seen, heard, thought of, or known, just let them be as they are seen, heard, thought of, or known at that moment. When you see, you just see it; when you hear, you just hear it; when you think, you just think it; and when you know, you just know it. If you note with mindfulness what you see, hear, think, or know, you will not get emotionally involved in those phenomena. Since you have nothing whatever to do with them, you will find no foothold on the sense-objects that you perceive. As you have no foothold on them, you are neither here nor there, nor anywhere, and because you exist nowhere it means that you have realised nibbāna where all suffering ceases.”

“Venerable sir, this is how I understand the meaning of what the Blessed One has taught in brief:—

“Having seen a form one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from form, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having heard a sound one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from sound, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having smelled an odour one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from odour, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having tasted a flavour one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from flavour,



torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having felt a contact one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from contact, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having cognised an idea one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from ideas, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the form that he has seen. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Looking at a visible object, he just sees it and just feels that he sees it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the sound that he has heard. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Hearing a sound, he just hears it and just feels that he hears it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the odour that he has smelled. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Smelling an odour, he just smells it and just feels that he smells it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the flavour that he has tasted. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Tasting a flavour, he just tastes it and just feels that he tastes it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the contact that he has felt. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Feeling a contact, he just feels it and just feels that he feels it, without

conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the idea that he has cognised. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Cognising an idea, he just cognises it and just feels that he cognises it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Venerable sir, this is how I understand the meaning of what the Blessed One has taught in brief.”

“Well said, Mālukiya-putta! You have understood well, Mālukiya-putta, the meaning in detail of what I said in brief.

“Having seen a form one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from form, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having heard a sound one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from sound, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having smelled an odour one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from odour, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having tasted a flavour one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from flavour, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having felt a contact one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from contact, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind

becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Having cognised an idea one loses mindfulness. Getting involved in the attraction of it, one feels the onset of desire that tries to imbibe it. A multitude of passions such as covetousness and rage, springing from ideas, torments one who takes a firm hold of it, with the result that his mind becomes burdened with vexation. Therefore, nibbāna remains remote from one who accumulates suffering.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the form that he has seen. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Looking at a visible object, he just sees it and just feels that he sees it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the sound that he has heard. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Hearing a sound, he just hears it and just feels that he hears it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the odour that he has smelled. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Smelling an odour, he just smells it and just feels that he smells it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the flavour that he has tasted. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Tasting a flavour, he just tastes it and just feels that he tastes it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the contact that he has felt. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Feeling a contact, he just feels it and just feels that he feels it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“Passion remains undeveloped in him who recollects with mindfulness the idea that he has cognised. Thus freed from lust, he refuses to imbibe it. Cognising an idea, he just cognises it and just feels that he cognises it, without conceptualising it. With this, suffering ceases. One who practises in this way is said to be near to nibbāna.

“That is how, Mālukyaputta, what I said in brief should be understood in detail.”

Then the Venerable Mālukyaputta, having delighted in and approved of what the Blessed One had said, rose from his seat, paid homage to the Blessed One, and departed keeping him on his right side.

Then the Venerable Mālukyaputta, practised in solitude, abiding vigilant, strenuous, and with single purpose — before long realised for himself the goal of the holy life with direct knowledge, which is visible here and now, for the sake of which clansmen go forth from home to the homeless life: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what should be done has been done, there will be no more of this.” And the Venerable Mālukyaputta became one of the Arahants.

### *About the Mālukyaputta Sutta*

This teaching on the practice of bare awareness, which was given to both Mālukyaputta and Bāhiya Dārucīriya, was frequently taught by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw to the meditators practising at his meditation centres. An explanation in detail can be found in the Sayādaw’s teaching [“A Discourse on the Mālukyaputta Sutta.”](#) It may be described as the shortest possible route to nibbāna.

Since the discourse is not long, I have included the repetitions found in the Pāḷi text that are elided in the translations by Bhikkhu Bodhi and Ajahn Thanissaro.

There is another discourse — The Lesser Discourse to Mālukyaputta — about speculative views.

# Dārukkhandhopama Suttaṃ

(S.iv.179)

## The Simile of the Log

**241.** At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Kosambī<sup>1</sup> on the bank of the river Ganges. Then the Blessed One saw a large log floating downstream in the current of the river Ganges. Having seen it he addressed the monks:–

“Monks, do you see that large log floating downstream in the current of the river Ganges?”

“We do, venerable sir.”

“If, monks, that log does not come aground at the near shore, nor go aground at the far shore, nor sink in midstream, nor get beached on high ground, nor get taken by human beings, nor get taken by non-human beings, nor get trapped in a whirlpool, nor rotting from within; then monks, that log will flow into the ocean, will converge on the ocean, will be lead to the ocean. What is the reason for that? The river Ganges, monks, flows to the ocean, converges on the ocean, leads to the ocean.

“In the same way, monks, if you do not come aground at the near shore, nor go aground at the far shore, nor sink in midstream, nor get beached on high ground, nor get taken by human beings, nor get taken by non-human beings, nor get trapped in a whirlpool, nor rotting from within; [180] then monks, you will flow into nibbāna, will converge on nibbāna, will be lead to nibbāna. What is the reason for that? Right-view, monks, flows to nibbāna, converges on nibbāna, leads to nibbāna.”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One: “What, venerable sir, is coming aground at the near shore, going aground at the far shore, sinking in midstream, getting beached on high ground, getting caught by human beings, getting caught by non-human beings, getting trapped in a whirlpool, rotting from within?”

“The near shore, monk, is a metaphor for the six internal sense faculties. The far shore, monk, is a metaphor for the six external sense faculties. Sinking in midstream, monk, is a metaphor for delight and lust. Getting caught up on high ground, monk, is a metaphor for the conceit, ‘I am’.”

“And what, monk, is getting caught by human beings? Here, monk, one lives with householders, rejoicing with them and grieving with them, happy when they are happy, suffering when they are suffering, involving himself in their business and affairs. This, monk, is called getting caught by human beings.

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<sup>1</sup>Kosambī is some considerable distance upstream from Benares.

“And what, monk, is getting caught by non-human beings? Here, monk, one lives the holy life wishing for a certain celestial realm: ‘By this morality, or observance, or austerity, or holy life, I will become a certain deity or one among certain deities. This, monk, is called getting caught by non-human beings.

“Getting trapped in a whirlpool, monk is a metaphor for the five strands of sensual desire.

“And what, monk, is rotting from within? Here, monk, a certain monk is immoral, evil by nature, of impure conduct, secretive of his actions, not a recluse though pretending to be one, [181] not living the holy life though pretending to live it, inwardly rotten, lustful, impure by nature. This, monk, is called ‘Rotting from within’.”

Then on that occasion Nanda the cowherd was standing not far from the Blessed One. Then Nanda the cowherd said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, I will not come aground on the near shore, nor go aground on the far shore, nor sink in midstream, nor get beached on high ground, nor get taken by human beings, nor get taken by non-human beings, nor get trapped in a whirlpool, nor become rotten from within. May I obtain the going forth in the presence of the Blessed One, may I receive the higher ordination?”

“Then, Nanda, return the cattle to their owner.”

“The cattle will return of their own accord, venerable sir.”

“Do return the cattle to their owner, Nanda.”

Then Nanda the cowherd, having returned the cattle to their owner, approached the Blessed One, and having approached, said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, the cattle have been returned to their owner. Venerable sir, may I obtain the going forth in the presence of the Blessed One, may I receive the higher ordination.”

Then Nanda the cowherd obtained the going forth in the presence of the Blessed One, he received the higher ordination. Not long after his ordination the Venerable Nanda, dwelling alone (*eko*), withdrawn (*vūpakaṭṭho*), heedful (*appamatto*), strenuous (*ātāpi*), and resolute (*pahitatto*), before long attained that incomparable goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of good families rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness, having realised it in this very life and abided in it, knowing “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what should be done has been done, there will be no more of this again.” Then the Venerable Nanda become another of the Arahants.

# Chappāṇakopama Suttaṃ

## (S.iv.198)

### The Simile of the Six Animals

247. “It is as if, monks, a man with festering wounds on his body would enter a clump of sharp reeds. There, sharp blades of grass would pierce his feet and the reeds would cut his limbs. Thus, monks, that man would experience even more pain and sorrow because of that. Likewise, monks, a monk, having gone to the village or the forest gets someone who reproves him: ‘The way this venerable behaves and conducts himself defiles the village;<sup>1</sup> he is a thorn in the village.’ Having understood that he is a thorn, restraint and non-restraint should be understood.

“And what, monks is non-restraint? Here, monks, a monk, having seen a sight with the eye gets attached to a pleasing sight and is repelled by a displeasing one. Not having established mindfulness of the body, he dwells with a limited mind, not knowing as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom whereby the arising of evil unwholesome states ceases without remainder. Having heard a sound with the ear ... having smelt an odour with the nose ... having tasted a flavour with the tongue ... having felt a touch with the body ... having known an idea with the mind he gets attached to a pleasing idea and is repelled by a displeasing one. Not having established mindfulness of the body, he dwells with a limited mind, not knowing as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom whereby the arising of evil unwholesome states ceases without remainder.

“It is as if, monks, a man, having caught six animals with different territories and feeding grounds would bind them with a rope. He would bind a snake (*ahi*), a crocodile (*susumāra*), a heron (*pakkhi*),<sup>2</sup> a dog (*kukkura*), [199] a jackal (*siṅgāla*), and a monkey (*makkha*) with a rope, and having tied the ropes together with a knot, he would release them. Then, monks, each of the six animals would pull towards its own territory and feeding ground. The snake would pull thinking, ‘I will enter an anthill,’ the crocodile would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the water,’ the heron would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the sky,’ the dog would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the village,’ the jackal would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the cemetery,’ the monkey would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the forest.’

“Then, monks, when those animals were weary and exhausted, they would follow and submit to whichever was the strongest, and fall under its control.

<sup>1</sup> The Commentary says that the monk acts as a physician or messenger. See [twenty-one wrong kinds of livelihood](#) for a monk.

<sup>2</sup> The Commentary glosses: **Pakkhinti** *hatthisoṇḍasakuṇaṃ*. A bird means with a cry like an elephant trumpeting.

In the same way, monks, in whatever monk who has not developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, the eye pulls towards pleasing sights and is repelled by displeasing sights ... the mind pulls towards pleasing ideas and is repelled by displeasing ideas. Thus, monks, is non-restraint.

“And what, monks, is restraint? Here, monks, a monk having seen a sight with the eye he does not get attached to a pleasing sight nor repelled by a displeasing one. [200] Having established mindfulness of the body, he dwells with an immeasurable mind, knowing as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom whereby the evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. Having heard a sound with the ear ... having smelt an odour with the nose ... having tasted a flavour with the tongue ... having felt a touch with the body ... having known an idea with the mind, he does not get attached to a pleasing idea nor repelled by a displeasing one. Having established mindfulness of the body he dwells with an immeasurable mind, knowing as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom whereby the evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.

“It is as if, monks, a man, having caught six animals with different territories and feeding grounds would bind them with a rope. He would bind a snake, a crocodile, a heron, a dog, [199] a jackal, and a monkey with a rope, and tie the ropes to a strong post or pillar. Then, monks, each of the six animals would pull towards its own territory and feeding ground. The snake would pull thinking, ‘I will enter an anth-hill,’ the crocodile would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the water,’ the heron would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the sky,’ the dog would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the village,’ the jackal would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the cemetery,’ the monkey would pull thinking, ‘I will enter the forest.’

“Then, monks, when those animals were weary and exhausted, they will stand by that post or pillar, sit by it, or lie down by it. In the same way, monks, in whatever monk who has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, the eye does not pull towards pleasing sights and is not repelled by displeasing sights. ... the ear is not pulled towards pleasing sounds ... the tongue is not pulled towards pleasing flavours ... the body is not pulled towards pleasing touches ... the mind is not pulled towards pleasing ideas nor repelled by displeasing ones. Thus, monks, is restraint.

“A strong post or pillar, monks, is an expression for mindfulness of the body. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will develop mindfulness of the body, cultivate it, make it our vehicle, make it our foundation, become experienced in it, augment it, and undertake it fully.’ Thus, monks, you should train yourselves.” [201]



# Sivaka Suttaṃ

## (S.iv.230)

### A Discourse to Sivaka

**269.** At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, in the Squirrels' Sanctuary. Then the wanderer Moliyasīvaka approached the Blessed One, and having approached, exchanged friendly greetings. Having engaged in polite conversation, he sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the wanderer Moliyasīvaka said to the Blessed One: "Friend Gotama, there are some recluses and priests who teach this doctrine, who hold this view: 'Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all of that is due to a former action.' Herein, what does the Venerable Gotama say?"

"Some feelings, Sīvaka, arise that are caused by bile. This is something that one can know for oneself, Sīvaka, and it is agreed upon as true in the world. Those recluses and priests, Sīvaka, who hold the view: 'Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all of that is due to a former action,' go beyond what one can know for oneself, and what is agreed upon as true in the world, therefore I declare that those recluses and priests are wrong.<sup>1</sup>

"Some feelings, Sīvaka, arise that are caused by phlegm. ... by wind. ... by an imbalance of bodily humours.<sup>2</sup> ... by extremes of climate.<sup>3</sup> ... by

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<sup>1</sup> Here, the Blessed One refutes the fatalistic view of kamma, which views everything as determined by previous kamma. It is one of three extreme wrong views (*pubbekatahetu-dīṭṭhi*). He does not deny that kamma done in previous lives gives effects in this existence, nor that kamma done in this existence gives results in future existences. As the Venerable Ledi Sayādaw says in his *Manual of the Excellent Man*: "Kamma is like seed-grain. Joy or sorrow (pleasant or unpleasant feeling) are like the paddy, making an effort is like the fertility of the soil, knowledge or skill are like the rain or irrigation water. The same seed-grain yields a good or poor crop depending upon the fertility of the soil, the supply of water, and most of all, effort exerted at the right time and in the right way. Indeed kamma is highly dependent on present effort. The seed-grain is no more significant than good soil and regular watering of a paddy field. Even the best of seeds, such as the Abbhantara fruit's stone, will not thrive in poor soil and in dry conditions. A successful birth can result only when proper prenatal care is given and arrangements have been made for the birth. Again, present results also depend on skill, discretion, and prompt effort."

<sup>2</sup> Many diseases are caused by imbalances in bodily functions: vitamin deficiencies, hormones, toxins in food or water, unsuitable food, and so forth. Although it is also true that the fruition of the kamma of cruelty in a previous life results in being subject to many diseases in this life, most diseases can be treated by a change of diet, exercise regime, or medicine. The kamma of previous lives is only one factor, the actions done in this life are more important. What one has done in the previous life one does not usually know; and what one knows that one has done in this very life cannot be undone. To resolve oneself to one's fate is ignorant and negative.

<sup>3</sup> Climate and air pollution also have a significant effect on health. One can use heating, air-conditioning, air-filters, and suitable clothing to ward off many diseases and ailments. In

careless behaviour.<sup>1</sup> ... by an assault or accident.<sup>2</sup> [231] Some feelings, Sīvaka, arise that are caused by the fruition of kamma.<sup>3</sup> This should be known by oneself, Sīvaka, and that is agreed upon as true in the world, therefore, Sīvaka, those recluses and priests who teach this doctrine, who hold this view: 'Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, all of that is due to a former action,' go beyond what one can know for oneself and what is agreed upon as true in the world. Therefore, Sīvaka, I declare that those recluses and priests are wrong."

When this was said, the wanderer Moliyasīvaka said to the Blessed One: "It is wonderful, good Gotama! It is marvellous, good Gotama! It is as if, good Gotama, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, the good Gotama has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May the Blessed One regard me as a disciple who has taken refuge from today for as long as I shall live."

"Bile, phlegm, and wind,  
imbalance of bodily humours and extremes of climate.  
Careless behaviour and assault or accident,  
with the fruition of kamma as the eighth."

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[contd.] severe cases one can even move to a different country or region where the climate is better for one's condition, e.g. by the seaside may be better for those who suffer from asthma or hay-fever.  
<sup>1</sup> Mindfulness is a great protection from injury, but however careful one is, sooner or later one will trip or injure oneself. We should not blame our past bad kamma, but our present actions. One should train oneself in safe working practices; not rushing, but working systematically and with clear comprehension.

<sup>2</sup> In the Siṅgāla Sutta the Buddha warns the youth Siṅgāla about the **six ways of dissipating wealth**. Clearly, if one goes out late at night to night-clubs and bars, or to festivals and theatres, etc., one puts oneself at greater risk of assaults or robbery. Stay safe and don't give past bad kamma too many opportunities to bear fruit. If it is heavy, it will bear fruit anyway, but protect yourself by avoiding bad friends and crowds where thieves prey on the unwary. Similarly, if one goes skiing one is more likely to meet with accidents than if one meditates.

<sup>3</sup> If the past kamma is heavy, it will give its results, and nothing can prevent it. One prime example is the murder of **Mahā-Moggallāna**. In a previous life he murdered his blind and elderly parents due to the nagging of his wife, who was weary of caring for them. As a result, he was reborn in the Avīci hell. When he was reborn in the lifetime of the Buddha, some of the residual effect of that evil kamma had to give its results. Even his own powerful psychic powers were unable to prevent his murder, and the Buddha, knowing that the result was inevitable, did nothing to intervene.

# Isidatta Suttam

(S.iv.286)

## A Discourse by Isidatta Thera

345. At one time many elders were dwelling at Macchikāsaṇḍa<sup>1</sup> in the mango grove. Then the householder Citta approached the elders; having approached, he paid homage to the elders and sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the householder Citta said to the elders: “Venerable sirs, please consent to accept tomorrow’s meal.” The elders accepted by remaining silent. Then the householder Citta, having understood their consent, rose from his seat, paid homage to the elders, and departed keeping his right side towards them. Then the elders, when the night had passed, put on their robes, and taking their double-robes and almsbowls approached the residence of the householder Citta; having approached, they sat down on seats that had been prepared.

Then the householder Citta approached the elders, and having approached them, paid homage and sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the householder Citta said to the elders: “These various views arise in the world: ‘The world is eternal, the world is not eternal, the world is finite, the world is infinite, the soul is the body, the soul is one thing the body is another, the Tathāgata exists after death, the Tathāgata does not exist after death, the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’ These sixty-two views taught in the Brahmajāla Sutta; what exists that they come to be, venerable sirs, what does not exist that they do not come to be?”

When this was said, the elders were silent. A second and a third time the householder Citta repeated the question. For a third time the elders were silent.

Then on that occasion the Venerable Isidatta<sup>2</sup> was the most junior of those monks. Then the Venerable Isidatta said to those elders: “Venerable sirs, may I answer the question of the householder Citta?” “Friend Isidatta, please answer the question of the householder Citta.” [287]

“Is this, householder, what you ask? ‘These various views arise in the world: “The world is eternal, the world is not eternal, the world is finite, the world is infinite, the soul is the body, the soul is one thing the body is another, the Tathāgata exists after death, the Tathāgata does not exist after death, the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.” These sixty-two views taught

<sup>1</sup> Macchikāsaṇḍa was a township of Kāsi (Benares), and was the home of Citta gahapati, who was declared by the Buddha as the foremost among householders in teaching the Dhamma.

<sup>2</sup> This is the second of two similar discourses given by Isidatta. Though junior, he was no ordinary monk. He ordained under [Mahā-Kaccāna](#) and became an Arahant.

in the Brahmajāla Sutta; what exists that they come to be, what does not exist that they do not come to be?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"These various views arise in the world: "The world is eternal, the world is not eternal, the world is finite, the world is infinite, the soul is the body, the soul is one thing the body is another, the Tathāgata exists after death, the Tathāgata does not exist after death, the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death." These sixty-two views taught in the Brahmajāla Sutta; come to be when personality-view exists, they do not come to be when personality-view does not exist."

"How, venerable sir, does personality-view come to be?"

"Here, householder, an unlearned ordinary person, having no regard for the Noble Ones, ignorant of and untrained in the noble teaching, having no regard for good people, ignorant of and untrained in the teaching of good people, regards material form as self, or the self as having form, regards feeling as self, or the self as having feeling, regards perception as self, or the self as having perception, regards mental formations as self, or the self as having mental formations, regards consciousness as self, or the self as having consciousness. Thus, householder, personality-view comes to be."

"How, venerable sir, does personality-view not come to be?"

"Here, householder, a learned disciple of the Noble Ones, having high regard for the Noble Ones, knowable of and well-trained in the noble teaching, having high regard for good people, knowledgeable of and well-trained in the teaching of good people, does not regard material form as self, or the self as having form, does not regard feeling as self, or the self as having feeling, does not regard perception as self, or the self as having perception, does not regard mental formations as self, or the self as having mental formations, does not regard consciousness as self, or the self as having consciousness. Thus, householder, personality-view does not come to be." [288]

"From where, venerable sir, does the Venerable Isidatta come?"

"I come from Avanti,<sup>1</sup> householder."



<sup>1</sup> Avanti is south-west of the Ganges valley, beyond the boundaries of Majjhimadesa, far from Macchikāsaṇḍa and Bārāṇasī (Benares), with its capital at Ujjeni (Ujjain).

“There is, venerable sir, in Avanti, a son of a good family named Isidatta who is my unseen friend.<sup>1</sup> Have you seen him?”

“It is so, householder.”

“Where, venerable sir, is he living now?”

When this was said, the Venerable Isidatta was silent.

“Are you, venerable sir, Isidatta?”

“It is so, householder.”

“Let the Venerable Isidatta enjoy Macchikāsaṇḍa. Let him enjoy the Mango grove. I will strive to provide robes, almsfood, a dwelling place, medicine for the sick, and medical requisites.”

“That is kind of you to say so, householder.”

Then the householder Citta, having delighted and rejoiced in what the Venerable Isidatta had said, served with his own hand and satisfied the elders with superior hard and soft food. Then when the elders had eaten and withdrawn their hands from the bowl, he got up and left. Then the elder monk said to Isidatta: “Friend Isidatta, you answered the question well. I could not answer the question. Then, friend Isidatta, whenever such a question comes up, you should answer it.”

Then the Venerable Isidatta having set his dwelling place in order, taking his double-robe and almsbowl, departed from Macchikāsaṇḍa, and when he had left, he never returned again.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Isidatta became a friend of Citta through correspondence. They had never met before.

<sup>2</sup> After the householder Citta had identified him and made an open invitation to provide him with the four requisites, Isidatta considered that it would be improper to receive requisites because of their special friendship, so he left never to return.

# Tālapuṭa Suttaṃ

S.iv.306

## A Discourse to Tālapuṭa

**354.** Thus have I heard — On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Squirrel Sanctuary in the Bamboo Grove.<sup>1</sup> Then Tālapuṭa, a leader of a troupe of actors, approached the Blessed One, and having approached, paid homage and sat at one side. Sitting at one side Tālapuṭa said to the Blessed One:—

“I have heard, venerable sir, as it has been passed down by the lineage of teachers of actors, ‘If an actor in the centre of the stage in the midst of a festival, makes the audience laugh,<sup>2</sup> after death on the breakup of the body he is reborn among the laughing deities.’ What does the Blessed One say about this?”

“Enough, headman, set this aside. Do not ask me this.”

A second time, Tālapuṭa ... a third time, Tālapuṭa said ...

“Evidently, I have not been able to get you to set this question aside, and not ask me this, so I will tell you. Headman, an actor in the centre of the stage in the midst of a festival, focuses on things that excite lust, those

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<sup>1</sup> This discourse is followed by three similar discourses: the Yodhājīva Suttaṃ (S.iv.308), the Hatthāroha Suttaṃ (S.iv.309), and the Assāroha Suttaṃ (S.iv.310). A soldier, an elephant mahout, and a cavalryman approached the Blessed One and asked him if it was true that warriors who were killed while fighting in battle were reborn in heaven. The Buddha explained, that since they were striving with ill-will, trying to kill others at the time of their death, they would be reborn in hell, and if they believed that they would be reborn in heaven, that was a wrong-view, with one of two definite results. At the end of each discourse, the warriors all took refuge, but they did not request the going-forth as Tālapuṭa had done. Apparently, their perfections were not yet ripe, or perhaps because they were still enlisted, they were not free to ordain. The monks cannot give the going-forth to someone who is still a member of the military. No doubt these teachings will be very unpopular with members of the military and their relatives, who have been tricked, deceived, and seduced for a long time by war films and propaganda that to fight the enemies of the state is an heroic and noble deed. If they read this, they should reflect carefully on what their mental state is when fighting in a battle, when killing or trying to kill enemy soldiers, and what their last thoughts will be like if they are killed while engaged in battle. If war and killing cannot be avoided, at least one should be aware that killing is an unwholesome deed, and is not something to be praised.

<sup>2</sup> This seems to refer to comedians or comic actors, but focusing the mind of the audience on lust, anger, and delusion is also done by movie or stage actors in dramas. War movies, disaster movies, sci-fi movies, even cartoons — they all excite unwholesome mental states. Only very few movies and plays stimulate wholesome mental states such as faith, moral shame, generosity, compassion, etc. Even in movies that include moral lessons, the entire story is often a complete fabrication, so delusion will predominate. Traditional Buddhist entertainments that relate stories from the Jātaka commentaries may be an exception to the general rule as they aim at teaching the Dhamma.

beings who are not free from lust to start with, who are bound with the bond of lust, making them even more lustful. Headman, an actor in the centre of the stage in the midst of a festival, focuses on things that excite anger, those beings who are not free from anger to start with, who are bound with the bond of anger, making them even more angry. Headman, an actor in the centre of the stage in the midst of a festival, focuses on things that excite delusion, those beings who are not free from delusion to start with, who are bound with the bond of delusion, making them even more deluded. He, being intoxicated and heedless himself having made others intoxicated and heedless, after death on the breakup of the body he is reborn in the laughing hell. If one holds this view: 'If an actor in the centre of the stage in the midst of a festival, makes the audience laugh, after death on the breakup of the body he is reborn among the laughing deities,' this is a wrong-view. For an individual holding wrong-view, headman, I declare one of two destinations — hell or the animal womb."

When this was said, Tālapuṭa cried and shed tears.

"I was not able to get you to set this question aside, and not ask me this."

"I am not crying, venerable sir, because the Blessed One said this, but, venerable sir, for a long time I have been cheated, deceived, and seduced by the lineage of the teachers of actors that 'If an actor in the centre of the stage in the midst of a festival, makes the audience laugh, after death on the breakup of the body he is reborn among the laughing deities.'

"It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, what was overturned was set upright, what was concealed was revealed, the right path was pointed out to one who was lost, or a light was brought into the darkness so that those with eyes could see forms. Thus the Blessed One has point out the Dhamma in various ways. Venerable sir, I take refuge in the Blessed One, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. Venerable sir, may I obtain the going-forth in the presence of the Blessed One, may I receive the higher ordination?"

Then Tālapuṭa the leader of a troupe of actors received the going-forth and the higher ordination in the presence of the Blessed One. No long after his ordination the Venerable Tālapuṭa attained the goal for which clansmen rightly go forth, realising higher knowledge and abiding in it he knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what should be done has been done, there will be no more of this.' The Venerable Tālapuṭa became another of the Arahants.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Verses of Tālapuṭa are found in the Theragāthā. Thag.96, vv.1094-1148.

# Asibandhakaputta Suttaṃ

## (S.iv.311)

### A Discourse to Asibandhakaputta

**358.** At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Nālandā in the mango grove of Pāvārika. [312] Then the headman (*gāmaṇi*) Asibandhakaputta<sup>1</sup> approached the Blessed One; have approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side. Sitting at one side the headman Asibandhakaputta said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, the Brahmins of the western region who carry a ceremonial water-pot, wear a garland of water-plants, purify by bathing in water, and tend the sacred fire, are said to be able to direct the departed and send them up to heaven. Venerable sir, is the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened Buddha able to make everyone in the entire world arise in a fortunate celestial realm on the break-up of the body after death?”

“Then, headman, I will ask you a counter-question. Please reply however you see fit. What do you think, headman? Here, a man is a killer of living-beings, a taker of what is not given, a sexual miscreant, a liar, a slanderer, an abuser, an idle-chatterer, he is covetous, bears ill-will, and holds wrong-views. Suppose a crowd would assemble around him, earnestly praying and praising him with joined palms: ‘May this man, on the break-up of the body after death, arise in a fortunate celestial realm.’ What do you think, headman, would that man, due to the earnest praying and praising of that crowd, arise in a fortunate celestial realm on the break-up of the body after death?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir!”

“It is as if, headman, a man would throw a big boulder into a deep pond. Then a crowd would assemble around that pond earnestly praying and praising with joined palms, ‘Rise up, good boulder, [313] float good boulder, emerge onto solid ground good boulder.’ What do you think, headman, would that big boulder, due to the earnest praying and praising, rise up, float, or emerge onto solid ground?”

“Indeed not, venerable sir!”

“In the same way, headman, if a man is a killer of living-beings, a taker of what is not given, a sexual miscreant, a liar, a slanderer, an abuser, an idle-chatterer, if he covetous, bears ill-will, and holds wrong-views, whatever that crowd might do by assembling around him, earnestly praying and praising him with joined palms: ‘May this man, on the

<sup>1</sup> Asibandhakaputta was a disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nāpajutta, who was a fatalist. In the Saṅkhaḍḍha Sutta (S.iv.317), the Buddha teaches Asibandhakaputta that not all evil-doers go to hell. In the Kula Sutta (S.iv.322) he teaches him the eight reasons for the destruction of families when asked if begging for alms during a famine is compassionate.



break-up of the body after death, arise in a fortunate celestial realm,' that man on the break-up of the body after death would arise in a state of misery, an unfortunate destination, a place of punishment, in hell."

"What do you think, headman? Here, a man abstains from killing living-beings, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from lying, slandering, abusing, and idle-chatter. He is not covetous, does not bear ill-will, and holds right-views. Suppose a crowd would assemble around him, earnestly praying and praising him with joined palms: 'May this man, on the break-up of the body after death, arise in a state of misery, an unfortunate destination, a place of punishment, in hell.' What do you think, headman, would that man, due to the earnest praying and praising of that crowd, on the break-up of the body after death, arise in a state of misery, an unfortunate destination, a place of punishment, in hell?"

"Indeed not, venerable sir!"

"It is as if, headman, a man, having immersed a pot of ghee or oil into a deep pond, would break it. Any pieces or shards of the pot would sink, and any ghee or oil would float. [314] Suppose a crowd would assemble around that pond earnestly praying and praising with joined palms, 'Sink good ghee or oil, descend good ghee or oil, go down good ghee or oil.' What do you think, headman? Would that ghee or oil, due to the earnest praying and praising of that crowd, sink, descend, or go down?"

"Indeed not, venerable sir!"

"In the same way, headman, if a man abstains from killing living-beings, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from lying, slandering, abusing, and idle-chatter. If he is not covetous, does not bear ill-will, and holds right-views, whatever that crowd might do by assembling around him, earnestly praying and praising with joined palms: 'May this man, on the break-up of the body after death, arise in a state of misery, an unfortunate destination, a place of punishment, in hell,' that man, on the break-up of the body after death, would arise in a fortunate celestial realm."

When this was said, the headman Asibandhakaputta said to the Blessed One: "It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May the Blessed One regard me as a disciple who has taken refuge from today for as long as I shall live."

# Khettūpama Suttaṃ

## (S.iv.314)

### The Simile of the Fields

359. At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Nālandā in the mango grove of Pāvārika. Then the headman Asibandhakaputta approached the Blessed One; have approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side. Sitting at one side the headman Asibandhakaputta said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, does the Blessed One dwell compassionate to all living beings?”

“It is so, headman, the Tathāgata dwells compassionate to all living beings.”

“Then why, venerable sir, does the Blessed One teach one person thoroughly, but does not teach another thoroughly?” [315]

“Then, headman, I will ask you a counter-question. Please reply however you see fit. What do you think, headman, here a farmer has three fields — one is excellent, one is average, and one is inferior, rough, salty, with poor soil. What do you think, headman, if that farmer wished to sow seeds, which would he sow first; the excellent field, the average field, or the inferior field, rough, salty, with poor soil?”

“A farmer wishing to sow seed would sow seed in the excellent field first. Having sown seed there, he would then sow seed in the average field. He might or might not sow seed in the inferior field, rough, salty, with poor soil. What is the reason for that? At least it might be fodder for the cattle.”

“The excellent field, headman, is like my monks and nuns. To them I teach the Dhamma — good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, correct in meaning and phrasing, I explain the complete and perfectly pure holy life. What is the reason for that? Headman, they dwell with me as their island (*dīpa*), shelter (*leṇā*), protection (*tāṇa*), and refuge (*saraṇā*).<sup>1</sup>

“The average field, headman, is like my male and female lay supporters. To them I teach the Dhamma — good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, correct in meaning and phrasing, I explain the complete and perfectly pure holy life. What is the reason for that? Headman, they dwell with me as their island, shelter, protection, and refuge.

“The inferior field, rough, salty, with poor soil, headman, [316] is like the recluses, priests, and wanderers of other views (*aññatitthiyā*). To them I teach the Dhamma — good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, correct in meaning and phrasing, I explain the complete and perfectly pure holy life. What is the reason for that? Headman, Perhaps if they understand even one word it will be for their welfare and happiness for a long time.

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<sup>1</sup> Island and refuge are very similar, as are shelter (a cave) and protection.

“It is as if, headman, a man had three water-jars — one without cracks that holds water perfectly without leaking; one without cracks that holds water, but with some leakage; and one with cracks that loses water, and leaks. What do you think, headman, if a man wished to store water, in which water storage jar would he store water first; the one without cracks that holds water perfectly, without leaking; one without cracks, that holds water, but with some leakage; or one with cracks, that loses water, and leaks?”

“Venerable sir, a man wishing to store water would first store it in the water-jar without cracks that holds water without leaking. Having stored water in that one, he would store water in the water-jar without cracks that holds water, but with some leakage. Having stored water in that water-jar he might or might not store water in the water-jar with cracks that loses water, and leaks. What is the reason for that? At least it could be used for washing goods.”

“Headman, the water-jar without cracks, that holds water perfectly without leaking is like my monks and nuns. To them I teach the Dhamma — good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, correct in meaning and phrasing, I explain the complete and perfectly pure holy life. What is the reason for that? Headman, they dwell with me as their island, shelter, protection, and refuge. Headman, the water-jar without cracks that holds water, but with some leakage is like my male and female lay supporters. To them I teach the Dhamma — good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, correct in meaning and phrasing, I explain the complete and perfectly pure holy life. What is the reason for that? Headman, they dwell with me as their island, shelter, protection, and refuge. Headman, the water-jar with cracks, that loses water and leaks is like the recluses, priests, and wanderers of other views. To them I teach the Dhamma — good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, correct in meaning and phrasing, I explain the complete and perfectly pure holy life. What is the reason for that? Headman, Perhaps if they understand even one word it will be for their welfare and happiness for a long time.”

When this was said, the headman Asibandhakaputta said to the Blessed One: “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May the Blessed One regard me as a disciple who has taken refuge from today for as long as I shall live.”

# Kula Suttam

(S.iv.322)

## Compassion for Families

**361.** One one time the Blessed One was touring the kingdom of King Kosala with a large following of monks and arrived at Nālandā. There, the Blessed One stayed at Nālandā in the mango grove of Pāvārika. [323] On that occasion there was a famine in Nālandā, food was scarce, white bones were scattered here and there, and the people subsisted on grass.<sup>1</sup> On that occasion Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta was dwelling at Nālandā together with a large following of naked ascetics. Then the headman Asibandhakaputta, who was a disciple of the naked ascetics, approached Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, having approached, he paid homage to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and sat down at one side. As he was sitting at one side, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said to Asibandhakaputta: “Come, headman, refute the doctrine of the recluse Gotama. Thus your fame will spread: ‘The headman Asibandhakaputta refuted the doctrine of the recluse Gotama, who is so powerful and majestic.’”

“How, venerable sir, will I refute the doctrine of the recluse Gotama, who is so powerful and majestic?”

“Come, headman, approach the recluse Gotama, and having approached him say this: ‘Venerable sir, doesn’t the Blessed One in various ways praise having sympathy for families, protecting families, having compassion for families?’ If, headman, when questioned thus, if the recluse Gotama replies: ‘It is so, headman, the Tathāgata does in various ways praise having sympathy for families, protecting families, having compassion for families,’ then you should say this: ‘Then why, venerable sir, is the Blessed One touring with a large following of monks when there is a famine, food is scarce, white bones are scattered here and there, and the people subsist on grass? The Blessed One is practising for the destruction of families, for the distress of families, for the harm of families!’ When asked this double-edged question by you, headman, the recluse Gotama will be unable to spit it out or swallow it.” [324]

Having replied, “It is so, venerable sir,” to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, having paid homage to him, he departed keeping him on his right side. He approached the Blessed One, having approached, and having paid homage to the Blessed One,

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<sup>1</sup> White bones (*setaṭṭhikā*). The Vinaya Commentary on the famine at VERAṆJA gives a different meaning based on a variant reading of *setaṭṭhikā* as being a crop disease that results in no grain being produced. Either way, one should understand that food was very hard to get, so people would go hungry if offering alms to the monks. Bhikkhu Bodhi adopts the explanation given for the variant reading. I prefer to translate the original text as no variant reading is given in the text for *setaṭṭhikā*.

he sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the headman Asibandhakaputta said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, doesn’t the Blessed One in various ways praise having sympathy for families, protecting families, having compassion for families?”

“It is so, headman, the Tathāgata in various ways praises having sympathy for families, protecting families, having compassion for families.”

“Then why, venerable sir, is the Blessed One touring with a large following of monks when there is a famine, food is scarce, white bones are scattered here and there, and the people subsist on grass. The Blessed One is practising for the destruction of families, for the distress of families, for the harm of families!”

“Headman, I can remember back for ninety-one aeons, but I do not know of any family ever being destroyed merely by offering almsfood. Whatever families there are who are wealthy, of great wealth, with much property, with abundant gold and silver, abundant possessions, abundant wealth and grain, all of them were acquired through generosity, truthfulness, and recluseship (*sāmañña*).<sup>1</sup>

“There are eight root causes (*hetū*), eight conditions (*paccayā*), headman, for the harm of families;<sup>2</sup> due to the king, due to thieves, due to fire, due to flooding, due to hidden treasure disappearing, due to a badly undertaken business plan, due to a wastrel arising in the family who squanders, dissipates, and wastes their wealth, [325] or due to it being impermanent as the eighth. These, headman, are the eight root causes, the eight conditions for the harm of families. These, eight root causes, these eight conditions, headman, exist so whoever says about me: ‘The Blessed One practises for the destruction of families, for the distress of families, for the harm of families,’ without having retracted those words, without having renounced that thought, without having abandoned that view, will arise in hell as surely as if taken and dragged there.”

When this was said, the headman Asibandhakaputta said to the Blessed One: “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. May the Blessed One regard me as a disciple who has taken refuge from today for as long as I shall live.”

<sup>1</sup> The Commentary glosses *sāmaññaṃ* means the remaining virtues (*sesasīlaṃ*). The meaning of *sāmañña* is recluseship, striving to live in solitude and renounce sensual pleasures.

<sup>2</sup> Only for the harm of families (*kulānaṃ upaghātāya*) is said here, not for the destruction of families (*kulānaṃ ucchedāya*), or the distress of families (*kulānaṃ ananāya*). These eight factors would lead to harm, and to misery and destruction in due course. I could not find the list in the Book of Eights, the Aṅguttaranikāya.

# Maṇicūḷaka Suttam

S.iv.325

## A Discourse to Maṇicūḷaka

**362.** “At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha at the squirrel’s sanctuary in the Bamboo grove. On that occasion this topic of conversation arose in the king’s court: “Money<sup>1</sup> is allowable for the monks, for the sons of the Sakyan. The monks consent to and accept money.”

Then the village headman (*gāmaṇi*), Maṇicūḷaka, said this: “Friends, do not speak thus. Money is not allowable for the monks, for the sons of the Sakyan. They do not consent to money, nor do they accept it. The monks have given up jewels (*maṇi*) and gold (*suvaṇṇa*), they are free from the stain of using money (*apetajātarūparajata*).” However, Maṇicūḷaka was unable to convince that assembly.<sup>2</sup>

The headman Maṇicūḷaka thus approached the Blessed One, and have paid homage, sat down at one side. Sitting there, the headman Maṇicūḷaka said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, this topic of conversation arose in the king’s court: ‘Is money allowable for the monks, for the sons of the Sakyan? Do the monks consent to and accept money?’ When this was said, venerable sir, I said to the assembly: ‘Friends, do not speak thus. Money is not allowable for the monks, for the sons of the Sakyan. They do not consent

<sup>1</sup> Money (*jātarūparajataṃ*) may be coins of gold, silver, copper, lacquer, or (nowadays) paper money. It refers to any medium that can be freely exchanged for goods. Direct exchange of otherwise allowable goods such as robes for almsfood, or almsfood for building materials is covered by the training rules on bartering (Nissaggiya Pācittiya 19-20) rather than the offence involving confession with forfeiture for accepting money (Nissaggiya Pācittiya 18). Allowable requisites that have been acquired by unallowable means may be returned to the offending monk and used by him if he wishes. However, money that has been accepted must be forfeited to a Saṅgha (at least four bhikkhus). If a lay steward is present, he can take the money and use it to buy allowable requisites for all but the offending monk. If no lay steward is available, the Saṅgha must appoint a trustworthy monk to dispose of the money, who must then throw it away outside of the monastery compound taking no notice of where it falls. Gifts of money to monks are therefore a significant inconvenience for the Saṅgha. Cash donations should be given directly to a lay steward, who can then provide the needs of a monk or monks. The rule on the use of funds given to a lay steward (Nissaggiya Pācittiya 10) is the longest in the Pātimokkha. It makes it abundantly clear that the donated money does not belong to the monk, nor to the Saṅgha, nor to the steward. It still belongs to the donor who should be advised to recover his donation if the steward does not provide any requisites with the funds even after repeated reminders.

<sup>2</sup> This discourse is cited in the Vinaya Cūlavagga, Vin.ii.296-297, to refute the tenth of the ten points practised by the Vajjian monks who had deviated from the true practice of monks. This was the reason for the convening of the Second Buddhist Council of seven hundred monks. For more details please refer to [Money Makes the World Go Round](#).

to money, nor do they accept it. The monks have given up jewels and gold, they are free from the stain of using money.' However, venerable sir, I was unable to convince that assembly. Speaking in that way, venerable sir, was I speaking truthfully in accordance with what you have said and not slandering the Blessed One with falsehoods, such that there may be grounds for criticism."

"Speaking thus, headman, you surely speak truthfully in accordance with what I have said, and do not slander me with falsehoods. Indeed, headman, money is not allowable for the monks, for the sons of the Sakyan, they do not consent to it, nor accept it. The monks, the sons of the Sakyan, have given up jewels and gold, they are free from the stain of using money. Whoever, headman, for whom money is allowable the five strands of sensual pleasure are also allowable. Whoever, headman, for whom the five strands of sensual pleasure are allowable, money is also allowable. If the five strands of sensual pleasure are allowable for anyone, you can definitely know that he lacks the characteristics of a monk, of a son of the Sakyan. I say, headman, that whoever has need of thatch (*tiṇa*) may seek for thatch, whoever has need of wood (*dāru*) may seek for wood, whoever has need of a wagon (*sakaṭaṃ*) may seek for a wagon, whoever has need of a workman (*purisa*) may seek for a workman. However, headman, I do not say that in any way money may be consented to or sought for."

# Ānanda Suttam

(S.iv.400)

## A Discourse to Ānanda on the Self

**419.** On one occasion the wanderer Vacchagotta approached the Blessed One, and having approached he exchanged friendly greetings. Having engaged in polite conversation he sat down at one side. Sitting at one said, the wanderer Vacchagotta said to the Blessed One: “Friend Gotama, is there a self?”

When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

“Then, friend Gotama, is there no self?”

A second time the Blessed One was silent. Then the wanderer Vacchagotta got up from his seat and left.

Then the Venerable Ānanda, not long after the wanderer Vacchagotta had left, said to the Blessed One: “Why, venerable sir, did you no answer the questions asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta?”

“If, Ānanda, when asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta: ‘Is there a self?’ I had replied, ‘There is a self,’ then, Ānanda, I would have been agreeing with those recluses and priests who are eternalists. If, Ānanda, when asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta: ‘Is there no self?’ I had relied, ‘There is no self,’ [401] then I would have been agreeing with those recluses and priests who are annihilationists.

“If, Ānanda, when asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta: ‘Is there a self?’ If I had replied, ‘There is a self,’ would this have been in accordance with the arising of knowledge: ‘All phenomena are not-self?’”

“Indeed not, venerable sir!”

“If, Ānanda, when asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta: ‘Is there no self?’ If I had replied, ‘There is no self,’ then, Ānanda, Vacchagotta who is already confused would have fallen into even greater confusion thinking: ‘Formerly I had a self, but now I do not!’”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This discourse makes it clear that there is no room for any kind of soul in the Buddha’s teachings. The only self in Buddhism is the conventional way of speech that we use to understand one another. There is an entire verse in the Dhammapada, the [Attavagga](#), but it only ever uses “self” in the conventional sense: “By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another.” ([Dhammapada verse 165](#)) for example.



# Nālanda Suttaṃ

(S.v.159)

## Sāriputta's Lion's Roar

378. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Nālandā<sup>1</sup> in the mango grove of Pāvārika. Then the Venerable Sāriputta approached the Blessed One, having approached, he paid homage, and sat at one side. Sitting at one side, he said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir! I have such faith in the Blessed One, that I think there never has been, nor will there be, nor is there now any other, whether a recluse or a Brahmin, who is greater than the Blessed One, that is to say, as regards the higher wisdom."

"Grand and bold are your words, Sāriputta: you have spoken with a bull's voice and roared a lion's roar!<sup>2</sup> Do you then comprehend with your mind the minds of all the Blessed Ones who in ages past have been Arahant Buddhas, are you aware what their conduct was, what was their teaching, what was their wisdom, what their mode of life, and what liberation they attained?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir!"

"Do you then comprehend with your mind the minds of all the Blessed Ones who in the future will be Arahant Buddhas, are you aware what their conduct will be, what will be their teaching, their wisdom, their mode of life, and what liberation they will attain?" [160]

"Indeed not, Venerable sir!"

"Do you then comprehend with your mind the mind of the Arahant Buddha now alive, are you aware what the Blessed One's conduct is, what is his teaching, his wisdom, his mode of life, and what liberation he has attained?"

"Indeed not, Venerable sir!"

"Then, Sāriputta, you do not know the minds of the Arahant Buddhas of the past nor of the future. Why, then, are your words so grand and bold? Why do you speak with a bull's voice and roar the lion's roar?"

"Venerable sir! I do not have the knowledge of the minds of the Arahant Buddhas that existed in the past, will exist in the future, and exist now. I only know the lineage of the faith. Just, Venerable sir, as a king might have a border city, with strong foundations, walls, and with only one gate; and the king might have a watchman there, clever, expert, and wise, to stop all

<sup>1</sup> This is the more usual spelling, but in this discourse it is spelt as Nālanda.

<sup>2</sup> This discourse is repeated in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of the Dighanikāya, and that chapter is named the "Sāriputtasihanādo." There, the Buddha does not congratulate the Venerable Sāriputta or urge him to give the exposition to the monks, nuns, and lay disciples. The same passage is also repeated in the Sampasādanīya Suttaṃ of the Dighanikāya (D.iii.99), where the Venerable Sāriputta goes into greater detail about the excellence of the Blessed One.

strangers and admit only friends. On inspecting the walls all around the city, he might inspect all the joints in the walls to know that there were no gaps where any creature bigger than a cat could get out. He would know that all living things larger than a cat that entered or left the city would have to do so by that gate. Thus only is it, Venerable sir, that I know the lineage of the faith. I know that the Arahant Buddhas of the past, abandoning the five hindrances; knowing all those mental faults that weaken wisdom; establishing their minds firmly in the four foundations of mindfulness; [161] thoroughly developing the seven factors of enlightenment, attained incomparable Enlightenment. I know that the Arahant Buddhas of the times to come will do the same, and I know that the Blessed One, the Arahant Buddha of today has done so now.”

“Well said, Sāriputta! Therefore, Sāriputta, you should repeat this exposition of the Dhamma frequently to the monks, nuns, male and female lay disciples. Those foolish persons, Sāriputta, who have doubts or perplexity regarding the Tathāgata, having heard this exposition, will abandon their doubts and perplexity.”

# Sedaka Suttam

S.v.168

## A Discourse at Sedaka

**385.** Thus have I heard — At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in Sumbha at a market town of Sumbha named Sedaka. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “At one time, monks, a bamboo acrobat set up a bamboo pole and said to his apprentice “frying-pan:” ‘Dear frying-pan,<sup>1</sup> having climbed the bamboo pole stand on my shoulders.’ Having replied, ‘Very well. teacher,’ monks, frying-pan the apprentice climbed the pole and stood on the teacher’s shoulders.<sup>2</sup> Then, monks, the bamboo acrobat said to the apprentice frying-pan: ‘Dear frying-pan, you protect me, and I will protect you. Thus [169] guarding and looking after each other we will show our skill, earn our reward, and descend safely from the bamboo pole.’

When this was said, monks, frying-pan the acrobat’s apprentice said: “No, teacher, it should not be like this. You, teacher, protect yourself, I will protect myself, Thus we will each guard and protect ourselves, show our skill, earn our reward, and descend safely from the bamboo pole.”

“That method, monks, said by frying-pan the acrobat’s apprentice to the teacher should be followed to protect oneself with mindfulness, and to protect others with mindfulness.

“And how, monks, does one, by protecting oneself, protect others? By practising, developing, and making much of the four foundations of mindfulness, thus monks, by protecting oneself, one protects others.

“And how, monks, does one protect others by protecting oneself? By patience, harmlessness, loving-kindness, and compassion (*anudayatāya*) — thus, monks, by protecting others, one protects oneself.

“Thinking ‘I will protect myself,’ monks, the foundations of mindfulness should be practised; Thinking, ‘I will protect others’ the foundations of mindfulness should be practised. By protecting oneself, monks, one protects others.”

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<sup>1</sup> The apprentice may have been male although the gender of the word for frying-pan is female.

<sup>2</sup> The Commentary says that the trick was for the acrobat to balance the pole on his forehead and for the apprentice to climb the pole. The text suggests that they both climbed the pole and the apprentice stood on the teacher’s shoulders.

# Ciraṭṭhiti Suttaṃ

(S.v.171)

## The Duration of the True Dhamma

**388.** Thus have I heard — At one time the Venerable Ānanda and the Venerable Bhadda were dwelling at Pāṭaliputta in the squirrels' feeding ground. Then the Venerable Bhadda, having spent the day meditating in seclusion, approached the Venerable Ānanda. Having approached, he exchanged friendly greetings with the Venerable Ānanda. Having engaged in polite conversation, he sat down at one side. Sitting at one side, the Venerable Bhadda said to the Venerable Ānanda: "What is the root cause, friend Ānanda, what is the condition that the true Dhamma does not endure for a long time after the final passing away of the Tathāgata? What is the root cause, friend Ānanda, what is the condition that the true Dhamma endures for a long time after the final passing away of the Tathāgata?"

"Well said, friend Bhadda! Well said! You are fortunate, Bhadda, your question is skilful in seeking the the path. Thus you ask, friend Bhadda: 'What is the root cause, friend Ānanda, what is the condition that the true Dhamma does not endure for a long time after the final passing away of the Tathāgata? What is the root cause, friend Ānanda, what is the condition that the true Dhamma endures for a long time after the final passing away of the Tathāgata?'"

"It is so, friend."

"If the four foundations of mindfulness, friend, are not developed, not made much of, the true Dhamma does not last long after the final passing away of the Tathāgata. If the four foundations of mindfulness, friend, are developed, made much of, the true Dhamma lasts long after the final passing away of the Tathāgata.

"What four? Here, friend, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having abandoned covetousness and sorrow concerning the world ... contemplating feelings in feelings ... thoughts in thoughts ... mental objects in mental objects, ardent clearly comprehending and mindful, having abandoned covetousness and sorrow concerning the world. If the four foundations of mindfulness, friend, are not developed, not made much of, the true Dhamma does not last long after the final passing away of the Tathāgata. If the four foundations of mindfulness, friend, are developed, made much of, the true Dhamma lasts long after the final passing away of the Tathāgata."

# Vesāli Suttam

S.v.320

## A Discourse at Vesāli

985. Thus have I heard — On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvattthi at the Great Forest in the Peaked Hall. Then the Blessed One on that occasion taught in various ways on repulsiveness, praising repulsiveness, and praising meditation on repulsiveness.<sup>1</sup>

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks — “Monks, I will spend the next fortnight in solitude.<sup>2</sup> No one should approach me, except for the one who brings my almsfood.”

“Very well, Venerable sir,” those monks replied to the Blessed One. No one approached him except for the one who brought him his almsfood.

Then those monks, thinking “The Blessed One has taught in various ways on repulsiveness, praising repulsiveness, and praising meditation on repulsiveness,” dwelt devoted to the meditation on repulsiveness in various ways. They became tormented, ashamed, and disgusted with the body so that in one day ten monks sought for an assassin ... twenty monks ... thirty monks sought for an assassin.

When that fortnight had passed, the Blessed One came out of seclusion and asked the Venerable Ānanda: “Why is the community of monks so depleted?”<sup>3</sup>

“The Blessed One taught the monks in various ways on repulsiveness, praising repulsiveness, and praising meditation on repulsiveness,” the monks dwelt devoted to the meditation on repulsiveness in various ways. They became tormented, ashamed, and disgusted with the body so that in one day ten monks sought for an assassin ... twenty monks ... thirty monks sought for an assassin. It would be good, Venerable sir, if the Blessed One would explain another method whereby the monks would be established in final knowledge.”

“Then, Ānanda, assemble all of the monks dwelling in dependence on Vesāli in the assembly hall.”

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<sup>1</sup> Contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body: head hair (*kesa*), body hair (*loma*), finger-nails (*nakha*), teeth (*danta*), skin (*taco*), flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys; heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs; large intestine, small intestine, stomach, faeces, [brain]; bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat; tears, grease, saliva, snot, synovial fluid, and urine. The Buddha may also have taught the cemetery contemplations.

<sup>2</sup> The monks assemble every fortnight for the Uposatha ceremony.

<sup>3</sup> Although the Blessed One knew the reason, he wished to hear it from Venerable Ānanda.

“Very well, Venerable sir,” the Venerable Ānanda replied to the Blessed One, and he assembled all of the monks dwelling in dependence on Vesāli in the assembly hall. Then he approached the Blessed One, saying: “The community of monks is assembled, Venerable sir. It is time for the Blessed One to do as he sees fit.”

Then the Blessed One approached the assembly hall and, having approached, sat down on a seat that had been prepared for him. Sitting there, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, this concentration on mindfulness of the respiration, when developed (*bhāvito*) and made much of (*bahulikato*), is peaceful (*santo*) and excellent (*pañīto*), a pure (*asecanako*) and blissful (*sukho*) abiding (*vihāro*) that instantly dispels evil unwholesome states that have arisen.”

“It is like, monks, during the last month of the hot season an out of season shower instantly removes any dust (*rajo*) or humidity (*jallam*) from the air. Similarly, monks, this concentration on mindfulness of the respiration, when developed and made much of, is peaceful and excellent, a pure and blissful abiding that instantly dispels evil unwholesome states that have arisen. How, monks, is concentration on mindfulness of the respiration developed and made much of as peaceful and excellent, a pure and blissful abiding that instantly dispels evil unwholesome states that have arisen?

“Here, monks, a monk, having gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty place, having sat down cross-legged, keeping his body erect, establishes mindfulness in front of his face. Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out ... ‘Contemplating relinquishment I will breathe in,’ he trains himself, ‘Contemplating relinquishment I will breathe out,’ he trains himself.<sup>1</sup> Thus, monks, he develops concentration on mindfulness of the respiration, developing it and making much of it, dwelling peacefully, and instantly dispelling evil unwholesome states that have arisen.”

### *About the Vesāli Sutta*

This story is also told in the Vinaya text. The Saṃyuttanikāya Commentary relates the past life story of the monks who were murdered or committed suicide. At one time in the past five hundred hunters lived in the forest for the whole life making a living by killing deer and birds. After death they were reborn in hell. Due to some other wholesome kamma, they were reborn during the Buddha’s time and went forth as monks. Knowing that their previous evil kamma still had some residue waiting to

<sup>1</sup> The Pāli text is elided here. Please refer to [A Manual of Respiration](#) by the Venerable Ledi Sayādaw for the full text and translation of this passage.

give its effect during that fortnight, the Buddha gave them the meditation object on repulsiveness to remove attachment to the body, to ensure a fortunate rebirth after their inevitable death by suicide or homicide.<sup>1</sup>

He therefore left strict instructions not to be disturbed during that fortnight, knowing that a large number of those monks would die as a result of their previous unwholesome kamma, which had to give its result at that time.

This story is often cited as a dilemma.<sup>2</sup> “If the Buddha was omniscient why did he teach the meditation on repulsiveness to those monks, because it made them disgusted with their bodies, and they therefore committed suicide?” The answer is, “If he had taught mindfulness of breathing or some other meditation method, those who were not Noble Ones would not have been able to abandon attachment to their bodies at the time of their death, and as a result they may have been reborn as hungry ghosts. Whatever kind of meditation they were given to practise, they were predestined to die during that fortnight due to their past kamma.”

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<sup>1</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi in his footnotes to this discourse finds it hard to reconcile a volitional action like suicide with the result of a kamma that is predetermined. In general, the law of kamma is not a doctrine of predestination. However, there are cases where the kamma inevitably has to bear fruit. A bullet or even a missile can be deflected, but a meteor cannot. The murder of Mahāmoggallāna is a well-known example. In a previous life he murdered his blind parents by beating them to death, pretending that they had been waylaid by robbers. As a result of that heavy evil kamma he was reborn in hell after his death. During the Buddha’s life time, some residue of that evil kamma remained, so in his final existence he was beaten to death by robbers. In spite of being an Arahant endowed with psychic powers, he could not escape, and even the Buddha was unable to prevent his murder. Suicide is a volitional action, not a resultant. However, urging others to commit suicide is a serious evil kamma that could have the result that one has to endure the same fate oneself. Those who do commit suicide feel that they have no other choice. Some encounter a rescuer who prevents them from taking that fatal last step, but some do not. The difference lies in the momentum and potency of the volition that led to the (inevitable) result.

<sup>2</sup> In his footnotes to this discourse, Bhikkhu Bodhi says that this dilemma is included in the *Milindapañha*. So far, I have been unable to find it there, but it is exactly the kind of dilemma one would expect to find there. There is also the dilemma that the Buddha asked Ānanda why the community of monks was so depleted although he already knew the reason. This was just the Buddha’s way of bringing up the subject.

# **Manussacutiniraya Suttaṃ**

**S.v.474-477**

## **Deceased Human Beings Reborn in Hell**

**1172.** Then the Blessed One picked up a small amount of dust on the tip of his fingernail and said to the monks: “What do you think, monks, which is greater? This small amount of dust on my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“Venerable sir, the great earth is far greater. The small amount of dust on the Blessed One’s fingernail is insignificant. The small amount of dust on the Blessed One’s fingernail is not even a hundredth, a thousandth, or even a hundred thousandth the amount of the great earth.”

“Even so, monks, only a few deceased human beings are born again as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering’.”

## **Manussacutitiracchāna Suttaṃ**

### **Deceased Human Beings Reborn as Animals**

**1173.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased human beings are born again as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn as animals. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering’.” ...

## **Manussacutipettivisayasuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Human Beings Reborn as Hungry Ghosts**

**1174.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased human beings are born again as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering’.” ...

## **Manussacutidevanirayādisuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Human Beings Reborn as Deities...**

**1175-1177.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased human beings are born again as deities; far more numerous are those who are reborn in



hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, 'This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering'." ...

## **Devacutinirayādisuttam**

### **Deceased Deities Reborn in Hell...**

**1178-1180.** ... "Even so, monks, only a few deceased deities are born again as deities; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, 'This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering'." ...

## **Devamanussanirayādisuttam**

### **Deceased Deities Reborn as Human Beings...**

**1181-1183.** ... "Even so, monks, only a few deceased deities are born again as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts ... in hell. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, 'This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering'." ...

## **Nirayamanussanirayādisuttam**

### **Deceased Hell Beings Reborn as Human Beings...**

**1184-1186.** ... "Even so, monks, only a few deceased from hell are born again as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, 'This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering'." ...

## **Nirayadevanirayādisuttam**

### **Deceased Hell Beings Reborn as Deities...**

**1187-1189.** ... "Even so, monks, only a few deceased from hell are born again as deities; far more numerous are those who are reborn as animals ... as hungry ghosts ... in hell. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, 'This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering'." ...

## **Tiracchānāmanussanirayādisuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Animals Reborn as Human Beings...**

**1190-1192.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased animals are reborn as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.’” ...

## **Tiracchānadevanirayādisuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Animals Reborn as Deities...**

**1193-1195.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased animals are reborn as deities; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.’” ...

## **Pettimanussanirayādisuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Hungry Ghosts Reborn as Human Beings...**

**1196-1198.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased hungry ghosts are reborn as human beings; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell ... as animals ... as hungry ghosts. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.’” ...

## **Pettidevanirayādisuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Hungry Ghosts Reborn in Hell...**

**1199-1200.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased hungry ghosts are reborn as deities; far more numerous are those who are reborn in hell. Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.’” ...

## **Pettidevapettivisayasuttaṃ**

### **Deceased Hungry Ghosts Reborn as Hungry Ghosts...**

**1201.** ... “Even so, monks, only a few deceased hungry ghosts are reborn as deities; far more numerous are those who are reborn as hungry ghosts.

Therefore, monks, devote yourselves to contemplating, ‘This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering’.” ...

Thus spoke the Blessed One. The monks rejoiced in what the Blessed One had said.

### ***About the Chapter on Repetition of the Five Destinies***

This last chapter of the *Samyuttanikāya* — the *Pañcagatipeyyālavaggo* — repeatedly stresses the great rarity of obtaining rebirth in the human realm. Even if reborn in the human or celestial realms after death, the next existence after that is much more likely to be in the lower realms. Only Stream-winners are guaranteed not to be reborn in lower realms, so all Buddhists should strive to attain, at the very least, insights on the preliminary path of practice leading to the attainment of the Noble Path. Only this will protect them from falling into the lower realms.

Similar discourses are given in the *Jambudīpapeyyālo* of Chapter Four of the *Book of Ones*, comparing the few lovely parks in the Continent of the Rose Apple (*Jambudīpa*, or India) to the vast areas of wilderness. Among human beings who are fortunate to be reborn as human beings in India during the time of the Buddha, very few gain faith in the Dhamma, penetrate its meaning, practise in accordance with it, and gain realisation, etc.

One should reflect wisely on [\*The Simile of the Blind Turtle\*](#).

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