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Te,vijja Sutta

The Discourse on Those With the 3 Knowledges | D 13
 Theme: Problems with the Creator-God idea and theistic prayer
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2002, rev 2010

Faith means not wanting to know what is true. (Friedrich Nietzsche)¹

1 Sutta significance

1.1 SCOPE OF THE SUTTA

1.1.1 The Tevijja Sutta (also translated as “the Discourse on the 3 Knowledges”) is the last of the thirteen suttas of the first section or volume—the **Sīla-k,khandha Vagga** (Chapter on the Group of Moral Virtue)—of the Dīgha Nikāya. In the Introduction to his translation of this Sutta (D:RD 1:298), T W Rhys Davids notes that this is the only sutta of the thirteen (Dīgha bk 1), whose teaching does *not* lead up to arhat-hood. It leads up only to the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).² [2.2.1.2]

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

¹ “‘Glaube’ heisst Nicht-wissen-wollen, was wahr ist.” F Nietzsche (1844-1900), *The Antichrist* (1895) §52.
<http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/quotes/popular-quotes.htm>.

² **Bodhi** makes this observation in his JBE review of **R Gombrich**, *How Buddhism Began*, 1996: “Gombrich locates the Buddha’s most radical departure from brahminism in his decision to make action or kamma rather than being the key to understanding existential reality. He stresses the revolutionary nature of the Buddha’s teaching on kam-ma, which he says ‘turned the brahmin ideology upside down and ethicized the universe,’ thus marking ‘a turning point in the history of civilisation’ (p 51). Nevertheless, Gombrich carries his comparison between the two systems to an untenable conclusion. In an extended discussion of the Tevijja Sutta (D 13) he contrasts the Buddha’s descrip-tion of the four divine abodes (*Brahma, vihāra*) as the ‘path to union with Brahmā’ with the Upanishadic dictum that the way to attain Brahman is through knowledge of the true self. This, he says, once again illustrates the distinction between the ethical standpoint of Buddhism and the ontological orientation of brahminism. So far, so good. But Gombrich then goes on to argue that for the Buddha ‘union with Brahmā’ is simply a metaphor for Nibbāna, and thus he concludes ‘the Buddha taught that kindness...was a way to salvation’ (p 62). Such an inference, however, cannot stand, for in many texts the Buddha declares the divine abodes to be inadequate for attaining Nibbāna (eg D 17, M 83, M 97, etc.); it would also mean that *paññā*, insight or wisdom, is not needed for final liberation. Gombrich is not unaware of the texts that contradict his position, but he casually dismisses them as the work of ‘the compilers of other suttas’ (p 61). The contrary evidence, however, is just too weighty to allow such an easy way out.” (JBE 4 1997:294; emphasis added)

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE SUTTA

1.2.1 In the **Te,vijja Sutta** (D 13), the Buddha mentions only those teachings he deems applicable to level of his audience. In the **Udumbārikā Sīhanāda Sutta** (D 25), for example, the Buddha stops his teaching at the “knowledge of the arising and disappearance of beings” (or karma), since his audience could only then understand up to that level (D 25.19).

1.2.2 It is evident from the Te,vijja Sutta and from teachings like those in the **Mahā Govinda Sutta** (D 19) that “companionship [communion] with Brahmā” (*brahma,sahavyatā*) [§37-39] simply means *rebirth amongst the host of Brahmā*, and not mystical union with Brahman, a notion that is totally alien to Indian Buddhism. Furthermore, “companionship with Brahmā” or rebirth in the brahma heaven, is never the final goal of Buddhist training (D 19.61).

1.2.3 This sutta is a good example of the spiritual turmoil and openness that were characteristic of the Buddha’s time. Not only was there a reform movement (Skt *nāstika*, P *n’atthika*), comprising the wandering recluses (Skt *śramaṇa*, P *samaṇa*) as against the established religion (Skt *āstika*, P *atthika*) of brahmins (*brāhmaṇa*) who had religious monopoly of the Vedas, but even within the Vedic system itself, there were rumblings of spiritual discontent and uncertainty, as exemplified by Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja in this sutta.³

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIVINE ABODES

1.3.1 The Sutta’s key spiritual theme

1.3.1.1 The Te,vijja Sutta has the following themes: (1) the Buddhist response to brahmanical theism (and generally to all God-views) [4.2]; (2) cultivating dhyaṇa through the divine abodes;⁴ and (3) the application of the divine abodes to awakening. These themes are respectively philosophical, meditative and spiritual (or soteriological). The first two themes, as noted, have been discussed elsewhere. In fact, of the three these, the third—the spiritual and soteriological theme—is surely the most important, especially in terms of our practice. And it is this spiritual theme that we shall discuss here.

1.3.1.2 In fact, the thesis of the whole Sutta teaching, is declared by the two young brahmin students, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja (the Sutta interlocutors) as that of “**the only straight path, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā**” [§§4, 5 etc]. More simply stated in modern language to reflect a key issue in theistic religions today would be: “the only way to God.”

Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja present this question before the Buddha, not as a challenge, but to learn from him, as a wiser third party: “**wherever he tells us, we shall accept**” [§7.2]. The Buddha’s answer takes up practically the rest of the Sutta. First, the Buddha debunks the brahminical conception of Brahmā (Almighty God) [§§12-36], and then he explains the Buddhist mental training in detail [§§36-81].

1.3.1.3 Interestingly, only first two of the 3 trainings⁵—moral virtue [§§37-63] and mental concentration [§§63-81]—are presented in the Sutta. We could perhaps surmise (since no reason is mentioned) that the two young brahmins—being highly intelligent students of religion—would benefit more from an instructive exposition on how true salvation is attained, rather than listing the benefits of the third train-

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

⁴ On dhyaṇa and the divine abodes, see **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5 esp (7.4).

⁵ On the 3 trainings, see **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6.

ing—that of wisdom—much of which the learned youths are probably already familiar with, at least in theory.

The brahmin youths already know of the Buddha’s reputation as a wise teacher, “**that the recluse Gotama knows the way to companionship with Brahmā**” [§37], and so seeks an answer from the Buddha. This fact is remarkable in a number of ways. It means that the Buddha (at least in the minds of the two brahmin youths) is a knowledgeable teacher on par with other wise brahmins.

At the start of the Sutta, we see the two brahmin youths debating with one another over whose teacher actually teaches the way to Brahmā, and they cannot agree on this [§§3-7]. In other words, they have spiritual doubts in the brahminical system itself. In fact, as we well know numerous such well-informed brahmins would turn to the Buddha’s teaching and become great monks and spiritual figures. The Buddha’s times was one of great spiritual search and social growth⁶—and he has all the right and liberating answers for those who would listen.

1.4 THE DIVINE ABODES AND AWAKENING

1.4.1 The divine abodes and self-mastery

1.4.1.1 The Aṭṭhaka, nāgara Sutta (M 52) gives a list of 11 ways (in terms of meditation) to nirvana or “the death-free” (*amata*) (that is, free of the duality of death and birth). These 11 bases of meditation are the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 divine abodes, and the 3 formless attainments.⁷ They are presented as “doors,” which are opened, as it were, by our regarding each of them as being “(mentally) constructed [mind-made], intentionally formed.”⁸ What is constructed and intentionally formed is impermanent, subject to ending.”⁹

1.4.1.2 Note that the 4 divine abodes are listed amongst the 11 bases of meditation, such as in **the Aṭṭhaka, nāgara Sutta** (M 52) [1.4.1.1]. How are they meditatively cultivated so that we attain spiritual wisdom? First, we should cultivate lovingkindness (indeed, for those of us who are beginners, we can stay with lovingkindness for as long as we like) to attain some level of inner stillness, if not dhyana. We should familiarize ourself with this inner stilling, and sustain it as long as we can.¹⁰

Then, when we feel quite confident with meditation calm and bliss, upon emerging from it, we reflect that those beautiful peaceful states (such as lovingkindness, compassion, gladness or equanimity), good as they may be, are mind-made,¹¹ and are, as such, impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. If we

⁶ See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2013 §4.

⁷ On the omission of the 12th state, ie, the bases of neither-perception-nor-non-perception” (*n’eva, saññā, nāsaññā’yatana*), see **Aṭṭhaka, nāgara S** (M 52,14.6), SD 41.2. See also SD 38.5 (8.3.2).

⁸ *Idam pi kho paṭhamam jhānam abhisañkhatam abhisañcetaṭṭhaka*. The phrase “(mentally) constructed [mind-made], intentionally formed” (*abhisañkhatam abhisañcetaṭṭhaka*) here shows that a dhyana is a conditioned state primarily conditioned by intention (*cetanā*) (MA 3:13). The term **abhisañcetaṭṭhaka** (*abhi + sam + cetayita*), “raised into consciousness, thought out, intended, planned” (PED), is pp of *abhisañcetaṭṭhaka* (*caus of abhi+sam + √cit*, “to perceive, know, appear”), “to think out, to plan” (CPD, DPL), of *abhisanceteti* (*abhi + sam + ceteti*), “to raise into consciousness, think out, devise, plan” (PED). Here, on a dhyana context, only the passive sense “raised into consciousness” applies, because thinking and knowing as we understand them do not arise during dhyana: see **The Buddha discovered dhyana** @ SD 33.1b (6.2).

⁹ *Yam kho pana kiñci abhisañkhatam abhisañcetaṭṭhaka, tad aniccaṃ nirodha, dhamman’ti*. See **Aṭṭhaka, nāgara S** (M 52,14.6) n, SD 41.2 (2.1).

¹⁰ See SD 38.3 (4.8) “One should keep to this mindfulness”; SD 38.5 (3.3) Lovingkindness as engagement.

¹¹ The reflection on the “mind-made” (*mano, maya*) is often applied to meditative states, esp dhyanas: see **Aṭṭhaka, nāgara S** (M 52,4.3 etc), SD 41.2.

meditate regularly, or are habitually mindful, there will often be moments (they, as a rule, arise spontaneously) when we notice the pervasive “rise and fall” pattern in our experiences.

We do not need to be good meditators to be mindful. However, we must, with some effort, view our present experience as if we are meditating. Whatever we see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think, are mind-made, constructed willfully or unconsciously.¹² When we habitually reflect in this way, then we are unlikely to be drawn in measuring a pleasant experience as being *desirable*, an unpleasant experience as being *undesirable*, or to *ignore* a neutral experience. We see them all as being impermanent.¹³

1.4.1.3 When we reflect in this way, that deep meditative state of lovingkindness, good as it is, is mind-made, impermanent, subject to ending [1.4.1.1], in due course, it becomes a window that opens into the true reality. And as we sustain and deepen such an experience of impermanence, and its attendant bliss, we penetrate deeper into the nature of true reality.

According to any of the 10 suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25), the Buddha guarantees that such a practice, whether done by one with faith or through wisdom, would bring him streamwinning in this life itself, if not certainly at the moment of passing away.¹⁴ It is with this understanding, we should read the Buddha’s closing statement in the Tevijja Sutta, when he says:

Then certainly, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk with self-mastery should after death, when the body has broken up, attains companionship with Brahmā, who too has self-mastery—this is possible. [§81.2]

1.4.1.4 Broadly, “self-mastery” (*vasa,vatti*) here refers to mental mastery, as in the expression, “he (lets his mind) masters himself” (*vasaṃ vatteti*, M 1:214). On a deeper level, *vasa,vatti* refers to overcoming the defilements (ThaA 2:136), and also is a quality of the Tathagata (ApA 17*).¹⁵ This means, essentially, that he has eliminated the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion, a sense which is applicable in the Tevijja Sutta context.

The phrase *vasaṃ vatteti*, here usually rendered as “he has or wields power,” appear in the description of the 8th kind of “various psychic powers” (*iddhi,vidhā*), that is, “He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahma world.”¹⁶ We can still translate the phrase as “he has self-mastery” over his body up to as far as the Brahma world. Then, we understand that the phrase refers to the mastery of the 4 dhyanas, which allows us to have such a psychic power.

1.4.1.5 The point remains that such psychic powers are not “blessing” from some higher power, but self-cultivated through attaining the 4 dhyanas. In terms of dhyana, the cultivation of lovingkindness, or compassion or of gladness bring us only to the 3rd dhyana, while the cultivation of equanimity can bring us to the 4th dhyana.¹⁷

¹² See **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b; also **Free will and Buddhism**, SD 7.7.

¹³ Further see **Nimitta and anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14.

¹⁴ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

¹⁵ Māra also uses this title, Vasavattī, here meaning lord of all beings, those realms up to his own, Paranimitta,-vasavattī: see J 1:69; ApA 68.

¹⁶ *Yāva brahma,lokā pi kāyena va saṃvatteti* [Be *vasaṃ vatteti* throughout; so too at M 12/1:69,18]. This line comes from the “Psychic powers” pericope: see eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 3,89), SD 8.10; **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,4.1), SD 1.2.

¹⁷ Vism 9.118/324. See also “The 40 meditation methods,” SD 15.1 (Fig 8.1).

1.4.2 How lovingkindness limits karma

1.4.2.1 We will now briefly examine how lovingkindness limits the effects of karma, that is, as stated in the underlined phrase found in this refrain, thus:

Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the 4 quarters, so by this cultivation [meditation], Vāseṭṭha, by this **freedom of the mind** through lovingkindness, any karma done in a limited way neither remains nor persists there.

This, Vāseṭṭha, is the way to companionship with Brahma [God].

(D 13,76-79/1:250-251), SD 1.8

The Commentary on the Brahma, vihāra Sutta (A 10.208) says that here “**limited karma**” (*pamāṇa-katam kammaṃ*) refers to sense-sphere karma (*kāmāvacara, kamma*) (AA 5:77). The Commentary on the Saṅkha, dhama Sutta (S 42.8) explains that “When (simple) lovingkindness is said, this can be interpreted either as access concentration or dhyana, but when it is qualified as ‘**freedom of mind**’ (*ceto, vimutti*), it definitely means dhyana or meditation dhyana (*jhāna*)” (SA 3:105). The point is that if a person masters the “freedom of mind by lovingkindness,” that is, at the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this dhyana attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm.¹⁸

1.4.2.2 On a simpler level, this means that if we habitually cultivate lovingkindness and send it out to others, we are unlikely to consciously break any of the 5 precepts. Lovingkindness strengthens and inspires us to keep the precepts more fully.

If we do break any precept, it is likely to be a result of a lapse of mindfulness, when the potential result is less heavy than that of a deliberate conscious breach. Moreover, when we realize that we have broken a precept, we are likely to feel remorseful, which would further strengthen our resolve in correcting ourselves by being more mindful and restrained.¹⁹

1.5 NATURAL ADAPTATION (SUTTA HIGHLIGHTS)

1.5.1 “Companionship with Brahma.” In a sense, the Buddha accepts the brahminical teaching of “companionship with Brahmā” (*brahmā, saḥavyatā*) [§§37-39], even as rebirth amongst the brahmas [1.2.2]. But any such acceptance is on his own terms. This is what we can call his method of “natural adaptation,”²⁰ by which he accepts popular or meaningful stories, terms, and practices from outside, but adapts them to be fully serve as patently Buddhist phraseology and practice.²¹

1.5.2 The key teaching is on how we can walk the true path to companionship with Brahmā. The Buddha answers the question of the two brahmins youths in their own language, step by step guiding them from the familiar which befuddles them to the unfamiliar which liberates them. [1.5.7]

1.5.3 The 5 parables. Firstly, the Buddha points to the contradiction between the brahmins’ life-style and the God (Brahma) that they proclaim. How can the brahmins, who are evil in their hearts, speak for

¹⁸ See Vism 309-311/9.49-58; S:B 1149 n346; A:ÑB 315 n73.

¹⁹ On limiting karma through the divine abodes, see **Karaja, kāya Brahma, vihātra S** (A 10.208, 1-3/5:300 f) + SD 2.1 (2). See also SD 38.5 (8.2).

²⁰ SD 39.3 (3.3.4).

²¹ On brahminical terms buddhicized by the Buddha, see SD 12.1 (6).

a God who is good? In fact, none of these brahmins, since ancient times, has ever seen God! [§§12-14]! They are all like the blind leading the blind [§15].

The Buddha uses four other parables [3] to show how they futilely supplicate an imaginary being they have never met [§§16-18], how they claim to know God when they have no idea at all how he looks like [§§19-20], how none of them have been in companionship with God, but speak of him as they did [§§21-23], and how, when they are themselves helpless and unsaved, claim to be able to help and save others [§§24-26]!

1.5.4 Ungodly ways. The ancient brahmins (like many of the priests and gurus of today) are, in fact, still bound by the 5 cords of sensual pleasures [§§27-28]. And they are still overwhelmed by the 5 mental hindrances [§§29-30]. As such, how can they ever meditate effectively to experience spiritual bliss and cultivate insight wisdom?

Moreover, the brahmins have wives (and wealth) but the God they proclaim does not. The brahmins have hate in their hearts, but the God they proclaim does not. The brahmins have ill will in their hearts, but the God they proclaim does not. The brahmins have defiled hearts, but the God they proclaim does not. [§§31-32]

That being the case, the scared texts that these brahmins have put together—the Three Vedas—are more like a desert, a jungle, or a disaster [§36; 2.2.1.2].

1.5.5 Eagerness to learn. The two young brahmins then ask the Buddha if it's true that he knows the direct way to companionship with Brahma [§§37-39] The Buddha replies that his familiarity with the Brahma heaven is like that of a native who know his village inside out. The two brahmin youths then request that the Buddha instruct them so.

1.5.6 Moral training. The Buddha opens his instructions with how we renounce for the sake of “recluse-ship” [§§40-42]. Then follows a very old list of moral precepts constituting “moral development” [§§43-63]. These prepare the recluse for “mental training,” comprising sense-restraint [§64], mindfulness and clear comprehension [§65], and contentment [§66].

1.5.7 Cultivation of the divine abodes. Then with the abandoning of the mental hindrances (with parables) [§§67-74], he attains **the first dhyana** [§75]. No other dhyana is mentioned, because the first three divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion, and gladness—can only be cultivated to the level of the 3rd dhyana [§§76-81]. Only the cultivation of equanimity leads to the 4th dhyana [1.2.1.5].

The Buddha then makes a very important statement, effectively saying that he not only well knows the direct way to Brahma, but he and many of his disciples have done so! This teaching is simple but profoundly true: like Brahma, the Buddha's fully awakened disciples (represented by “monks”) do not have wives (they are celibate), they have not hate or ill will, and their minds are undefiled. [3.6]

Clearly, such disciples (that is, the arhats) have self-mastery [1.1.4.1] like Brahma. As such, the arhats (including the Buddha himself) are “Brahma-become” (***brahma, bhūta***),²² equal with God, so to speak. However, since Brahma or God is not awakened the Buddha and the arhats are beyond God or the gods (***atideva***).²³ As such, sometimes, the Buddha, as our awakened teacher, is known as “the God beyond the gods” (***devâtideva***).²⁴

²² Of the Buddha: D 3:84; M 1:111, 3:195, 223; S 4:94; A 5:226; It 57. Of arhats: A 2:206; S 3:83. As the way to awakening, *brahma.bhūta,yāna*: S 4:5; J 6:57. For other usages, see PED 493, sv.

²³ Tha 489; Miln 277,11.

²⁴ Vv 64.27; J 4:158,23*; Ap 253,12.

We should see such appellations simply as a skillful means to show the God-believers, that the Buddha, on account of his full awakening, cannot be said to belong to this world or the heavens. While God-believers trouble themselves to prove God's "existence," the Buddha declares that the true saints are beyond existence and non-existence: they have attained nirvana.

1.6 NATURAL ADAPTATION TODAY

1.6.1 Where we are daily chained or challenged by Christian evangelism, where we are even ungenerously told that our Buddhist path is one of "sin" and so on, the following **natural adaption** is a great way of responding to triumphalism with spirituality. Both Jews and Christians deeply love this Bible verse, where Micah (an 8th-century-BCE prophet in Judah) writes that God teaches man "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6.8).²⁵

To Buddhists, "to do justice" is to practise what is just (*dhamma*) to one self and all beings, that is, to respect life, other's property, the body, the truth and that our heart be unclouded. This is the essence of the 5 precepts incumbent upon all Buddhist practitioners.²⁶ Moral justice means that we value life (it gives meaning to everything else), happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom—all of which entails an appreciative awareness of being and of all beings.

The phrase "to love kindness (or mercy)" contains the Hebrew word *hesed*, which means "loyal love" or "lovingkindness." Firstly and habitually, we must learn to accept ourselves just as we are and others just as they are. When others, even and especially those who do not deserve it, we must show compassion; for we fail ourselves most when we have done to others what we would not do to ourself.

1.6.2 What does it mean to "**walk with God**"? It means several important things. First, that the prevailing power of enmity in us has weaken or abandoned. No one can do this—not even God—can do this if we do not allow it. So, we must be humble to allow our own goodness to prevail: this is *what* (not who) God really is.

Secondly, we have reconciled with ourself: we have accepted responsibility for our own actions. We have realized that we are the master of our own spiritual destiny: for, who else could that master be? (Dh 160, 380).

Thirdly, it means that we see and accept the impermanence of all things in this world and universe. For, we are walking every moment of our lives: we are moving with impermanence, change, becoming other. From change comes meaning and purpose. Change is in our body, our language, in everything we do, and everything around us. Whatever was, is or will be is changing: to exist is to change. In this sense, God is truth: the truth of change, the eternity of change, that change always is.

Finally, walking with God means that we are making progress in the divine life (*brahma, cariya*), the holy life, the path to awakening. Walking requires progressive action, motion, direction and goal—the 4 truths of any kind of willful action. In fact, in **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13), the two Brahma-believing brahmin youths ask the Buddha, "How to walk with Brahma (Almighty God)?"

1.6.3 The Buddha teaches them all that we should know **godliness** (*devatā*), or at least, should know *of* it. We should love ourself, and love others as we love ourself. We should be compassionate to others, be kind to them especially when they do not deserve it. We should rejoice in the goodness of others; be happy at the happiness of others. And, even then, we should look on with humility at our work: it is never finished.

²⁵ The New Oxford Annotated Bible.

²⁶ For an analysis of the precepts, incl values, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41), SD 5.7 (2). On moral values, see SD 1.5 (2.7+8).

No matter how much love we show, there is still the unloved; no matter how compassionate we are, there are still the undeserving who need succour. No matter how much we rejoice in the good of others, many more remain alone in their good. No matter how loving, compassionate or appreciative we are, there are many more who move in their own sowing deeds and harvesting fruits. And yet the time will come for every being find themselves: for self-mastery, that's the only journey worth walking.

At the close of his teaching to the two brahmin youths, the Buddha declares, the one with self-mastery “should after death, when the body has broken up, gain companionship with Brahma, who, too, has self-mastery—this is possible.” [§81.2]

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

Religion, not matter how profound or inspiring, is a human construction of our faith in the potential of rising above our present predicaments. However, God-centred religions, as history has painfully witnessed repeatedly, tends to march on power so that when left to its own devices it wreaks terrible destruction and widespread pains.²⁷

The Te,vijja Sutta advocates the practice of lovingkindness, especially for erstwhile God-believers who are turning to the Dharma for spiritual development. Even for those who practice *only* lovingkindness without cultivating insight meditations, they are capable of going to heaven, or having happy rebirths here in this world. In other words, through lovingkindness and a moral life, anyone can go to heaven. The Buddha's teaching, however, offers more, that is, the way to nirvana.²⁸

2 Did the Buddha know the Vedas?

2.1 THE VEDAS

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

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

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

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

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

²⁷ See eg **Kakacūpama S** (M 21) @ SD 38.1 (3.2).

²⁸ See **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98 = Sn 3.9) @ SD 37.1 (1.3.5).

2.1.2 UPANISADS

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

(7) the Atharva-veda (mostly apotropaic spells and chants).²⁹

2.1.2.2 Some of the great 19th century scholars of Buddhism (like Louis de la Vallée Poussin, *La morale bouddhique*, 1927:12) thought that the Buddha had no super-knowledge of the Vedas.³⁰ The Tevijja Sutta, in fact, mentions the names of some of the early Upanishads (still in their evolving stages)—Ādhvarika, Taittirīya, Chāndogya and Bahvṛcā [§10]³¹ and also the names of early Vedic sages—Aṣṭaka, Vāmaka, Vāma,deva, Viśvā,mitra, Jamad-agni, Aṅgi,rasa, Bhāra,dvāja, Vāsiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, Bhagu³² [§13].

2.1.2.3 Jayatilleke, in his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, gives the following concordance for the Ādhvarika, Taittirīya, Chāndogya and Bahvṛcā brahmins.³³

| <u>School</u> | <u>Text</u> |
|--|--|
| Ṛgveda-bavhārijā Brāhmaṇā (Bahvṛcas) | Bahvṛcas Brāhmaṇa (lost) but incorporated in the Aitareya and Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇas. |
| Sāma,veda-chandogā Brāhmaṇa (Chandoga) | Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa. |
| Yajur,veda-tittiriyā Brāhmaṇā (Taittiriya) | Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa. |
| Yajur,veda-addhariyā Brāhmaṇa (Ādhvaryu) | Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. |

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

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

2.1.2.5 The Upanishads (“close-up sessions”) are speculative texts, numbering some 108, containing elaborations in prose and verse of the Vedas. They record the views of a succession of brahminical

²⁹ On the Vedas, see Dictionary of Buddhism: Veda, & Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 1989:27 f. For refs, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedas>.

³⁰ On the Vedas, see prec n. On spirituality and the 4 classes, see **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8, esp (6).

³¹ These are the original Sanskrit forms of the Pali: *Addhariyā*, *Tittiriyā*, *Chandokā* and *Brahmacariyā*. According to T W Rhys Davids, the first three were skilled in liturgy generally and probably referred to those adept in the Yajur, Sāma and Ṛg Vedas respectively, and notes that “If we adopt the other reading [ie *Brahmacariyā*] for the last in the list, then those priests who relied on liturgy, sacrifice or chant would be contrasted with those who had ‘gone forth’ as *religieux*, either as *Tāpasas* or as *Bhikshus*.” (D:RD 1:303 n2).

³² See V 1:245; D 1:104, 238, 242; A 3:224, 229; M 2:200. For identification of these seers' names, see *Vinaya Texts* (tr Rhys Davids & Oldenberg) 2:130 n3 & V:H 4:337 nn5-9. See also Shults 2013.

³³ Jayatilleke 1963:479-481. See further Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 2005:132-136.

teachers and seers who were active as early as c1000 BCE and who flourished c600 BCE. They represent the final stage in the tradition of the Vedas, so the teaching based on them is known as the Vedānta (Skt “conclusion of the Veda”).

The special concerns of the Upanishads include “a spiritual ultimate reality underlying the phenomenal world, known as Brahman or Ātman; the individual soul is essentially one with this reality; we are in bondage due to ignorance of our true nature; and, finally, we can, and should, try to win liberation by attaining true insight.”³⁴ Such ideas form the fundamentals of Hindu thought, but which early Buddhism strongly rejects.

2.1.3 The Buddha knew the brahminical texts. The Pali Commentaries (like those of Buddhaghosa and of Dhammapāla), however, make no mention of the Vedas or the Upanishads, or chose not to do so. Scholars like K R Norman³⁵ and his pupil, R S Gombrich,³⁶ have clearly shown again and again that the Buddha was well aware of the brahminical texts.³⁷ Here are some example of the Buddha’s responses to the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads:

| <u>Brahminical sources</u> | <u>Buddhist responses</u> |
|---|---|
| Ṛgveda 10.90.12 (Puruṣa,śūkta) | The brahmins originating from the mouth of cosmic Man: D 27,3 f/3:81 = M 93,5/2:148. |
| gveda 10.169.1 | Blessing for cows: A 7.44 (closing). ³⁸ |
| Chāndogya Upaniṣad & Bṛhad,- āraṇyaka Upaniṣad ³⁹ | Yajñavalkya’s idea (6 wrong views): M 22,15-16; V 1:14, 19. |
| Bṛhad,āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.5 | <i>Puṇya, karman</i> & <i>pāpa, karman</i> (as purifying ritual) becomes “volitional act” (A 63.11/3:415). |
| Bṛhad,āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.1-3 | Brahmā as creator of the universe: D 1.2.2-6; M 49.4; S 6.581; J 405. |
| Bṛhad,āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.2.13 | “Gautama, woman is a fire ...”: A 7.44. ⁴⁰ |
| Manu, smṛti 2.231 | The 3 fires: A 7.44; S 35.28 = V 1:23-25 (Āditta, pariyāya Sutta). ⁴¹ |
| Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa; Gṛhya Sūtra | Worship of the six directions (Sigāl’ovāda Sutta, D 31). ⁴² |

³⁴ Pratap Chandra, “Was early Buddhism influenced by the Upaniṣads?” *Philosophy East and West* 21,3 1971: 317-324.

³⁵ See eg K R Norman, “Theravāda Buddhism and Brahmanical Hinduism: Brahmanical terms in a Buddhist guise,” 1991:193-200.

³⁶ See eg R Gombrich, “Recovering the Message of the Buddha,” 1990:5-20. Gombrich further discusses how the Buddha’s teachings are formulated as a response to certain Brahmanical teachings in: *Theravāda Buddhism*, 1988:60-86; “Recovering the Buddha’s Message,” 1990: 5-20; “The Buddha’s Book of Genesis?” 1992: 159-178. On the Brahman doctrine of the early Upanishads and the Tevijja S, see *How Buddhism Began*, 1996:58-62.

³⁷ See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (3.2).

³⁸ See Gombrich 1990: 19 f.

³⁹ See Norman 1981: 20; Gombrich 1990: 14 f.

⁴⁰ See Gombrich 1990: 17-20.

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

⁴² See C A F Rhys Davids in D:RD 3:170 for refs (Intro to her tr of **Sigāl’ovāda S**). Also Michel Clasquin, 1995.

2.2 TE,VIJJA

2.2.1 The claims of the brahmins

2.2.1.1 THE 3 FALSE KNOWLEDGES. The Te,vijja Sutta is a declaration of a total and certain rejection of the Three Vedas [2.1] of the ancient brahmins. It disproves and denounces the *tri,vidyā*, the 3 “knowledges” or 3 Vedas⁴³—Ṛg, Sāma and Yajur Vedas—of the brahmanical system, put together by the early seers basically as sort of speculation about the world, life and reality. The later brahmins, as ancient India became more urbanized, used these sacred texts as a justification for entrenching themselves as the dominant class to which all others are subservient. This is an example of how religious ideology (especially the God-idea) and religious institutions (especially rituals) and are used for social control and economic opportunism.

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

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

The Sutta climax is the Buddha’s declaring the Three Vedas to be “a desert, a jungle, a disaster” [§36]. They are a “desert,” because they have nothing to offer for spiritual liberation, but used by the brahmins to exploit society; they are a “jungle” because they are more forest than trees, and we could easily be lost on account of their speculative and religious nature; and they are a “disaster” because ideologies based on such teachings will continue to blind priests and believers to exploit society, uphold a class system, demean women and drug the mind with grand falsities.

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

2.2.2 The 3 superknowledges. Unequivocally rejecting the Three Vedas of the brahmins [2.2.1], the Buddha elsewhere⁴⁴ teaches (by way of “symbolic adaptation”) the arhat’s **te,vijjā** of the 3 superknowledges (*abhiññā*), namely,⁴⁵

(1) the knowledge of the recollection of past lives (*pubbe.nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*),

⁴³ After the Buddha, a fourth, the Atharva Veda, was added. On the Vedas, see Intro (1) n & Basham 1989: 27 f.

⁴⁴ V 2:183; M 2,10/1:8, 9.70/1:55; D 33,1.10(58)/3:220, 34,1.4(10)/3:275; M 36,38-44/1:2478-249, 39,19-21/-1:278-280, 51,24-26/1:347 f, 65,18-21/1:441 f, 76,47-50/1:522, 79,41-44/2:38 f, 101,42-45/2:226 f; S 6.5/1:146*, 8.7/1:192*, 8.9/1:194*; A 3.59,2-4/1:166 f; Sn 656; cf M 9,70/1:55, 112,20/3:36 (only *āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa* mentioned).

⁴⁵ On the 3 super-knowledges, see Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S (M 27,23-25), SD 40.5.

- (2) the divine eye or knowledge of the arising and passing away of beings (according to their karma) (*cutūpapāta,ñāṇa*), and
 (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*).⁴⁶

One of the 4 types of arhats traditionally mentioned in the Suttas possesses these 3 knowledges, that is, the “3-knowledge arhat” (*te,vijja arahata*).

2.2.3 The 4 types of arhats as follows:⁴⁷

- (1) The 6-knowledge arhat (*cha-l-abhiñña arahata*), has attained, with samatha as basis, four or more dhyanas. The 6 knowledges are:⁴⁸
1. psychic powers (*iddha,vidhā*);
 2. the divine ear (*dibba,sota*) or clairaudience;
 3. mind-reading (*paracitta,vijānana,ñāṇa*) or telepathy;
 4. retrocognition (*pubbe,nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;
 5. the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
 6. the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)
- (2) The 3-knowledge arhat (*te,vijja arahata*), who, with samatha as basis, have attained 4 or more dhyanas. The three knowledges are:⁴⁹
1. retrocognition (*pubbe,nivāsānussati,ñāṇa*), that is, the recollection of past lives;
 2. the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and
 3. the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (D 3:281; M 1:34; A 1:255, 258, 3:17, 280, 4:421)
- (3) The arhat freed both ways (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*), attained through direct experience and full mastery of the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*)⁵⁰ or the “9 dhyanas.”⁵¹ This kind of saint is fully accomplished in meditation. (M 1:160, 174, 204, 209; A 2:183)
- (4) The wisdom-freed arhat (*paññā,vimutta*), any or all of the 4 dhyanas as samatha basis, and the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*), that ends rebirth. (M 3:36)

⁴⁶ The term *āsava* (lit “influx, outflow”; fig “canker”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāśava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is prob older and is found more freq in the suttas (D 33,1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these influxes (*āsava-k,khaya*) is equivalent of arhathood. See D 3:220, 275; A 2:163, 165; A 1:146, 192, 194; cf V 2:83; Sn 594, 656. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁴⁷ On the 4 types of arhats, further see SD 10.16 (14). See also de Silva 1978:143 f.

⁴⁸ For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

⁴⁹ For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

⁵⁰ On the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*), see **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15), SD 5.17 (10).

⁵¹ Properly known as the 9 progressive abodes (*anupubba,vihāra*), comprising: the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless dhyanas (*arūpa jhāna*), and the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha* or *nirodha,samāpatti*) (D 3:265, 290; A 4:410). These are different from the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*) (see prec n).

3 Parables of the Tevijja Sutta

3.0 THE 5 MAJOR PARABLES. The Buddha’s arguments against the Brahmanical claims about the nature of Brahmā and “companionship with Brahmā”⁵² are entirely founded on 5 major parables (or sets of parables):

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

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

3.1 THE 1ST PARABLE—that of the file of blind men [§15]—is “a criticism of religion as traditional authority, or authoritarian tradition” (Kruger 1988:57). This argument is listed as the very first of “the ten positions of doubt” in **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65/1:189). Blind faith and unexamined belief are here rejected. This might be regarded as the “historical” argument. [4.2.2.4]

3.2 THE 2ND PARABLE—that of the sun and the moon [§§16-18]—develop from the previous parable. In the parable of the file of blind men, none of them could see. None of the brahmins who speak of Brahmā have ever seen him. Not only are they helpless with the unseen, but they are also unable to help their believers (and themselves) with what is seen, namely, the sun and the moon, no matter how much they supplicate these distant heavenly bodies.⁵³

3.3 THE 3RD PARABLE—that of the most beautiful woman (“the beauty queen”) in the land [§§20-20] —is a criticism of religion as “desire” (Kruger 1988:57).⁵⁴ In this “psychological argument,” the Buddha implicitly points to religion as the desire for self-protection (“God” idea) and self-preservation (“soul” idea).⁵⁵ Human insecurities are often sublimated into religion, or more specifically, into a God-religion.

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

3.4 THE 4TH PARABLE—that of the stairway to nowhere [§§21-23]—is a criticism of religion as “a pretentious construction” (Kruger 1988:58). The builder of the stairway does not even have a plan for his proposed building to which the stairway is to be connected to. In fact, he is not sure what he wants to build, if he is building anything at all.

⁵² See Jayatilleke 1963:182.

⁵³ For a related, more warm-hearted, story, see **Maṭṭha,kuṇḍali Vatthu** = DhA 1.2/1:25-35 ad Dh 2.

⁵⁴ There are at least 2 other canonical parables of a beautiful girl, but in different contexts: **Mahā Dukkha-k-khandha S** (M 13.18/1:88 = SD 6.9) on the decaying process of our body, and **Janapada Kalyāṇī S** (S 47.20/5:169 f) on how a man carrying a bowl brimful of oil followed by another with a drawn sword would pay full attention to his action and not be distracted.

⁵⁵ See eg Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 1978:51.

This may be called the “social” or “sociological argument” where religion is a social construct and society takes the place of “God.” Like the previous statement, Jayatilleke points out that “he claims to make a stairway to ascend a mansion which he has neither seen nor known. His statement is considered meaningless since he can attach no meaning or verification to the term ‘mansion’ which is one of the terms of his statement.” (1963:328)⁵⁶

3.5 THE 5TH PARABLE—that of the river Aciravatī [§§24-26]—comes in three variations, all of which criticize religion “that is not authenticated by rigorous purity of existence” (Kruger 1988:58). The first variation of the parable [§24]—the man beseeching the farther bank to come over—is a parody of selfish and impossible prayer.⁵⁷

The second variation [§25]—a man bound on the bank—is clearly suggestive of one, especially a blind follower or fanatic, who is imprisoned or stunted in growth by his own beliefs and devotion.

The third variation [§26]—a man with his head covered and lying on the ground—represents a blind believer or misguided fanatic who is unable or unwilling to be open to other possible truths, especially those that liberate. These parables constitute the “existential argument.”

3.6 MORAL ISSUES. The Buddha then criticizes the brahmins who claim to be God’s ordained by pointing to how different the brahmins—*with their wives*—are from Brahmā (God) who have none of these. God (or Brahmā, as he is called by the brahmins) is commonly believed to be celibate, pure and good, but the brahmins were well known for their being served by their wives and women, living materialistic and impure lives, and lacking self-mastery [§31-35].

In modern terms, the brahmins are “religious professionals” who exploit religion as means of living, rather than taking it as a “calling” (“vocation”) or as right livelihood. In other words, what they thought and taught were both false and wrong, so that it is neither socially helpful nor spiritual beneficial. In fact, their teachings and practices, since they are rooted in greed, hate and delusion, only fruit in bad karma. “Therefore, these Three Vedas are called the three knowledges that are a desert, the three knowledges that are a jungle, the three knowledges that are a disaster!” [§36.3]

4 Sutta teaching

4.1 THE 3 TRAININGS & DEMYTHOLOGIZATION

4.1.0 The fruits of reclusheship. The sutta closes with the Buddha’s demythologizing⁵⁸ of the brahminical God-idea into universal spiritual qualities and wholesome practice for internalizing goodness, rather than looking for them externally in a constructed agent (Brahma or God) or religious ideology (companionship with Brahma). Here, the Buddha presents the path of the true Dharma, that is, the “fruits of reclusheship” (*sāmañña,phala*) [§§40-81], which constitutes the latter half of the Sutta.⁵⁹

4.1.1 Moral training. Since the Sutta’s interlocutors—the brahmin students Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja [5]—are ready for the higher training (that of the renunciant), the Buddha launches the 3 trainings,⁶⁰

⁵⁶ For a similar logical problem and the Buddha’s reply, see **Cūḷa Sakul’udayī S** (M 79.9-10/2:32 f). For a positive version of this parable, see **Paṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.46/1:198).

⁵⁷ On the Buddha’s criticism of selfish prayer, see **Iṭṭha S** (A 5.43/3:47-49); cf **Ṭhāna S** (A 5.48/3:54).

⁵⁸ For another famous example of demythologizing, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1.

⁵⁹ On the “fruits of reclusheship” (*sāmañña,phala*), see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.43-62/2:63-69), SD 8.10.

⁶⁰ On the 3 trainings (*ti,sikkhā*), see **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6.

starting off with moral training (*sīla,sikkhā*)⁶¹ [§§40-63]. This constitutes discipline in body and speech as a preparation for mental training [1.4.2].

For the laity, moral training includes the keeping to the 5 precepts as a minimal moral code of personal discipline and respect for others. For the monastic, this entails keeping to the monastic code and rightly livelihood, that is, living a morally virtuous life enhanced by mental cultivation. In either case, an underlying benefit is that the practitioner does not fall below the human state here and now, or is able to quickly heal himself if he were to inadvertently do so.⁶² In the Tevijja Sutta, the Buddha shows how moral virtue and mental cultivation prepare us for the divine life here and now.⁶³

4.1.2 Meditation training. Moral training overlaps with mental training in the practice of sense-restraint and mindfulness [§§64-67]. This helps in the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances, which prevents any effort in bringing the mind to a focus for calm and clarity [§68]. Instructions on them are given with the colourful parables [§§69-74]. The result of such a training is the attaining of dhyana—in the Tevijja Sutta, only the first dhyana (*paṭhama jhāna*) is mentioned [§75].

This dhyana forms the basis for the cultivation of the 4 divine abodes (*brahma,vihāra*) [§§76-79]—the very qualities of Brahmā himself. These are the spiritual qualities that the brahmins have externalized and attributed to a supreme being rather than cultivating them themselves. The brahmins, in other words, have reneged on their true religious duties and spiritual practices, and relegated these vital virtues to an external agency.

The Buddha declares that anyone can—and should—cultivate these divine qualities. Godliness is not a matter of faith or worship, but one of cultivation and internalization. The Buddha, as such, has effectively brought God and heaven down to earth here and now. The future is now.

4.1.3 Wisdom training. Even then, these divine qualities are not ends in themselves. They allow us to live happily, even as gods and angels on earth.⁶⁴ Towards the end of the Sutta, the Buddha—by way of pointing out the key issue (our spiritual training in here and now)—confirms that the brahmins, though they claim to speak for Brahma, or like all those who claim to be God’s vicars on earth, have none of his qualities.

On the contrary, they have greed, hate and delusion (like most of everyone else!). Despite their claim to religious excellence, they lack self-mastery [§§80-81]. To the brahmins, therefore, religion is priestcraft and spirituality is a high-class consciousness.

The two young brahmins are now fully convinced and go for refuge [§82]. This is an overview of the Tevijja Sutta. Now let us examine the Sutta structure in some analytical detail.

⁶¹ The long section on moral training (*sīla,sikkhā*) occurs verbatim (in whole or with some omissions) in all of the first 13 suttas constituting the first chapter, Sīla Vagga (the morality chapter) of Dīgha Nikāya and, according to T W Rhys Davids, may once have formed a separate “tract” (D:RD 1:3 n1). The moralities section here have been collated with parallel refs in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2) @ SD 8.10 (3).

⁶² See Piya Tan, “We are not born human,” R216, 2011. See also **Notion of ditṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (11.2.2): Craving. On the difficulty of remaining human, see **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (4.1.4).

⁶³ On moral virtue and the divine abodes, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7) @ SD 1.5 (2.9).

⁶⁴ On the 4 divine abodes (*brahma,vihāra*), see **Brahma,vihāra**, SD 38.5.

4.2 THE SUTTA TEACHING

4.2.1 Defining the problem

4.2.1.1 Philosophically or theoretically (for the sake of a better understanding), the teaching of the Te,vijja Sutta can be instructively divided into 3 main sections to show the Buddha’s teaching method in terms of **the 3 periods of time**, that is, the past, the present and the future. The “past” here is where the Buddha defines the problem of the creator-God idea (centering around Mahā Brahmā). Then he directs our attention to the “present” realities of the true and meaningful nature of goodness and godliness. And finally, he declares how the possibility of a purposeful “future” through the cultivating of a wholesome mind.

4.2.1.2 Firstly, the Buddha defines the problem of the creator-God idea (centering around Mahā Brahmā) by clarifying the brahminical “past.” The brahmins pride themselves in social and religious traditions, on which account, they demand the faith (*saddhā*) of the other class members. Such traditions have been constructed through personal preference (*ruci*), and handed down through repeated hearing (*anussava*) or tradition. Their reasoning for such ideologies are at best specious (*ākāra,parivittakka*) and they have convinced themselves of their own self-views after pondering over them (*ditṭhi,nijjhāna-k-khanti*).⁶⁵

Like anyone who tries to promote an imaginative idea (the God-idea is surely the most imaginative of all), it has to be packaged and presented in a convincing way, if not forcibly imposed. However, the religious language of the brahmins are riddled with lack of clarity, false claims and empty promises. Perhaps, because no one has really spoken out against such ideological tyranny (until the Buddha), that they have convinced themselves that they are right, or at least have the hubris to declare themselves to be God’s spokesmen on earth. They are clearly pathologically driven by a desire for power and pleasure, and a delusion of grandeur.

4.2.2 The problem of religious language⁶⁶

4.2.2.1 The Sutta opens with a clear example of the brahmin’s unclear **language** in their theistic claim that “This is the only straight path, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā” [§§3-6]. This is what deeply troubles the two brahmin youths, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja. Such a claim is simply outrageous, especially when they lack any clear explanation or personal example. Both the teachers of the two brahmin youths (and many other brahmin teachers, too) make the same, hence, conflicting claims—so who is right? [§§2-6].

The two intelligent brahmin youths are at a loss to believe whose path—even whose God—is the right one. This is a very familiar scenario today amongst the God-believing sects, too (especially within the same religion)! This is the **present** problem that these two brahmin youths face: it is a problem for them because they are unable to see any meaning or purpose in the brahminical claims.

⁶⁵ These are the 5 grounds for views as noted in **Caṅkī S** (M 95,14.2), SD 21.15 & **Pañcattaya S** (M 102,15), SD 40.12. A more comprehensive discussion on these 5 grounds is found in **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65/1:188-193), SD 35.4a. The most comprehensive list of views is of course found in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1/1:1-46), SD 25.

⁶⁶ Glenn Wallis in his analysis here quotes German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), working in Britain, “We are engaged in a struggle against the bewitchment of the intellect by means of language” (2008:57; untraced). Wittgenstein actually says, “Philosophy is the battle against the bewitchment of the intellect by means of language” (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1953 1.109).

4.2.2.2 Philosophically, we have **three premises** (statements accepted or believed to be true) operating in the debate between the two brahmin youths and their discussion with the Buddha. The first premise is that they believe or accept that there exists a being they call Brahmā, for which we can appropriately render as "God." Secondly, that such an entity is directly knowable. Thirdly, that there are some teacher or teachers who have super-knowledge and experience of such a being. However, the two brahmin youths could not agree on which of them have done so.

4.2.2.3 The two young brahmins decide to consult a neutral third party, as it were, but someone well known for his openness and wisdom, that is, the Buddha [§7]. When the two brahmin youths present the claim of the brahmins that theirs is the only way that **"leads"** to God, the Buddha thrice questions them—"You say, 'They lead,' Vāseṭṭha?" [§11]—to stress the outrageousness of the error of such a claim.

The verb **"lead"** (*niyyanti*) is clearly wrongly used here. The brahmins themselves have not seen God nor been to heaven, so how can they ever "lead" anyone there!⁶⁷ Anyway who makes such a claim must mean that they know God, or that they have taken the path and seen God, and are surely God-like themselves! These are the claims that the Buddha would debunk in the rest of the Sutta.

4.2.2.4 Obviously, the very first legitimate question to ask of someone who claims that a certain being exists is to ask if they themselves⁶⁸ or their teachers or lineage of teachers have personally met God [§12], or if their greatest ancient seers, the very source of their religious tradition, have done so [§13]—this is like asking for the authentication of the existence of a historical person. Since, by their own admission, none of them have personally seen God [§14], the Buddha then famously declares that they are like **the blind leading the blind** [3.1], but none of whom sees the way at all! [§15]

4.2.2.5 The Buddha next presents **the parable of the sun and the moon**. "These brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who can see the sun and moon just as other people do, *and facing the sun and moon as they rise and set, do they pray, sing praises and worship with clasped hands.*" However, even if they were to claim that they are the only way that we can have companionship with the sun and the moon (which are after all visible to all), could they ever effect such a claim? This is of course impossible. What more to speak of something unseen and abstract like a God-idea? [§§16-18]

4.2.2.6 The next parable of the Buddha is that of **the country's most beautiful woman** [§§19-20]. A man might claim that he wants to marry the most beautiful woman in the land. Yet he has not met such a one, nor does he know of any such person. The point is a well known philosophical truth: we simply cannot define anything into existence.⁶⁹

We could well describe a unicorn, for example, in great detail, and even draw beautiful pictures or carve life-like statues of them, or put together pious prayers to them. They simply do not exist, except in our imagination.

To say that something exists is to say that it has some properties. Even if we define that "God" is the greatest (use any superlative you like here) being in the universe, it does not mean that there *is* such a being. *Existence* itself is not a property. As such, just because we, or some holy man, or even the most

⁶⁷ For a philosophical analysis of the problems of language, see eg John Hospers 1967:1-17, 67-98; 1997:1-11, 21-38.

⁶⁸ The questioners, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja, themselves are not asked this question for an obvious reason: they are themselves in doubt of such a claim.

⁶⁹ For a philosophical analysis of definition, see eg John Hospers 1967:18-62; 1997:12-20.

sacred of scriptures, say something exists does not mean that it does.⁷⁰ Even famous teachers can have wrong views—and with devastating effects.⁷¹

4.2.2.7 A theist or any religious person or any holy book could put their belief of a God or heaven or salvation in the most beautiful words, the most moving parables, or most powerful promises—the bottom line is that *nothing happens in the end*. The point is that we all die in the end, or fall sick before that, and we can give the most wordy, eloquent or inspiring explanation or excuse for it—still, the truth of impermanence is what it is all really about. We may deny God, but we can never deny impermanence.

Here the Buddha uses **the parable of the stairway to nowhere** [§§21-23]. We can construct the largest or tallest or highest stairway, but it is not really useful at all if it leads only to empty space. Most religious talk tends to be “all stairway.” Here ends our philosophical analysis of the Sutta in terms of religious language. Now we will go on to examine the false religious claims of the brahmins.

4.2.3 The brahmins’ false claims⁷²

4.2.3.1 When truth and liberation are defined and dispensed by a class of priests or virtuosi, and individual effort is discouraged, even disallowed, then we are generally deprived of the inclination or opportunity to become true individuals. We might even lose our humanity, and sheep in a tribal flock or lemmings blindly heading for a certain end. Saddest of all, we have no real lives of our own, but living in the absence of some alien being, waiting for some promised future presence before such an imagined being. We are then not present in the here and now, much less do we care for others around us—unless perhaps they are like us, and with whom we would hold our hands tightly together like the blind leading the blind.

Even if the brahmins were capable of seeing the path to liberation (which is possible, unlike the virtual reality of an imaginary supreme being), they are still incapable of ever reaching such a goal on account of their lack the discipline, the heart and the spirituality to do so. This is illustrated by the Buddha in a set of two parables centering around **the river Acira,vatī**. [§§24-26]

4.2.3.2 Here, the Buddha rejects the efficacy of prayer, specifically that directed towards the attaining of path to communion with God [§25]. Such a conduct, says the Buddha, is like someone wishing to cross over a flooded river, stands on this bank and calls out to the far bank to come over! [§24]. In fact, such a supplicant remains helplessly caught in this world, failing to live in this world seeing its true reality and spiritual beauty.⁷³

“Even so, Vāsetṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, neglecting what makes a brahmin, and taking up what makes a non-brahmin” [§25]. In other words, the brahmins are neglecting their true duties in living the holy life of moral virtue, meditation and wisdom, as their ancestors have rightly done in the past.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See **Unanswered questions**, SD 40a.10 (7.2.2): Existence.

⁷¹ **(Ahitā) Thera S** (A 5.88), SD 40a.16.

⁷² Glenn Wallis reminds us here of a quote from Emmanuel Levinas, a French philosopher of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry (1906-1995): “‘The true life is absent.’ But we are in the world. Metaphysics arises and is maintained in this alibi” (1979:33). This is from the beginning of *Totality and Infinity* (1979) where he negates French poet Arthur Rimbaud’s words from “The Foolish Virgin”: “True life is lacking. We are exiles from this world really” (1976:29).

⁷³ See **Itṭha S** (A 5.43), SD 47.2, abr at SD 12.4(2).

⁷⁴ On what a brahmin “should do and should not do,” see, eg, **Aggañña S** (D 27.22), SD 2.19.

Here we have an even more compelling parable. The person wishing to cross the flooded river is left on the near bank with his arms fettered, so that he is unable to swim or row a raft across the waters to the other side [§26].

4.2.3.3 No matter what claims the brahmins or God-believers make, no matter what prayers they offer, they are still fettered by their other-worldly fantasies and hindered by hopes for a heavenly after-life. Fettered and hindered in this way, they are unable to live beyond their physical bodies because their minds are absent to this world. [§§27-28]

This is like a man, wishing to cross over the flooded river, could only **lie down on this bank, covering his head with a shawl** [§29]. In other words, his spiritual progress is hampered by his own mental hindrances, so that he is unable to cultivate his mind to liberate himself [§30]. None are so blind as those who see not their own minds.

Unlike God or Brahma, the brahmins have wives and wealth, and are troubled by greed, hate and delusion, and lack self-mastery [§31-35]. Clearly then, the brahmins are stuck in suffering and danger. Their claims and teachings called the Three Vedas are, then, nothing but **“the 3 knowledges that are a desert, the three knowledges that are a jungle, the 3 knowledges that are a disaster”** [§36].

4.2.4 The brahmins’ vain promises

4.2.4.1 Finally, the Buddha explains the possibility of a purposeful **“future”**: “This I’ve heard,” says Vāseṭṭha, “that the recluse Gotama *knows* the way to companionship with Brahmā” [§37]. Using **the parable of the man from Manasākaṭṭa**, the Buddha answers that he is very familiar with that path, just as a native is familiar with every path in his own village [§38].

The brahmins, in other words, have made only vain promises of salvation; they are themselves stuck in their own unwholesome ways, and have no idea whatsoever how to have communion with God. The brahmin youths then beseech the Buddha to teach them the right way to companionship with Brahma. [§39]

4.2.4.2 These three instruction-sections of the Tevijja Sutta [4.2.2-4.2.4] present a progressive psychological training from the Buddha’s pointing out their **wrong view**, that is, the God-idea. Once we understand and accept the wrong view for what it is, what is revealed is the **right view**, that is, the how our lives should be lived here and now that is mutually beneficial for the most, if not all, of us. Thirdly, with a clear mind, cleared of all views, even of right view itself, we make our individual effort towards mental cultivation as the basis for spiritual awakening and liberation.

4.2.4.3 Since the brahmin youths are deeply inspired and ready to learn, the Buddha begins to teach them **the 3 trainings** (*ti, sikkhā*), beginning with how a renunciant lives the morally virtuous life [§§40-63]. This is followed by teachings on mental cultivation [§§64-74] leading to the attaining of the first dhyana [§75] as the basis for the cultivation of the 4 divine abodes [§76-79].

With the cultivating of the divine abodes, we internalize all the four qualities of Brahma: lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. We *become* Brahma, insofar as we fully *are* those divine qualities. Instead of worshipping Brahma or God or anyone, we practise *being* God, that is, freeing ourselves from the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion [§§80-81]. The highest prayer is that of our cultivating good ourselves.

4.2.5 Leaving the crowd

4.2.5.1 Why is individual training necessary here? Firstly, the God-idea is a tool for crowd-control. The brahmins invented, spread and used the God narrative to sustain the view that they are the highest and holiest of the hereditary classes—the priests—born of the mouth of God Himself, of Brahma himself; hence, they claimed (falsely) that they are *brāhmaṇa* (brahmins).⁷⁵

Since the brahmins were God’s “chosen” class, as it were, the other classes—the kshatriyas (or aristocratic class), the shudras (the merchant class), and the vaishyas (the working class)—each successively lower, were to serve the higher classes. The brahmins, being the highest, were to be served by all the lower three classes.⁷⁶ In short, the brahmins, and those who subscribe to their brahminical ideas, accept the ideology that religion serves to support the rich and powerful by putting the others in their proper places in a classed society.

4.2.5.2 “Crowd” thinking, centering on the God-idea, promotes such a class system, religious materialism, and social exploitation. Such a crowd is clearly unthinking: the crowd does not think; only the individual does. Right thinking frees us from the shackles of social injustice and induced ignorance.

Being free from the crowd is only a sporadic and uncertain respite because thinking can be challenged and change. We need to be stronger than the crowd; we need to rise above the crowd and crowded thinking. Indeed, on a higher level, we need to rise even above *thinking* itself, so that we can directly feel and touch our inner and true potential for truth and joy. Here in the Tevijja Sutta, this potential can be realized by the cultivating of the 4 divine abodes [§§76-79], by which we can here and now, on earth itself or wherever we are, cultivate godliness, even rise beyond the gods themselves [§§80-81].

5 Buddhism and theism

5.1 EMPTY CLAIMS BEHIND THE GOD-IDEA

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

The main argument that emerges from the various colourful parables of the Tevijja Sutta is that those who claim to point the way to God, have themselves neither seen him nor known him, and also that they lack the qualities of the very God that they claim to represent, very much like “sinners” who claim to speak for a sinless God. On a more subtle, yet more important, level is the fact that God is a mind-made idea, possible only with the existence of human language and discourse.

Such a situation entails no problems as long as there is freedom of thought and expression. However, the problems and dangers become real and serious when the God defined by a dominant class or power is the only choice one has, and one could only deviate from such an ideology at a cost, even that of one’s freedom or life.

⁷⁵ For the classic on the universality of goodness as being above class or externalities, see **Vāsetṭha S** (M 98/-2:196 = Sn 3.9/596-656/115-123), SD 37.1. On how the 4 classes were orig merely occupational guilds, but degenerated into classes, see **Aggañña S** (D 27/3:80-97), SD 2.19. Here in **Te,vijja S** (D 13) we see the brahmins’ false religious claims (D 13/1:235-252), SD 1.8.

⁷⁶ See eg **Esukāri S** (M 96), SD 37.9.

5.2 IN WHAT WAY IS BUDDHISM “NON-THEISTIC”?

5.2.1 The Te,vijja Sutta is the locus classicus for a non-theistic notion of Buddhism.⁷⁷ It is a common misconception amongst many western and westernized Buddhists that “non-theistic” here means that Buddhism has nothing to do whatsoever with beliefs in God or gods, and related practices. However, the early texts often refer to unseen worlds of devas, yakshas, pretas and various other non-humans, and the Mahāyāna pantheon is filled with cosmic Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gurus. Even today, numerous Buddhists continually pray to these religious forms and beings, not only for inspiration, but even for more mundane help. On this level, Buddhist worshippers behave (perhaps also think) in a manner no different from the faithful of theistic religions.

5.2.2 There are two main ways of explaining this interesting and articulate development in Buddhism: the academic and the spiritual. **The academic explanation** (but not the only one) is based on Peter Brown’s 1981 study of the rise and function of the cult of saints in Latin Christianity.⁷⁸ The basis for this idea is the lay-monastic dichotomy in Buddhism: *the monastics* give up the security and pleasures of household life for one of renunciation in quest of spiritual awakening, and dwelling in moral virtue and acting as spiritual teachers and exemplars, they are provided with the support of basic necessities (almsfood, robes, shelter and medical needs) by *the laity*, who in turn keep to a less regiment religious training by keeping to the 5 precepts, practising charity and other spiritual exercises within their ability and inclination.⁷⁹

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

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

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

Here the Buddha directs us to rely only on ourselves, using various methods to explore our own human nature as it exists right now. This exploration is not a one-sided introversion. Rather, it is looking at our present experiences of both the “internal” and “external” worlds to see what lies at their base, beneath the constant chatter of discursive thinking. Then from within

⁷⁷ See eg Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Buddhism: a Non-theistic Religion*, tr I Schloegl from the German, London: Allen & Unwin, 1970.

⁷⁸ Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its rise and function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

⁷⁹ A good study here is **Reginald Ray**, *Buddhist Saints in India*, 1994:15-43 (ch 1). **ME Spiro** speaks of “apotropaic,” “kammatic,” and “nibbanic” types of Buddhists in *Buddhism and Society*, 2nd ed, Berkeley, 1982. **Lewis Lancaster** sees a dichotomy based on social dominance, in “Elite and folk: Comments on the two-tiered theory,” in *Religion and the Family in East Asia*, ed George A De Vos & Takao Sofue, Berkeley, 1984:87-95. However, the lay-monastic dichotomy is not always clear, as discussed in **Gregory Schopen**’s works, esp “On monks, nuns and ‘vulgar’ practices: The introduction of the image cult into Indian Buddhism,” *Artibus Asiae* 49,1-2 1988:153-168.

our own experience is gradually uncovered what is ultimately real. This is our Buddha-nature—that which is open, clear, all-wise and limitlessly compassionate.

In fact, it is this very nature that is habitually projected onto “supernatural beings.” It is in this sense that the Buddha, the prototype of the enlightened person, is called the devatideva in the early texts—the god above gods. The Buddha fully understands the deities—that while they may appear to exist on a relative level, they have no final reality. Instead, they are projections of the deepest qualities of our own human nature. This understanding is attained through the practice of meditation, in which the temporary defilements that obscure the buddha-nature are gradually stripped away. (Ray, “Religion without God,” *Shambhala Sun*, 2001)

6 Vāsettha and Bhāra,dvāja

6.1 The brahmin youths Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja are close friends. **Vāseṭṭha** is an expert in the Three Vedas, who belongs to a very rich family, renouncing forty crores⁸⁰ when he goes forth. With his friend Bhāra,dvāja, he visits the Buddha and has discussions with him. These discussions are recorded in **the Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (Sn 1.7),⁸¹ **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13) and **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27). Buddhaghosa says that Vāseṭṭha is the chief disciple of Pokkhara,sāti.⁸²

He adds⁸³ that Vāseṭṭha’s first visit to the Buddha is on the occasion of the Vāsettha Sutta, at the conclusion of which he takes refuge. His second visit—and taking refuge again, or probably only Bhāra,dvāja doing so, since Vāseṭṭha has earlier done so—is when the Buddha expounds the Tevijja Sutta. Soon after, he enters the order, and at the conclusion of the Aggañña Sutta, he is given the higher ordination and in due course attains arhathood, as does Bhāra,dvāja (DA 3:860).

6.2 According to Buddhaghosa, **Bhāra,dvāja** belongs to a noble family worth 45 crores (DA 3:860). As a brahmin youth, he is a pupil of Tārukkha. A discussion between him and Vāseṭṭha leads to the teaching of the Vāseṭṭha Sutta and the Tevijja Sutta. Bhāra,dvāja later becomes the Buddha’s follower (D 1:252; Sn p123). The Aggañña Sutta is given in connection with Bhāra,dvāja and Vāseṭṭha when they are undergoing the probationary period prior to their becoming fully ordained monks (D 27/3:80).

Buddhaghosa says that they accept the Buddha as their teacher at the conclusion of the Vāseṭṭha Sutta and enters the order at the end of the Tevijja Sutta (DA 3:860). Later, while meditating on the teachings of the Aggañña Sutta, they become arhats (DA 3:872).

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⁸⁰ A crore (*koṭi*) = 10 million.

⁸¹ Sn p115/594 ff; M 2:197/98.

⁸² D 2:399; SnA 2:463; cf Sn p116.

⁸³ DA 2:406; cf 3:860, 872.

Te,vijja Sutta

The Discourse on Those with the Three Knowledges

D 13

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was wandering [peregrinating] in Kosala country by stages (on a teaching tour)⁸⁴ with a large company of monks, some five hundred in number. He came to a brahmin village of the Kosalas called Manasākaṭa.⁸⁵

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

Vāsetṭha and Bhāra,dvāja

2 At that time, many very well-known and wealthy brahmins were staying in Manasākaṭa, that is to say, the brahmin Caṅkī, the brahmin Tārukka, the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi, the brahmin Todeyya, and other well-known and wealthy brahmins [of the great halls].⁸⁶

3 Now, the brahmin youths Vāsetṭha and Bhāra,dvāja, while walking back and forth, exercising their legs,⁸⁷ engaged in a debate on what is the path and what is not the path (to salvation).⁸⁸

⁸⁴ “Wandering...by stages,” *cārikam caramāno*, lit “walking the walk,” that is, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering to the people. This expression is found through the Nikāyas: **D** 1:88×3, 111×2, 112, 127×2, 128, 224×2, 235, **2**:316, 317, 318, 3:207×2; **M** 1:146×2, 166, 171, 240×2, 285×2, 400, 401, 473, **2**:49, 54, 55, 60, 61, 93, 96, 135, 136, 140, 141, 146, 164 (×3), 185, 210, 212, **3**:201, 237, 269, 290 (×2); **S** 3:95, **4**:63, 323, **5**:352; **A** 1:180, 188, 236, **3**:30, 341, 402, 274, 340, **5**:122; **U** 25, 41, 58, 78, 81, 85; **Sn** pp 93 (**Sabhiya S**), 102 & 105 (**Sela S**). **M**:ÑB has “wandering by stages.” Comy glosses as “going on a journey” (*addhāna,gamanam gacchanto*) (**MA** 1:239; **UA** 1:183). Two types of wanderings are noted: the “fixed” wandering or “the journeying” (*nibaddha*), ie towards a destination, and the “unfixed wandering” or simply “the wandering,” ie without a destination (**DA** 1:243). A further classification is the “quick,” ie, short journey (*turita,cārika*) and the “slow,” ie long journey (*aturita,cārika*). The Buddha makes short trips of compassion, thus: he travels 3 gāvutas “in a second” (*muhuttana*) to meet Mahā Kassapa; to meet the yaksha Āḷavaka, 30 yojanas; to meet Aṅgulimāla, 30 yojanas; to meet Pukkusāti, 45 yojanas; Mahā Kappina, 120 yojanas; to meet Dhaniya, 170 yojanas; and Sāriputta travels 120 yojanas and 3 gāvutas to meet Tissa, the forest-dwelling novice (**MA** 1:239-244). 1 yojana = 11.25 km (7 mi) = 4 gāvutas.

⁸⁵ Manasākaṭa was a brahmin village on the banks of the Acira,vatī, in Kosala. It was a beautiful place and well known brahmins would from time to time retire gather there in its quiet to perform their various rituals, such as reciting the Vedas (**DA** 2:399). The Buddha gave teachings, such as those recorded in **Tevijja S** (**D** 13/1:235-252) in a mango grove to the north of the village. In **Vāsetṭha S** (**M** 98 = **Sn** 3.9), these same brahmins are said have gathered in Icchā,naṅgala (**M** 98.1/2:196 = **Sn** p115).

⁸⁶ Comy says that Caṅkī was from Opāsāda, Tārukka from Icchā,naṅgala, Pokkhara,sāti from Ukkaṭṭha, Jāṇussoṇi from Sāvattṭhī, and Todeyya from Tudi,gāma (**DA** 2:399). It is said that they would gather once every 6 months, ie, twice a years: once at Pokkhara,sāti’s residence in Ukkaṭṭha to purify their birth (*jāti,sodhana*), and once at Icchā,naṅgala, to purify their “mantras,” ie the Vedas (**MA** 3:431). **Te,vijja S** (**D** 13) records them as having gathered in Manasākaṭa, a brahmin village on the banks of the Acira,vatī in Kosala, to “purify” (*sodhetum*), ie, ritually affirm, “the mantras.” (**DA** 2:399).

⁸⁷ Comy: After learning and memorizing mantras all day, in the evening, they went down to the river to bathe, and then walked up and down on the sand. (**DA** 2:399).

⁸⁸ *Maggāmagga* = *magga* + *amagga*.

4 The brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said:

“This is the only straight path, the direct path, that leads to salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā⁸⁹—this is taught by the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti!”

5 The brahmin youth Bhāra,dvāja said:

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

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

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

“Now, Bhāradvāja,⁹⁰ the⁹¹ recluse Gotama, the son of the Sakyas, who went forth from the Sakya clan,⁹² is now staying at Manasākaṭa in the mango grove on the bank of the river Aciravati, to the north of Manasākata.

7.2 Concerning this Blessed One, this fair report has been spread about, thus:⁹³

‘The Blessed One is such: arhat [worthy], fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, supreme guide of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’⁹⁴

7.2 Come then, Bharadvaja, let us approach the recluse Gotama; and having approached him, let us ask the recluse Gotama about this matter, and whatever he tells us, we shall accept it.”

⁸⁹ *Ayam eva uju,maggo ayam añjasāyano niyyāniko niyyāti tak,karassa brahma,sahavyatāya.* “Companionship,” *sahavyatā*, also “fellowship, communion.” Rhys Davids has been accused of mistranslating *sahavyatā* here as “union,” thus implying a mystical union rather than merely being a part of Brahmā’s company. “But,” remarks Walshe, “the Brahmins had explained to the Buddha that they were puzzled because different teachers interpreted the path to Brahmā in different ways. Thus both interpretations may well be implied here.” (D:W 43)

⁹⁰ Buddhaghosa says that Vāseṭṭha and Bhāra,dvāja first meet the Buddha as recorded in **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98 = Sn 3.9), when they go for refuge (M 98.14 = Sn p123). They receive another long instruction from the Buddha in **Te,vijja S** (D 13), and again take refuge (D 13.82/1:252). **Aggañña S** (D 27) is given to them when they are probationers for full ordination (D 27/3:80). According to Buddhaghosa, they accept the Buddha as their teacher at the end of **Vāseṭṭha S** and join the order (as probationers) at the end of **Tevijja S** (DA 3:860). Later, while meditating on the teachings of **Aggañña S**, they become arhats (DA 3:872). It is noteworthy that here, Vāseṭṭha addresses Bhāra,dvāja by name *without* the brahmin appellative *bho* (“sir”), as earlier in **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98.3 = Sn p115). This change prob reflects their gradual turning away from Brahmanism.

⁹¹ *Ayam*.

⁹² A stock passage speaks of the Buddha as “the recluse Gotama, a Sakya son who went forth from the Sakya clan” (*samaṇo...gotamo sakya,putto sakya,kulā pabbajito*): **Mv 22.2/V 1:35**; **D 4,1/1:111**, **13,7/1:236**; **M 41,2/-1:285**; **A 3.63,1/1:180**; **Sn p103**. On his renunciation, see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,14/1:163), SD 1.11, **Soṇa,daṇḍa S** (D 4,6/1:115), SD 30.5, **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5,7/1:131), SD 22.8(7a) & **Caṅkī S** (M 95,9/2:167), SD 21.15, the last three of which say that he is “from a high family” (*uccā kulā*).

⁹³ *Evam kalyāṇo kitti,saddo abbhuggato*: **V 1:35**; **D 1:49**, 116, 236, 2:317; **M 1:285**, 2:167; **S 5:352**; **A 1:180**, 3:58, 4:80 (*kalyāṇo...abbhuggaccheyya*); **Sn p103**; **J 1:509**.

⁹⁴ On this recollection of the Buddha, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7b.

TALK ON WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT THE PATH
(*Maggâmagga kathâ*)

Meeting the Buddha

8 So the brahmin youths, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, approached the Blessed One, and having gone up to the Blessed One, exchanged courtesies and sat down at one side. Seated thus, the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said to the Blessed One:

“Here, master Gotama, while we were walking back and forth, exercising our legs, we engaged in a debate on what is the path and what is not the path (to salvation).

I said thus:

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

The brahmin youth Bhāra,dvāja said thus:

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

8.2 Regarding this matter, master Gotama, there is a quarrel, a dispute, a difference of opinion between us.” [237]

9 “So, Vāseṭṭha,⁹⁵ you say that the way to companionship with Brahmā is the one taught by the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, and Bhāradvāja says that it is the one taught by the brahmin Tārukkha. What then is the dispute all about?”

10 “The true path and the false path, master Gotama. These brahmins, master Gotama, teach different paths: that is, the Ādhvarika, the Taittirīya, the Chāndogya and the Bahvṛcā⁹⁶ brahmins.

10.2 **But, do all these paths to salvation lead the one who works for it to companionship with Brahmā?**⁹⁷

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

that is to say, there are the many different paths taught: those of the Ādhvarika,⁹⁸ the Taittirīya, the Chāndogya and the Bahvṛcā brahmins.

But, do all these paths to salvation lead the one who works for it to companionship with Brahmā?”

11 “You say, ‘They **lead** (*niyyanti*),’⁹⁹ Vāseṭṭha?”

“I say: ‘They **lead**,’ master Gotama.”

“You say, ‘They **lead**,’ Vāseṭṭha?”

“I say: ‘They **lead**,’ master Gotama.”

“You say, ‘They **lead**,’ Vāseṭṭha?”

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

⁹⁵ We would have expected the dual pl *vāseṭṭhā* (“Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja”). However, it is 3 sg throughout, prob because only he speaks with the Buddha while Bhāradvāja is the silent listener. On the dual elliptical plural, etc, see SD 1.11 (3.2.2); SD 43.6 (1.2).

⁹⁶ *Addhariyā brāhmaṇā tittiriyā brāhmaṇā chandokā brāhmaṇā* [Ee adds *chandāvā* ~, prob wr] *bavhārijjhā brāhmaṇā*. On *chandāvā brāhmaṇā* as wr, see DP sv *chandāva* (Cone 2010:83); Shults 2013:107. See Intro (2.1).

⁹⁷ *Atha kho sabbāni tāni niyyānikāni niyyanti tak,karassa brahma,sahavyatāya*. Here, *tak,karassa* has to be tr as “the one who works for it.” Cf §4.

⁹⁸ *Addhariyā brāhmaṇa* should be Skt *ādhvarika* rather than Skt *adhvaryu*. See CPD + DP: sv *addhariya*; Shults 2013:107.

⁹⁹ On the significance of this passage, see (4.2.2.3).

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BRAHMANISM

Where is God?

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

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

12.2 “Then, is there even a single one of the teachers¹⁰⁰ of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who has himself seen Brahmā face to face?”

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

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

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

12.4 “Then, is there any single one of the brahmins going back up to the seventh generation who has himself seen Brahmā face to face?”¹⁰¹

“No, indeed, master Gotama.”

13 “Well then, Vāseṭṭha, what about the ancient seers of the brahmins, mantra-makers, mantra-preachers—that is to say, Aṣṭaka, Vāmaka, Vāma,deva, Viśvā,mitra, Jamad-agni, Aṅgi,rasa, Bhāra,dvāja, Vāsiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, and Bhagu¹⁰²—whose ancient mantras and verses are chanted, uttered and collected by the brahmins of today, who sing them and recite them, and having sung them make others sing them, having recited them make others recite them¹⁰³—did they ever say:

‘We know and see when, how and where Brahmā appears?’¹⁰⁴

“No, master Gotama.”

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

Nor could any of the ancient seers of the brahmins, mantra-makers, mantra-preachers, whose ancient mantras and verses are chanted, uttered and collected by the brahmins of today, who sing them

¹⁰⁰ Alt tr: “Any teacher or teacher’s teacher,” here following Buddhadatta (*Concise Pali-English Dictionary*, 1968) who defines *pācariya* as “teacher’s teacher.” If the cpd resolved as *ek’ācariya-p-ācariya*, it means “one teacher after teacher.” Childers (DPL) however defines *ek’ācariya* as “having the same teacher,” and *pācariya* as “a pupil,” which makes the reading *ek’ācariya-pācariya* = “a pupil following the same teacher.” Possible alt tr: “any teacher or pupil.”

¹⁰¹ Cf **Caṅkī S** (M 95): “What then, Bhāra,dvāja, is there a single brahmin amongst those who are teachers of teachers, going back over seven generations of teachers [of the teacher], who says thus: ‘I know this, I see this: only this is true, everything is false!’?” (*Kim pana Bhāradvāja, atthi koci brāhmaṇānaṃ ek’ācariyo pi ek’ācariya-pācariyo pi yāva sattamā ācariyamaha,yugāpi, yo evam āha: aham etaṃ jānāmi, aham etaṃ passāmi, idam eva saccaṃ mogham aññan ti.*) (M 95,13.2/2:169), SD 21.15

¹⁰² See Intro (2.1).

¹⁰³ “The ancient seers ... make others recite them,” ... [*tevijjānaṃ*]* *brāhmaṇānaṃ pubbakā isayo mantānaṃ kattāro mantānaṃ pavattāro, yesam idaṃ etarahi brāhmaṇā porāṇaṃ manta,padaṃ gītaṃ pavuttarṃ samhitāṃ, tad anugāyanti tad anubhāsanti, bhāsitaṃ anubhāsanti vācitaṃ anuvācenti, seyyath’idaṃ—Aṭṭhako Vāmako Vāma,devo Vessā,mitto Yama-t-aggi [Ke Yama-d-aggi] Aṅgīraso Bhāra,dvājo Vāseṭṭho Kassapo Bhagu [* only at D 13.13]: this is stock: Mv 35.2 = V 1:245; **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,2.8/1:104); **Tevijja S** (D 13,2.13/1:238 f, 13,2.18/1:241, 242, 243); **Caṅkī S** (M 95,13/2:169 f), **Subha S** (M 99,9/2:200); **Doṇa S** (A 5.192/3:223 f, 3:229 f,), (**Maha-p,phala**) **Dāna S** (A 7.49/4:61). For identification of the seers’ names, see *Vinaya Texts* (tr Rhys Davids & Oldenberg) 2:130 n3 & V:H 4:337 nn5-9.*

¹⁰⁴ Cf **Kevaddha S** (D 11.80). This question is only briefly asked in **Caṅkī S** (M 95,13), SD 21.15.

and recite them, and having sung them make others sing them, having recited them make others recite them, say:

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

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

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

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

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

The blind leading the blind

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

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

15.2 Just as a file of blind men, Vāseṭṭha, one clinging to the other: the first one sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, and the last one sees nothing¹⁰⁵—so it is with the talk of these brahmins, for certain,¹⁰⁶ like the file of blind men holding onto the line, one clinging to the other: the first one **[240]** sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, the last one sees nothing.¹⁰⁷

15.3 The talk of these brahmins learned in the Three Vedas turns out to be only laughable, mere words, simply empty, utterly vain.”¹⁰⁸

The sun and the moon

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

“They do, master Gotama.”

17 “What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? These brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who can see the sun and moon just as other people do, *and facing the sun and moon as they rise and set, do they pray, sing praises and worship with clasped hands,*

can they show the way to companionship with the sun and moon, saying,

‘This is the only straight path, the direct path, that bring salvation for one who works for companionship with Brahmā?’”

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

¹⁰⁵ *Seyyāthapi Vāseṭṭha, andha,veṇi paramparā,saṃsattā, purimo pi na passati majjhimo pi na passati pacchimo pi na passati.* This well known parable is found in **Te,vijja S** (D 13.15/1:239); **Caṅkī S** (M 95.13e/2:170), (**Brahma,-vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99.9/2:200). An even better known parable is that of the blind men and the elephant (U 6.4/68), SD 40.14: see Jayatilleke 1963:354 f, 378 f.

¹⁰⁶ “For certain,” *maññe.*

¹⁰⁷ See Intro (3) & **Caṅkī S** (M 2:170/95.13).

¹⁰⁸ *Tesam idam te,vijjanam brāhmaṇānam bhāsitaṃ hassakaṃ yeva sampajjati, nāmakam yeva sampajjati, rittakam yeva sampajjati,tucchakam yeva sampajjatīti.* Cf **Te,vijja S** (D 13), where the wanderer vents his anger with these words, and where the reading is *lāmakam*, “frivolous,” instead of *nāmakam* (D 13.15/1:240), SD 1.8.

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

[241]

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

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

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

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

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

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

The country’s most beautiful girl

19 “Vāseṭṭha, it is just as if a man were to say, ‘I desire and love the most beautiful girl of the country.’¹⁰⁹

And if people were to ask him, ‘All right, then, do you know whether this most beautiful girl is a kshatriya lady [noble woman], a brahminee [brahmin woman], a vaishya [business-class woman] or a shudra [working-class woman]?’¹¹⁰ he would answer, ‘No.’

And if people were to ask him, ‘All right, then, do you know the name or **[242]** the family name of this most beautiful woman? Is she tall or short or of medium height. Is her complexion black, dark or clear?¹¹¹ Is she from a village, town or city?’ he would answer, ‘No.’

And if people were to ask him, ‘All right, then, do you desire and love for someone whom you neither know nor have seen?’ he would answer, ‘Yes!’¹¹²

19.2 What do you think, Vāseṭṭha, such being the case, does not what this person says turn out to be groundless?”¹¹³

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

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

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

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

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

¹⁰⁹ “The most beautiful girl of the country,” *janapada, kalyāṇī*, alt tr “the beauty queen of the country,” Jayatilleke 1963:326 f. This parable recurs in **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.35/1:193), SD 7.14 & **Te, vijja S** (D 13.19/1:241 f), SD 1.8: see (3).

¹¹⁰ These 4 were the classes or castes (*vaṇṇa*) of ancient India: generally the kshatriya was a noble; the brahmin, a priest; the vaisya, a merchant; the shudra (or helot), a menial worker. See **Kaṇṇaka-t, thala S** (M 90), SD 10.8 (4).

¹¹¹ “Clear(-complexioned),” *maṅgura-c, chavī*, lit “golden-skinned.”

¹¹² See Intro (3).

¹¹³ “Word...groundless,” *appāṭihīra, kataṃ bhāsitaṃ*, as at **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.35/1:193), SD 7.14, **Te, vijja S** (D 13.14+21+22/1:239+243+244), SD 1.8; **Vekhanassa S** (M 80.3.4/2:41), SD 40a.15. Comy at M 79 explains *appāṭihīra, kataṃ* as “not leading to liberation, unrooted, without purpose” (*aniyyānikaṃ amūlakaṃ niraṭṭhakaṃ*) (MA 3:273,10). Cf *appāṭihīriya* (M 2:9).

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

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

The stairway to nowhere

21 “Vāseṭṭha, it is just as if a man were to build a stairway to a mansion at a crossroads.¹¹⁴ People might ask, ‘Hey there, this stairway to a mansion—do you know whether the mansion will face east, west, north or south, or whether it will be high, low or medium in height?’ and he would say, ‘No!’

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

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

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”¹¹⁵

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

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

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

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

“Groundless, indeed, master Gotama.”

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

The Aciravatī parables

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

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

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

25 Even so, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, neglecting what makes a brahmin, and taking up what makes a non-brahmin,¹¹⁶ were to say:

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

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

¹¹⁴ For a positive version of this parable, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.46/1:198).

¹¹⁵ See Intro 3.

¹¹⁶ *Ye dhammā brāhmaṇa, karaṇā te dhamme pahāya vattamanā; ye dhammā abrāhmaṇa, karaṇā te dhamme samādāya vattamanā.* On what a brahmin “should do and should not do,” see, eg, **Aggañña S** (D 27.22), SD 2.19.

And a man, wishing to cross over to the other side, to get there, to land there, to cross over to the opposite bank. But he, on this bank, were to have his arms tightly bound behind him with a strong chain.¹¹⁷

26.2 What do you think, Vāseṭṭha, would that man be able to get to the other side?”
“Certainly not, master Gotama.”¹¹⁸

The 5 cords of sensual pleasure

27 “Even so, Vāseṭṭha, in the noble discipline these **5 cords of sensual pleasure**¹¹⁹ are called shackles,¹²⁰ a bond.¹²¹ What are the five?¹²²

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

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

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

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

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

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

27.2 And, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas are enslaved, infatuated by these 5 cords of sensual desire that they enjoy with relish,¹²³ unaware of the danger, knowing no way out.

28 Even so, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, neglecting what makes a brahmin, and [246] taking up what makes a non-brahmin, infatuated by these 5 cords of sensual desire—and (yet) they hope that after death, they would attain companionship with Brahmā—indeed, this is not possible.

The 5 mental hindrances

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

29.2 What do you think, Vāseṭṭha, would that man be able to get to the other side?”
“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

30 “Even so, Vāseṭṭha, in the noble discipline these **5 mental hindrances**¹²⁴ that are said to be obstructions, hindrances, coverings, shrouds.¹²⁵ What are the five?

¹¹⁷ *So orima, tīre dalhāya anduyā pacchā, bāham gālha, bandhanam baddho.*

¹¹⁸ See Intro 3.

¹¹⁹ *Pañca kāma, guṇa.*

¹²⁰ “Shackles” or fetters (*andu*).

¹²¹ “Bond” (*bandhana*).

¹²² The foll is a well known stock, esp in **Saḷ-āyatana Vagga** (S ch 4).

¹²³ Read *ajjhapanno* (see CPD), “being addicted to, being enthralled by,” (to enjoy doing something) with relish. PTS has *ajjhāpanna*, “with guilt,” guiltily.

¹²⁴ *Pañca nīvaraṇā.*

¹²⁵ *Evam eva kho vāseṭṭha pañc’ime nīvaraṇā ariyassa vinaye āvaranā ti pi vuccanti, nīvaranā ti pi vuccanti, onghā ti pi vuccanti, pariyonahā ti pi vuccanti.* The underscored words are the n parallels of adjs *āvuto nivuto ophuṭo*

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

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

30.2 And, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins, learned in the Three Vedas, are obstructed, hindered, covered over, shrouded up,¹²⁶ by these 5 mental hindrances, and they enjoy them, not seeing the danger, not knowing to escape.¹²⁷

30.3 Truly, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, neglecting what makes a brahmin, and taking up what makes a non-brahmin, are obstructed, hindered, covered over, shrouded up, by these 5 mental hindrances, and they enjoy them, not seeing the danger, not knowing to escape—and (yet) they hope that after death, [247] they would attain companionship with Brahmā—indeed, this is not possible!

Possessing wives¹²⁸

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

Does Brahmā have **wives** or does he not? [Is Brahmā married or not?]¹²⁹

“He does not have wives, master Gotama.”

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

“Without hate in his heart, master Gotama.”

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

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

pariyonaddho below [foll n] (D 1:246, DA 404; M 2:203, MA 3:447, 131, 4:198; Nm 24 = Nc 146, NmA 1:273 = 249; Ap 371; SA 2:367). *Āvaraṇā nīvaraṇā*, like *āvuto nivuto ophuṭo* (read as *avuṭo*), are clearly formed from √VR, to cover (CPD: ophuṭa etc). *Pariyonahā* (*pari + onāha*, “drawing over, covering, shrouding”) (D 1:247; Dhs 1157; Miln 300); also related us *onaha* (vl *onāha*) (DA 1:135; DhsA 378) (CPD svv). See (**Brahma, vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99.15.2/2:-203), SD 38.6.

¹²⁶ “Obstructed, hindered, covered over, shrouded up,” *āvatā* (vl *āvutā*) *nivutā ophutā* (vl *ophutā*) *pariyonaddhā*, which are the adj parallels of the nn above: see prec n.

¹²⁷ *Ime kho, vāseṭṭha, pañca kāma, guṇe tevijjā brāhmaṇā gadhitā mucchitā ajjhoppānā anādinava, dassāvino anissaraṇa, paññā paribhuñjanti*. From *gathito* on, D 1:245, 24 = M 1:173, 28 ≠ D 3:43, 29 = A 1:274, 21 ≠ S 3:332, 29.

¹²⁸ The location of this parable immediately foll the section on mental hindrances [§30] is significant. Technically, with the letting go of the hindrances, dhyana (*jhāna*) arises. Once we have a taste of dhyana, we would no more be attached to sensual pleasures, so that we would be very contented to be celibate. The dhyana section follows below [§75]. It is possible that much, if not all, of the intervening materials, esp the *sāmañña, phala* passage (on the 3 trainings) have been inserted later. See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4. On the need of dhyana for attaining arhatood, see **Samatha & vipassana**, SD 41.1 (2.2.2.4).

¹²⁹ *Sa, pariggaho vā brahmā apariggaho vā*. A humorous word-play on **pariggaha** has the foll meanings: **1** (adj) wrapping around, enclosing (Tha 419). **2** (part) taking up, seizing on, acquiring, seizing, grasping (Sn 779 (= *tanhā* and *ditṭhi*, Nm 57); Pm 1:172, 2:182 (*nekkhamma, pariggaha* etc); Nm 11 (*itthi, pariggaha*, finding a wife); J 6:259; Miln 244 (*āhāra, pariggaha*, abstinence from food), 313 (id). **3** possession(s), belonging(s), property (D 2:58, 3:289 = S 4:400; D 3:199 (*apariggaha*, without possession); M 1:137 (qu at Nm 122); S 1:32 (*sapariggaha*, along with one's belongings), 1:93; A 4:396 (*apariggaha*); Sn 805; J 4:371, 6:259; PvA (*pariggaha, bhūta*, belonging to, the property of); VvA 213, 321). **4** a wife (ThaA 271; PvA (*kata, pari-ggaha*, wedded), 282; *sapariggaha* (married), *apariggaha* (unmarried), both are applicable to both men or women (D 1:247; J 4:190, 6:348, 364). **5** blessing, favour, grace, DA 1:241 (*āmisā, pariggaha*, material blessing).

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

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

“Is Brahmā one with **self-mastery**¹³⁰ or is he one without self-mastery?”

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

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

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

“*The have wives, master Gotama.*”

“Have they hate in their hearts or not?”

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

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

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

“Have they defiled hearts or not?”

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

“Do they have self-mastery or not?”

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

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

“*Certainly not, master Gotama.*”

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

35 Then you say, too, Vāseṭṭha, that

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

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

those brahmins have *impure hearts* but Brahmā does *not*;

those brahmins lack *self-mastery* but Brahmā does *not*.

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

“*Certainly not, master Gotama.*”

Desert, jungle, disaster

36 “Excellent, Vāseṭṭha. Those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas *lack* self-mastery—and yet they hope that after death, they would attain companionship with Brahmā who *has* self-mastery—indeed, this is not possible.¹³¹

36.2 As such, Vāseṭṭha, those brahmins learned in the Three Vedas, having sat down (on the river bank) would sink down (in the mire). And so sinking, they would only come to despair, wondering how to cross over (the river) without getting wet.¹³²

¹³⁰ “Self-mastery,” *vasa,vatti*, The expression *vasaṃ vatteti* (M 1:214) means “he (lets his mind) masters himself.” See (1.4.1.4).

¹³¹ *Sādhu, vāseṭṭha, te vata, vāseṭṭha, avasa,vattī tevijjā brāhmaṇā kāyassa bheda para) maraṇā vasa,vattissa brahmuno saavyūpagā bhavissantī ti, n’etaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjati.*

¹³² *Idha kho pana te, vāseṭṭha, tevijjā brāhmaṇā āsīditvā saṃsīdanti, saṃsīditvā visāraṃ pāpuṇanti, sukkha,taraṃ maññe taranti.* “Cross over without wetting themselves,” *sukkha,taraṃ*, lit “crossing over dry.”

36.3 Therefore, these Three Vedas are called the three knowledges that are a desert, the three knowledges that are a jungle, the three knowledges that are a disaster!¹³³

THE BUDDHA'S WAY TO COMMUNION WITH BRAHMĀ

The man from Manasākaṭa

37 When he had spoken thus, the brahmin youth Vāseṭṭha said to the Blessed One:
“This I’ve heard—that the recluse Gotama *knows* the way to companionship with Brahmā.”¹³⁴

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

“It is hear here, master Gotama, not far from here.”

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

“Certainly not, master Gotama.”

37.4 “And why not?”

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

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

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

38.2 For, Vāseṭṭha, I know Brahmā, too, and the Brahmā world, and the path to the Brahmā world, and the way of practice whereby one arises in the Brahmā world.¹³⁵

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

“This I’ve heard—that the recluse Gotama *shows* teaches] the way to companionship with Brahmā.¹³⁶ It would be good if master Gotama were to teach the way to companionship with Brahmā.

39.2 Let master Gotama save the brahmin race!”¹³⁷

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

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

RECLUSESHIP

The going-forth

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

¹³³ The parables—a desert (*īriṇa*) ... a jungle (*vipina*)...misfortune (*vyasana*)—appear to be a play on the words *Iru-b,beda* (the Pali word for Rgveda, but a late term) and *veda*.

¹³⁴ This sentence also at (**Brahma,vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99,22/2:206), SD 38.6; but cf below §39.

¹³⁵ *Brahmānañ p’ahaṃ, vāseṭṭha, pajānāmi brahma,lokañ ca brahma,loka,gāminiñ ca paṭipadaṃ, yathā paṭipanno ca brahma,lokaṃ upapanno, tañ ca pajānāmi ti.*

¹³⁶ This sentence spoken above [§37] with “knows” (*jānāti*) instead “shows” here.

¹³⁷ *Ullumpatu bhavaṃ gotamo brahmaṇiṃ pajarṃ*, lit “Raise up, master Gotama, the brahmin generation!” DA takes this as “Save me from the brahmin race!”

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

41 A householder or householder's son, hearing the Dharma, gains faith¹³⁸ in the Tathāgata and reflects: 'The household life is stifling, a dusty path. The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life completely, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

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

42 When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code,¹³⁹ possessed of proper conduct and resort.¹⁴⁰ Having taken up the rules of training, he trains himself in them, seeing danger in the slightest faults.

He comes to be endowed with wholesome bodily and verbal deeds, his livelihood is purified, and he is possessed of moral virtue. He guards the sense-doors, is possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension, and is content.

¹³⁸ "Faith," *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) "rootless faith" (*amūlika, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) "faith with a good cause" (*ākāravatī, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p, pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). "Wise faith" is syn with (2). *Amūlika* = "not seen, not heard, not suspected" (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Gethin** speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): "Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith in its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary." (Gethin 2001:107; my emphases).

¹³⁹ Pāṭimokkha.

¹⁴⁰ Resort (*gocara*), lit "the cow's routine path or pasture." Here it refers to two aspects of the renunciate's life. In the Canon, it refers to places that are regarded as suitable for collecting almsfood (V 2:208). In this sense, *agocara* refers to places that are unsuitable for renunciates to resort to (whether for alms or otherwise) (D 1:63 = It 118 M 1:33 S 5:187 It 96; cf Dh 22). In Comys, *gocara* refers to places suitable for meditation (Vism 127). We can also take *gocara* here in the psychological sense of *ārammana*, that is, sense-objects. In other words, one "possessed of proper conduct and resort" means "accomplished in proper conduct of body and of mind."

(A) MORAL DEVELOPMENT¹⁴¹

THE SHORT SECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE

[The moralities §43-62¹⁴² = Brahmā,jāla Sutta, D 1.8-27/1:4-11]¹⁴³Perfection of moral virtue**Right bodily conduct** [D 1.8]**43 And how, Vāseṭṭha, is a monk accomplished in moral virtue? [D 1:4]**

(1) Here, Vāseṭṭha, having abandoned the destruction of life, a monk¹⁴⁴ abstains from destroying life. He dwells with rod and weapon laid down, conscientious,¹⁴⁵ merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings.

This is part of his moral virtue.¹⁴⁶

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

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

(3) Having abandoned incelibacy, he lives a celibate life, living apart, abstaining from the sexual act,¹⁴⁷ the way of the village.¹⁴⁸

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

Right Speech [D 1.9]

44 (4) Having abandoned false speech, he abstains from false speech.

He¹⁴⁹ speaks the truth, the truth is his bond,¹⁵⁰ trustworthy, reliable, no deceiver of the world.¹⁵¹

¹⁴¹ For a summary of this whole section on moral virtue, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), SD 8.10 (3).

¹⁴² These 3 sections (comprising 13 items or groups) on moral virtue occur verbatim (in whole or with some omissions) in all of the first 13 suttas and may once have formed a separate “tract” (D:RD 1:3 n1). See Gethin 2001: 195 f. See Intro (3) above.

¹⁴³ These three sections (comprising 13 items or groups, totalling some seven A4 pages at 10 points) on moral virtue occur verbatim (in whole or with some omissions) in all of the first 13 suttas and may once have formed a separate “tract” (RD).

¹⁴⁴ *Bhikkhu*: in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.8-28/1:3-13 = SD 25.2) the reading is *samaṇo Gotamo* throughout.

¹⁴⁵ *lajjī*, “feel shame, modest,” explain in the Comy on S 1:73 as “one who has moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*).” Opp *alajjī*, shameless.

¹⁴⁶ **Brahma,jāla S** refrains: *Thus, bhikshus, would the worldling speak when praising the Tathagata* (D 1.8).

¹⁴⁷ *Brahma,cariya* is the supreme conduct or holy life, ie celibacy. DA points out that it involves abstaining from other forms of erotic behaviour besides intercourse.

¹⁴⁸ *Gāma,dhamma*, ie the way of the householder, vulgar (in the sense of being associated with the masses).

¹⁴⁹ PTS ed has *samaṇo gotamo* here, which seems rather abrupt.

¹⁵⁰ “The truth is his bond,” *sacca,sandha*. Comy glosses as *saccena saccam sandahati*, “he joins truth with truth” (MA 1:206 = DA 1:73).

¹⁵¹ *Sacca,vādī sacca,sandho theto paccaṃyiko avisaṃvādako lokassa*. This line as in **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30,2.16/3:170) @ SD 36.9.

(5) Having abandoned divisive speech, he abstains from divisive speech.

What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here.

What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there.

Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or consolidating those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks words conducive to concord.¹⁵²

(6) Having abandoned abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech.

He speaks words that are gentle, pleasant to the ear, loving, touching the heart, urbane, delightful and pleasing to the people.¹⁵³

(7) Having abandoned idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter.

He speaks at the right time, speaks what is true, speaks on the beneficial [the good].¹⁵⁴

He speaks on the Dharma [teaching]¹⁵⁵ and the Vinaya [discipline].¹⁵⁶

He speaks words worth treasuring, timely, [D 1:5] well reasoned, well measured, connected with the goal.¹⁵⁷

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

General [D 1.10]

45 (8) He abstains from damaging seeds and plant life.¹⁵⁸

Sāmañera,sikkhā 6-10 [D 1:6]

(9) He eats only once a day, abstaining from the evening meal and from food at improper times.¹⁵⁹

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

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

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

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

¹⁵² This para is stock, eg **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,9/1:286 f), SD 5.7 & **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114,6.7/3:49), SD 39.8.

¹⁵³ *Yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇa,sukhā pemaṇiyā hadayaṇ,gamā porī bahu.jana,kantā bahu.jana,manāpā tathā,rūpim vācaṃ bhāsītā hoti.*

¹⁵⁴ *Kāla,vādī bhūta,vādī attha,vādī.* Comy glosses *attha,vādī*, as that he speaks about what is connected with the spiritual goal here and now, and hereafter (MA 2:208; DA 1:76). However, here, I have rendered *attha* as “the beneficial, the good (incl the goal),” which fits the flow of ideas better. As *attha* (as “goal”) appears at the end of this stock passage, I have rendered this closing word as “the goal,” which seems more fitting.

¹⁵⁵ He speaks on the 9 supramundane things (*nava lok’uttara,dhamma*) (MA 2:208 = DA 1:76), ie the 4 paths, 4 fruitions, nirvana (Dhs 1094).

¹⁵⁶ *Dhamma,vādī vinaya,vādī.* The disciplines of restraint (*saṃvara*) (of the senses) and of letting go (*pahāna*) (of defilements) (MA 2:208 = DA 1:76). We can also connect *attha,vādī* (in the prec line) here, as alt have “He speaks on meanings, he speaks on teachings, he speaks on the discipline.”

¹⁵⁷ *Nidhāna,vatim vācaṃ bhāsītā kālena sâpadesaṃ pariyanta,vatim attha,samhitam.* *Pariyanta,vati* means “within limits, well defined.” On “the goal” (*attha*), see n on “speaks on the beneficial” above here.

¹⁵⁸ Curiously, this replaces the precept against intoxicants which is omitted.

¹⁵⁹ “Improper times” here means between noon and the following dawn (V 1:83).

General

(14) He abstains from accepting uncooked grain; raw meat; women and girls; male and female slaves; goats and sheep, fowl and pigs; elephants, cattle, horses, and mares.

(15) He abstains from accepting fields and lands [property].¹⁶⁰

(16) He abstains from running messages [errands].

(17) He abstains from buying and selling.

(18) He abstains from dealing with false scales, false metals, and false measures.

(19) He abstains from bribery, deception, and fraud.

(20) He abstains from wounding, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plunder, and violence.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

THE MEDIUM SECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE

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

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

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

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

48 [D 1.13] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on watching shows such as these: dancing, singing, music, plays, ballad recitations, hand-clapping, cymbals and drums, painted scenes,¹⁶² acrobatic and conjuring tricks,¹⁶³ elephant fights, horse fights, buffalo fights, bull fights, goat fights, ram fights, cock fights, quail fights; fighting with staves, boxing, wrestling, war-games, roll calls, battle arrays, and troop movements—he abstains from watching shows such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

49 [D 1.14] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on heedless and idle games such as these—eight-row chess, ten-row chess, chess in the air, hopscotch, spillikins [or jackstraws], dice, stick games, hand-pictures,¹⁶⁴ ball-games [marbles], blowing through toy pipes [playing whistling games with folded leaves], playing with toy ploughs, turning somersaults [acrobatics],

¹⁶⁰ The Buddha however accepted land from rajahs like Bimbisāra and Pasenadi, and others like Anāthapiṇḍaka and Visākhā, which were received in the name of the Sangha. What is connoted here is accepting land on a personal basis.

¹⁶¹ From here on, the numberings of PTS ed & Bodhi's tr (1989) agree. See §17a n.

¹⁶² *Sobha, nagarakam*, "of the city of Sobha" (the city of the Gandharvas or heavenly musicians). RD thinks it refers to a ballet with fairy scenes. Bodhi: "art exhibitions."

¹⁶³ *Caṇḍālarāṃ vaṃsarāṃ dhopanaṃ*, an obscure phrase. The performers were presumable of the lowest caste. DA thinks of an iron ball (used for juggling?). Cf **Citta Sambhūta J** (J 4:390) where the phrase appears.

¹⁶⁴ The hand is dipped in paint or dye, then struck on the ground or a wall, so that the player creates the figure of an elephant, a horse, etc. In classical Thai literature, the artful tricksters Sī Thanonchai (Skt, Śrī Dhanañjaya) is well known for this skill.

playing with toy windmills, toy measures, toy chariots, toy bows, guessing letters drawn in the air or on one's back, guessing thoughts, mimicking deformities—**[D 1:7]** he abstains from heedless and idle games such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

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

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

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

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

52 [D 1.17] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, are bent on low chatter,¹⁶⁵ such as these: talking about kings, robbers, ministers of state; armies, dangers and wars; food and drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, and scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women **[D 1:8]** and heroes; the gossips of the street and at the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity [philosophical discussions of the past and the future], the creation of the world and of the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not [or, talk about gain and loss]¹⁶⁶—he abstains from talking about low topics such as these.

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

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

'You do not understand this Dharma and Vinaya [this Teaching and Discipline]. I understand this Dharma and Vinaya. What could you understand of this Dharma and Vinaya? You are practising wrongly. I am practising rightly. I am being consistent. You are inconsistent. What should be said first you said after. What should be said after you said first. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your viewpoint has been overthrown. You are defeated. Go and try to salvage your viewpoint; extricate yourself if you can!¹⁶⁷—he abstains from debates such as these.

¹⁶⁵ *Tiracchāna, kathā*, lit animal talk. As animals mostly walk parallel to the earth, so this kind of talk does not lead on upwards. Cf **Lohicca S** (D 1:228).

¹⁶⁶ *Iti, bhavābhāva, kathā*, may be rendered as "being and non-being" or as "profit and loss," but according to Walshe, the philosophical sense (as in Horner and Ñāṇamoli translations of **Sandaka S**, M 76) is preferable.

¹⁶⁷ This is stock: **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1:8), **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 1:66), **Pāsādika S** (D 3:117), **Saṅgīti S** (D 3:210), **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 2:3), **Sāmagāma S** (M 2:245), **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 3:12), **Viggāhika Kathā S** (S 5:418) and **Mahā**

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

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

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

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

55 [D 1.20] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, engage in deceitful pretensions (to attainments), flattery (for gain), subtle insinuation or hinting (for gain), pressuring (for offerings), and pursuing gain with gain—he abstains from such pretensions and flattery.¹⁶⁸

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

THE GREAT SECTION ON MORAL VIRTUE¹⁶⁹

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

reading marks on the limbs [eg, palmistry, sole-reading];

reading omens and signs;

interpreting celestial events [lightning, falling stars, comets];

interpreting dreams;

reading marks on the body [eg, physiognomy, phrenology];

reading marks on cloth gnawed by mice;

offering fire oblations, oblations from a ladle, oblations of husks, rice powder, rice grains, ghee, and oil;

offering oblations using oral spells;

offering blood-sacrifices;

making predictions based on the fingertips;

determining whether the site for a proposed house or garden is propitious or not [geomancy];

making predictions for officers of state;

laying demons in a cemetery;

laying spirits;

reciting house-protection charms [or using charms recited by those living in an earthen house];

snake charming, treating poisoning, curing scorpion-stings and rat-bites;

interpreting animal and bird sounds and the cawing of crows;

foretelling the remaining duration of life;

reciting charms for protection against arrows;

reciting charms to understand the calls of birds and animals

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

This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

Niddesa (Nm 1:173). See *Brahmajāla S*, D 1:2 f. Cf **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22) where a similar statement is made regarding the wrong reason for learning the Dharma (M 22.10/1:133).

¹⁶⁸ For details, see *Vism* 1.61-82.

¹⁶⁹ For Pali listing and nn, see **Brahmajāla S** (D 1.21-27), SD 25.2.

57 [D 1.22] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as:
 determining lucky and unlucky gems, staffs, garments, swords, arrows, bows, and other weapons;
 determining lucky and unlucky women, men, boys, girls, male slaves, female slaves;
 determining lucky and unlucky elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, fowl, quails,
 lizards [or iguana], long-eared rodents,¹⁷⁰ tortoises, and other animals
 —he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.
 This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

58 [D 1.23] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as forecasting thus: **[D 1:10]**
 the leaders [rajahs]¹⁷¹ will march forth [advance];
 the leaders will return [retreat];
 our leaders will attack, and their leaders will retreat;
 their leaders will attack, and our leaders will retreat;
 there will be triumph for our leaders and defeat for their leaders;
 there will be triumph for their leaders and defeat for our leaders;
 thus there will be triumph, thus there will be defeat
 —he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.
 This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

59 [D 1.24] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as forecasting thus:
 there will be a lunar eclipse;
 there will be a solar eclipse;
 there will be an occultation of an asterism;
 the sun and moon will go their normal courses;
 the sun and moon will go astray;
 the asterisms will go their normal courses;
 the asterisms will go astray;
 there will be a meteor shower;
 there will be a darkening of the sky;
 there will be an earthquake;
 there will be thunder coming from a clear sky;
 there will be a rising, a setting, a darkening, a brightening of the sun, moon, and asterisms;
 such will be the result of the lunar eclipse, of the solar eclipse *and so on*
 —he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these. **[D1:11]**
 This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

60 [1.25] Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood through the low arts such as forecasting thus:
 there will be abundant rain; there will be a drought;

¹⁷⁰ *Kaṇṇika, lakḥhaṇaṃ*, from *kaṇṇa*, “ear.” DA thinks it means either ear-rings or house-gables, both of which do not fit here. Walshe follows the Thai *tr* which, probably following an old tradition, has *tun*, “bamboo-rat” (see McFarland, *Thai-English Dictionary*, p371). Franke says “an animal that is always mentioned with the hare” and considers that it must mean an animal with long ears.

¹⁷¹ *Raññaṃ* (gen pl), ie the joint leaders (rajah) of a republican state in ancient India.

there will be plenty; there will be famine;
 there will be rest and security; there will be danger;
 there will be disease; there will be health [freedom from disease];
 or they earn their living by counting, accounting, calculation,
 composing poetry, or teaching hedonistic arts and doctrines
 —he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.
 This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

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

calculating auspicious dates for marriages (where the bride is brought home or leaves the house), betrothals, divorces;
 calculating auspicious dates for collecting debts or making investments and loans; reciting charms for becoming attractive or unattractive;
 curing women who have undergone miscarriages or abortions [or, reviving the fetuses of abortive women];¹⁷²
 reciting spells to bind a man's tongue, to paralyze his jaws, to make him lose control over his hands, or to bring on deafness;
 getting oracular answers to questions addressed to a mirror, to a young girl, or to a spirit medium;
 worshipping the sun, worshipping Mahā Brahmā, bringing forth flames from the mouth, invoking the goddess of luck
 —he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.
 This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

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

promising gifts to deities in return for favors; fulfilling such promises;
 demonology;
 teaching house-protection spells;
 inducing virility and impotence;
 consecrating sites for construction;
 giving ceremonial mouthwashes and ceremonial bathing;
 offering sacrificial fires;
 preparing emetics, purgatives, expectorants, diuretics, headache cures;
 preparing ear-oil, eye-drops, oil for treatment through the nose, collyrium [eye-wash] and counter-medicines;
 curing cataracts, practising surgery, practising as a children's doctor, administering medicines and treatments to cure their after-effects
 —he abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.¹⁷³ [D 1.27 ends here.]¹⁷⁴ [D1:12]
 This, too, is part of his moral virtue.

¹⁷² *Viruddha, gabbha, karaṇaṃ.*

¹⁷³ It is the practice of medicine for gain that is here condemned. (Walshe)

¹⁷⁴ Hereon until §74b, follows the parallel passages in *Sāmañña, phala S* (D 2.63-76/1:69-73), SD 8.10.

Confidence through practising the above moralities

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

Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, he experiences within himself a joy that is blameless.

This is how a monk is accomplished in moral virtue.

(B) MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Sense-restraint (Custody of the senses)

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

¹⁷⁵(1) Here, Vāsetṭha, when a monk sees a form with the eye, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,¹⁷⁶

insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that eye-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure¹⁷⁷ might overwhelm him,

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁵ This whole para: *Idha mahārāja bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ divvā na nimitta-g, gāhī hoti nānuyyañjana-g, gāhī. Yatvādhikaraṇaṃ enaṃ cakkhundriyaṃ asaṃvutaṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhā, domanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anavāssaveyyuṃ, tassa saṃvarāya paṭipajjati, rakkhati cakkhundriyaṃ, cakkhundriye saṃvaraṃ āpajjati. On Na nimitta-g, gāhī hoti nānuyyañjana-g, gāhī, lit “he is not one who grasps at a sign, he is not one who grasps at a detail (feature),” see SD 19.14. Comys say that “**sign**” (*nimitta*) here refers to a grasping arising through one’s sensual lust (*chanda, rāga, vasena*) or on account of merely one’s view (*diṭṭhi, matta, vasena*); “**detail**” (*anuyyañjana*) here refers to finding delight by grasping at another’s limb or body part (eyes, arms, legs, etc) (Nm 2:390; Nc 141, 141; DhsA 400, 402; cf MA 1:75, 4:195; SA 3:4, 394; Nc 1:55; DhA 1:74). On other meanings of *nimitta*, see SD 13 §3.1a.*

¹⁷⁶ See **Nimitta & anuyyañjana**, SD 19.14.

¹⁷⁷ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*, which Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders as “hankering and fretting for the world”; alt tr “covetousness and displeasure” or “longing and loathing.” MA says that longing and displeasure signify the first two hindrances—sensual desire and ill will—principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed. They thus represent the contemplation of mind-objects, which begins with the five hindrances. Cf M 1:274/39.13; see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.13) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36) on how to deal with the hindrances in one’s meditation. The monk effects the abandoning of the hindrances by the contemplations of impermanence, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering) and letting go (of defilements), and thus comes to look upon the object with equanimity. On *abhijjhā, domanassa*, there is an interesting related passage from **Pubba or Pubb’eva Sambodha S** (A 3.101): “Bhikkhus, before my awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, this thought occurred to me... ‘Whatever physical and mental joy (*sukha, somanassa*) there is in the world, that is the gratification (*assāda*) in the world; that the world is impermanent, suffering and of the nature to change, that is the disadvantages (*ādīnava*) in the world—the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world, that is the escape from the world.’” (A 3.101/1:258, pointed out to me by Robert Eddison).

to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.
He guards the restraint of the ear-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the ear-faculty.

(3) When he smells a smell with the nose *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,
insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that nose-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,
to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.
He guards the restraint of the nose-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the nose-faculty.

(4) When he tastes a taste with the tongue, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,
insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that tongue-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,
to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.
He guards the restraint of the tongue-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the tongue-faculty.

(5) When he feels a touch with the body *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,
insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that body-faculty so that the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him,
to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.
He guards the restraint of the body-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the body-faculty.

(6) When he cognizes a mind-object with the mind, *he grasps neither its sign nor its detail*,
insofar as he dwells unrestrained in that mind-faculty so that covetousness and displeasure, evil unwholesome states, might overwhelm him,
to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained. He practises the restraint of it.
He guards the restraint of the mind-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the mind-faculty.¹⁷⁸

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

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

Mindfulness and clear comprehension¹⁷⁹

65 And how, Vāseṭṭha, is a monk possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension?

Here, Vāseṭṭha,

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) in going forward or back, | he clearly comprehends what he is doing; |
| (2) in looking forward or back, | he clearly comprehends what he is doing; |
| (3) in bending or stretching, | he clearly comprehends what he is doing; |
| (4) in carrying his upper robe, outer robe and bowl, | he clearly comprehends what he is doing; |
| (5) in eating, drinking, chewing and tasting, | he clearly comprehends what he is doing; |
| (6) in voiding or peeing, | he clearly comprehends what he is doing; |

¹⁷⁸ D 2,64/1:70, 10,2.2/1:207, 33,1.11(10)/3:225; M 27,15/1:180, 33,20/1:223, 38,35/1:269, 51,16/1:346, 53,8/1:355, 94,18/2:162, 101,33/2:226; S 35.120/4:104, 35.239/4:176; A 3.16/1:113, 4.14/2:16, 4.37/2:39, 4.164/2:152 (×4), 4.198.11/2:210, 5.76.12/3:99 f, 5.140.11/3:163, 10.99.6/5:206, 11.18.23/5:351. For a study, see SD 9.14.

¹⁷⁹ *Sati,sampajañña = sati*, “mindfulness,” *sampajañña*, “clear comprehension.” In **Satipaṭṭhānas Ss**, however, this section is “clear comprehension” (*sampajañña*); “mindfulness” (*sati*) See SD 13 (3.6abc).

(7) in walking, in standing, in sitting, in being asleep,
 in being awake,¹⁸⁰ in talking, or in remaining silent, he clearly comprehends what he is doing.
 This, Vāseṭṭha, is how [1:71] a monk is possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension.

Contentment

66 And how, Vāseṭṭha, is a monk content?

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

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

This, Vāseṭṭha, is how a monk is content.

Abandoning the mental hindrances

67 Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and clear comprehension, and this aggregate of noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gully [gorge], a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw.¹⁸¹

Returning from his almsround, after his meal, he sits down, crosses his legs, keeps his body erect, and establishes mindfulness before him.¹⁸²

68 (1) Abandoning covetousness¹⁸³ with regard to the world, he dwells with a mind devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness.

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

¹⁸⁰ "In being asleep, in being awake" *sutte jāgarite*. Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, "lying down, sleeping." See SD 13 (3.6.3).

¹⁸¹ *So iminā ca ariyena sīla-k, khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya, samvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati, sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuḥhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanaṃ bhajati, araññaṃ rukkhā, mūlam pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giri, guhaṃ susānaṃ vana, pattham abbhokāsam palāla, - puñjam*. This stock phrase of 9 places conducive to meditation are found at D 1:72, 207, 2:242, 3:49; M 1:181, 269, 274, 346, 440, 441, 2:162, 226, 3:3, 35, 115-117; A 2:210, 3:92, 100, 4:436, 5:207; Nm 1:26, 140, 2:341; Miln 369. A shorter list, prob older, is mentioned in **Anāpāna, sati S** (M 118): "Here, monks, a monk who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty place, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him." (M 118, 17/3:82).

¹⁸² Comy. He applies mindfulness towards his meditation subject; or he sets it up in the region of the mouth. As such, it is said in **Vibhaṅga**: "This mindfulness is set up, set up well, at the tip of the nose or at the sign of the mouth" (Vbh §537/252). Comys: The "sign of the mouth" (*mukha, nimitta*) is the middle region of the upper lip, against which the air strikes when it comes out of the nose (VbhA 368); or for one long-nosed, at the nose-tp; one short-nosed, on the upper lip (PmA 2:479).

¹⁸³ *Abhijjhā*, here is synonymous with "sense-desire" (*kāma-c, chanda*), which is the usual term in the set of 5 mental hindrances. *Kāma-c, chanda* is almost identical with "a lustful mind" (*sa, rāgaṃ cittam*) (M 10.12(1a)). Both refer to sensual desire in general, and arises from wrong reflection on a sensually attractive sense-object. The exercise in §12 is simply that of noting the presence of such a state of mind. Here, one goes on to investigate how it arises, how it can be removed, etc (through right effort). See eg **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36(1)/1:60), SD 13.3 (5D.2).

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

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

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

Parables for the mental hindrances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

74 In the same way, Vāsetṭha, when these 5 mental hindrances are not abandoned in himself, the monk regards it as a debt, a sickness, a prison, slavery, a journey on a road through the wilderness.¹⁸⁴

74.2 When he knows that these 5 mental hindrances are abandoned in him, he regards it as solvency, good health, release from prison, emancipation, a place of security.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ MA 2:318-321 explains this section in some detail: see Appendix to **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39), SD 10.13.

¹⁸⁵ *Ānaṇyaṃ yathā ārogyaṃ yathā bandhanā mokkhaṃ yathā bhujissaṃ yathā khem’anta, bhūmiṃ*. This well known positive set of parables—embedded in the *peyyāla*—for one who has overcome the mental hindrances is

Resultant joy and peace

74.3 Seeing that they have been abandoned within him, he becomes glad. For one who is glad, zest arises. For one whose mind zestful, the body is tranquil. One tranquil in body feels happy. For one who is happy, the mind concentrates.¹⁸⁶

The 1st dhyana

75 Quite detached from sense-objects, detached from unwholesome mental states, he enters and remains in the 1st dhyana, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of detachment [ie samādhi]. He permeates and pervades, floods and fills this very body with the zest and happiness born of detachment.¹⁸⁷

The cultivation of the divine abodes¹⁸⁸

76 (1) With a heart of **lovingkindness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, [251]

so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth;

thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself,

he dwells suffusing all the world with lovingkindness¹⁸⁹

that is vast, grown great [exalted],¹⁹⁰ immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.¹⁹¹

77 Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation,¹⁹²

also found in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,69-73/171-73), SD 8.10, and **Mahā Assapura S** (M 39,14/1:275 f), SD 10.13. MA 2:318-321 gives a detailed account of each of the 5 parables. See Nyanaponika, *The Five Mental Hindrances*, BPS Wheel 26, 1961:27-34.

¹⁸⁶ *Tass'ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīṇe attani samanupassato pāmojjaṃ jāyati. Pamuditassa pīti jāyati. Pītimanassa kāyo passambhati. Passaddha,kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti. Sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati.* This important stock passage is found throughout the Nikāyas: see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,76/1:73), SD 8.10 n for refs. See also SD 10.15 (4.4.2).

¹⁸⁷ Dhyana-factors: *vitakka vicāra pīti sukhaṃ ek'aggatā.*

¹⁸⁸ This whole section is stock: **Cakka,vatti Sīha.nāda S** (D 26,31/3:78), SD 36.10, says it to be “in the wealth for a monk (*bhikkhuno bhogasmim*).” **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.11(6)/3:223, calls it “the immeasurables” (*appamañña*). **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,31/1:297), SD 35.1, (**Ceto,vimutti**) **Anuruddha S** (M 127,4-7/3:146 f), SD 54.10 & **Go,datta S** (S 41.7,5/4:296), SD 60.4 call it “the immeasurable freedom of mind” (*appamañña ceto,vimutti*). **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52,8-11/1:351 f) = **Dasama Gaha,pati S** (A 11.17/5:344), SD 41.2, if one stabilizes these states, reflecting on its impermanence, etc, one attains arhathood; if not, one attains non-returning. (**Majjhima**) **Jīvaka S** (M 55,6/1:369), SD 43.4, the Buddha as Brahmā. **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97,32-33/2:195), SD 4.9, and (**Brahma,vihāra**) **Subha S** (M 99,24-27/2:207 f), SD 38.6, call it the path to companionship with Brahmā (communion with God). (**Saṅgha**) **Uposatha S** (A 4.190,4/2:184), SD 15.10b, concerns one “attained to Godliness,” *brahma-p,patta*. **Pm** 5.20/2:39 calls it “freedom that is focused on only the beautiful,” *subhan t'eva adhimutto hoti ti vimokkha*); **Vbh** 13/272-276 (*sutta,niddesa*), 276-282 (*abhidhamma,niddesa*), 282-284 (comy). For a table of refs, see SD 38.5 (2.1.3.1).

¹⁸⁹ On the directions of lovingkindness, see SD 38.5 (2.1.3.2).

¹⁹⁰ The mind “grown great” (*maha-g,gatā*) or exalted perception refers to the mind in dhyana, ie in the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*). See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4), SD 24.14 (4).

¹⁹¹ The recurrence of these last two phrases—“without hate, without ill will”—attests to the fact that lovingkindness is the basis for all the other three abodes, ie, they are actually a refinement of lovingkindness applied on deeper and broader levels.

¹⁹² “By this cultivation,” *bhāvitāya*. Alt tr “by this meditation.”

78 Vāseṭṭha, by this freedom of the mind through lovingkindness, any karma done in a limited way¹⁹³ neither remains nor persists there.

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

(2) Further, with a heart of **compassion**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing all the world with compassion that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

78.2 Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters,

so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this freedom of the mind through compassion, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

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

(3) Further, with a heart of **gladness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing all the world with gladness that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

78.3 Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters,

so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this freedom of the mind through gladness, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

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

(4) Further, with a heart of **equanimity**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus above, below, across, everywhere, and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing all the world with equanimity that is vast, grown great [exalted], immeasurable, without hate, without ill-will.

79 Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāseṭṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters,

so by this cultivation, Vāseṭṭha, by this freedom of the mind through equanimity, any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.

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

¹⁹³ “Karma done in a limited way” or “limited karma,” *pamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*. As in **Saṅkha(dhama) S** (S 42.8/-4:322) & **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299), SD 2.10. Comys on Brahma, vihāra S says that “limited karma” refers to sense-sphere karma (*kāmāvacara, kamma*)” (AA 5:77), and “unlimited karma” (*appamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*) refers to form-sphere karma. It is called “unlimited” because it is done by transcending the limit, for it is developed by way of specified, unspecified and directional pervasion (DA 2:406; MA 3:450; cf J 2:62). SA on Saṅkha S explains that “When (simple) lovingkindness is said, this can be interpreted either as access concentration or dhyana, but when it is qualified as ‘freedom of mind’ (*ceto, vimutti*) it definitely means dhyana or meditation dhyana (*jhāna*).” (SA 3:105). The point is that if a person masters the “freedom of mind by lovingkindness” at the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this dhyana attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm. See **Brahmavihāra**, SD 38.5 (8.2) & *Vism* 309-311/9.49-58. (S:B 1149 n346; A:B 315 n73).

The nature of Brahmā

80 What do you think, Vāseṭṭha?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Certainly, master Gotama.”

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

81.2 THE ABODES OF BRAHMĀ¹⁹⁴

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

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

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

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

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

“There is, master Gotama.”

81.3 “Excellent, Vāseṭṭha. Then certainly, Vāseṭṭha, that the monk with self-mastery should after death, when the body has broken up, attains companionship with Brahmā, who too has self-mastery—this is possible.”¹⁹⁵

Refuge-going

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

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

were to place upright what had been overturned, or

were to reveal what was hidden, or

¹⁹⁴ These 4 passages can be read as alluding to the 4 divine abodes, that is, “free from hate” = lovingkindness, “free from ill will” = compassion, “undefiled” = gladness, and “self-mastery” = equanimity. The last mention of “self-mastery” serves as a shorthand for all the 4 abodes, which Brahmā has, and which should be cultivated by us.

¹⁹⁵ *So vata vāseṭṭha vasavattī bhikkhu kāyassa bheda param maraṇā vasavattissa brahmuno saavyūpago bhavisatīti thānam etaṃ vijjatīti.* Here, the Buddha is using intended language or “natural adaptation” of “companionship with Brahmā” (*brahmā, saavyatā*)

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

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

— evaṃ —

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[See SD 1, Main Bibliography]

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