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Accharā Saṅghāṭa Vagga

The Finger-snap Chapter | A 1.6.1-10 [A:B 1.51-60]

Cūḷ'accharā Saṅghāṭa Sutta The Lesser Discourse on the Finger-snap

A 1.6.1-10 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 1, Ekaka Nipāta 6, Accharā,saṅghāṭa Vagga 1-10

Theme: Lovingkindness; moral conduct; diligence

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

1 Sutta contents

The **Cūḷ'accharā Saṅghāṭa Sutta** or Cūḷ'accharā Sutta (A 1.6.1-10 = A 1.5.51-60)—also called **the Accharā Saṅghāṭa Vagga** (the finger-snap chapter—comprises 10 very short suttas or rather statements on some key ideas in early Buddhism. The title comes from A 1.6.4-5, on the parable of the finger-snap (*acchara* or *accharā saṅghāṭa*). The full Cūḷ'accharā Sutta comprises the following key topics:

A 1.6.1-2	(A 1.51-52)	Pabhassara Sutta	The pure radiant mind	SD 8.3(6)
A 1.6.3-5	(A 1.53-55)	Cūḷ'accharā Saṅghāṭa Sutta ¹	A moment of lovingkindness	SD 2.13(2) [§§3-5]
A 1.6.6-7	(A 1.56-57)	Mano,pubb'aṅgama Sutta	The mind behind all actions	SD 2.13(3) [§§6-7]
A 1.6.8-9	(A 1.58-59)	Pamadāppamāda Sutta	Heedlessness and heedfulness	SD 2.13(4) [§§8-9]
A 1.6.10	(A 1.60)	Kosajja Suta	Laziness	SD 2.13(5) [§10]
A 1.7.1	(A 1.61)	Viriy'ārambha Sutta	Exertiveness	SD 2.13(6)

Alternatively, any of these Suttas² may be prefixed with (**Ekaka**) should there be other suttas with the same name, that is, as (**Ekaka**) **Pabhassara Sutta**, (**Ekaka**) **Kosajja Sutta**, and so on.

2 Sutta teachings

2.1 LOVINGKINDNESS [§§3-5]. Two related suttas—the **Cūḷ'accharā Sutta** (A 1.6.3-5) and the **Okkhā Sutta** (S 20.4)³—show that lovingkindness (*mettā*) is a quality of the radiant mind (*pabhassara citta*). The Cūḷ'accharā Sutta states that when the mind is directed to a wholesome thought, in this case, lovingkindness, even for a brief moment,⁴ it is of great benefit (A 1.6.5).

In other words, the radiant mind that is waiting to be “uncovered” is already endowed with loving-kindness. As such, it is said that the liberation of mind through lovingkindness “shines, blazes, and radiates” (*bhāsate ca tapate ca virocate ca*) and is like the radiance of the sun or of the moon (It 19 f).⁵

2.2 THE MIND AS FORERUNNER [§§6-7]

2.2.1 The Aṅguttara Commentary interprets the teaching here [§6] in terms of the Abhidhamma notion that the mind (*citta*) and its mental factors (*cetasikas*) occur simultaneously:

¹ This is the name given at Aṅguttara Comy, which also says that the Sutta comy (AA 1:63) expands on the meaning of teaching of **Aggi-k,khandh'upama S** (A 7.68/4:128), SD 52.12.

² **Cūḷ'accharā Saṅghāṭa S**, “the lesser discourse on the finger-snap,” however, is itself a unique title.

³ S 20.4/2:264 (SD 2.14).

⁴ Another such text is **Okkhā S** (S 20.4/2:264), SD 2.14.

⁵ On *pabhassara citta*, see **The radiant mind**, SD 8.3.

“These (factors) arise together with the mind (*mano*). They have a single arising, a single basis, a single cessation and a single object. But because the mind is what arouses, produces, generates, originates, yields them, they are said to have mind as their forerunner.” (AA 1:73,5-10)

2.2.2 However, following **Dh 1 and 2**, the text clearly means simply that before we commit any unwholesome bodily or verbal deed, we first *decide* to act—this is an ethical aspect or “preconscious” level⁶ of our mental process. On a deeper, this is the psychological aspect of our conduct, rooted in the “unconscious.” In either case, intention (*cetanā*) is meant by “mind” here. This is, in fact, clear from the next sentence: “**The mind arises first, followed by the unwholesome state.**”

The same applies to the wholesome mind and its qualities in the next sutta [§7].

2.2.3 The first 2 verses of **the Dhammapada** (Dh 1+2) give us a good idea of the import of the teaching here:

<p><i>Mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhasati vā karoti vā tato naṃ dukkham anveti cakkam va vahato padaṃ</i></p>	<p>The mind precedes all mental states; The mind is supreme; mind-made are they: When, with a defiled mind, one speaks or acts, suffering follows one like a wheel that dogs a draught ox's foot.⁷ (Dh 1)</p>
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<p><i>Mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā manasā ce pasannena bhasati vā karoti vā tato naṃ sukham anveti chāyā va anāpayinī</i></p>	<p>The mind precedes all mental states; the mind is supreme; mind-made are they: when, with a pure mind, one speaks or acts, happiness follows one like a shadow that leaves not.⁸ (Dh 2)⁹</p>
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2.3 HEEDLESSNESS AND HEEDFULNESS [§8-9]

2.3.1 The Aṅguttara Commentary quotes **the Vibhaṅga** definition of heedlessness (*pamada*):

“Therein, what is **heedlessness**?

The laxity of mind, looseness of mind, by way of bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct, or the 5 cords of sensual pleasures. The disrespect for, non-persevering in, non-persisting in the cultivation of wholesome states. The falling back in practice, lack of will, lack of commitment, non-determination, non-devotion, non-pursuit, non-cultivation, and non-development of wholesome states. Heedlessness, that which is similar to heedlessness, state of being heedless, the heedless condition—this is called heedlessness.”¹⁰ [Vbh §846/350] (AA 1:74,4-11)

⁶ On the “preconscious,” see SD 17.8b esp (1.1.2; 2.2); SD 7.10 (3.3).

⁷ *Mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā | manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhasati vā karoti vā | tato naṃ dukkham anveti cakkam va vahato padaṃ.*

⁸ *Mano,pubb'aṅgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā | manasā ce pasannena bhasati vā karoti vā | tato naṃ sukham anveti chāyā va anāpayinī.*

⁹ For further details, see SD 8.3 (3).

¹⁰ *Tattha katamo pamādo. Kāya,duccarite vā vacī,duccarite va mano,duccarite vā pañcasu vā kāma,guṇesu citta-tassa vossaggo vossaggānuppadānaṃ kusalānaṃ vā dhammānaṃ bhāvanāya asakkacca,kiriyatā asātacca,kiriyāya aniṭṭhita,kiriyāya olīna,vuttikā nikkhitta,chandatā nikkhitta,dhuratā anāsevanā abhāvanā abahulī,kammaṃ an-*

2.3.2 Further studies on heedlessness and heedfulness can be found in the following:

(Chakka) Appamāda Sutta	A 6.53	see also SD 42.22 (2)
Pamāda Vihāri Sutta	S 35.97	SD 47.6
(Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta	A 10.15	SD 42.23
Sāra,gandha Sutta	S 45.143	SD 42.24
Paṭisallāna Sutta	It 45	SD 41.4
Dh 150		SD 46.15 (2.7.2); SD 52.13 (1.3.5.2)
See also:		SD 46.15 (2.7.2); SD 47.1 (1.1.2.5); SD 47.17 (2.3.4.1)

2.4 LAZINESS [§10].

2.4.1 The **Kusī'ārambha,vatthu Sutta** (A 8.80)—whose teachings are also recorded in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga**—warn against the 8 bases of laziness (*aṭṭha kusita,vatthu*), summarized as follows:

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| (1) there is work to be done, | a monk lies down, does not exerting himself to attain the unattained; |
| (2) the work is done, | a monk lies down, does not exerting himself to attain the unattained; |
| (3) a journey is to be made, | a monk lies down, does not exerting himself to attain the unattained; |
| (4) a journey is made, | a monk lies down, does not exerting himself to attain the unattained; |
| (5) almsround, | does not get sufficient or adequate food: he lies down without exerting; |
| (6) almsround, | received sufficient and adequate foods: he lies down without exerting; ¹¹ |
| (7) a trifling illness, | he lies down, does not exert himself to attain the unattained; |
| (8) recovered from illness, | he lies down, does not exert himself to attain the unattained. |

(A 8.80/4:332 f; D 33,3.1(4)/2:255; Vbh §953/385 f), SD 112.5

2.4.2 The lesson here is that no matter what task that a monastic needs to do or has completed, his real task is that he should “exerting effort to attain the unattained, to break through into what he has not broken through, to realize what he has not realized” (*viriyam ārabhati appattassa pattiyā anadhigatassa adhigamāya asacchikatassa sacchikiriyāya*),¹² that is, to reach the path, if not to attain arhathood.

2.5 EXERTION OF ENERGY [6] (A 1.7.1/1:12)

The Kusī'ārambha,vatthu Sutta (A 8.80)—whose teachings are also recorded in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga**—speaks of the 8 bases of exertion (*aṭṭha ārabha,vatthu*), summarized as follows:

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| (1) there is work to be done, | yet a monk exerts himself to attain the unattained; |
| (2) the work is done, | and he exerts himself to attain the unattained; |
| (3) a journey is to be made, | yet monk exerts himself to attain the unattained; |

adhiṭṭhānam ananuyogo pamādo, yo eva,rūpo pamādo pamajjanā pamajjitattam: ayam vuccati pamādo. (Vbh §846/350,21-29)

¹¹ Vbh adds “(languid) like soaked beans” or “in late pregnancy” (*mās'ācitarṃ maññe*) (Vbh 386,26). See PED: mās-acita.

¹² Besides these 2 refs, this phrase recurs at D 33,3.1(5)/3:256×8, 34,2.15)/3:287×8; **Suvīra (Deva,putta) S** (S 11.1-1/1:217, **Dasa,bala S 2** (S 12.22/2:29); **Parisā S 3** (A 2.5.3/1:71×4), **Ājāniya S 1** (A 3.95/1:243×2), **Sugata Vinaya S** (A 4:160/2:148×4) SD 6.7, **Anāgata Bhaya S 1** (A 5.77/3:101×6, 102×4) SD 1.10(3.1), **Anāgata Bhaya S 2** (A 5.78/3:103×3, 104×2, 105×3) SD 1.10(3.2), **Anāgata Bhaya S 3** (A 5.79/3:108×2) SD 1.10(3.3), **Saddhamma,sammosa S 3** (A 5.156/3:179×2, 180×2), **Nandaka S** (A 9.4/4:362); **Nm** 2:337; **Nc:Be** 172; **Vbh §953/385×2 + 386×6.**

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| (4) a journey is made, | and he exerts himself to attain the unattained; |
| (5) almsround, | he does not get sufficient or adequate food: still he exerts himself; |
| (6) almsround, | received sufficient and adequate foods: he exerts himself; |
| (7) a trifling illness, | yet he exerts himself to attain the unattained; |
| (8) recovered from illness, | yet he exerts himself to attain the unattained. |

(A 8.80/4:334 f; D 33,3.1(5)/2:256; Vbh §394/209), SD 112.5

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Accharā Saṅghāta Vagga

or Accharā Vagga

The Chapter on the Finger-snap

or the Finger-snap Chapter

A 1.6.3-10

(2) Cūḷ'accharā Saṅghāta Sutta (A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f), SD 2.13(2)

or Cūḷ'accharā (Saṅghāta) Sutta, The lesser discourse on the finger-snap¹³

3 Bhikshus, if even for just the moment of a finger-snap,¹⁴ a monk associates with (*āsevati*) a thought of lovingkindness, he is called a monk. His meditation is not in vain. He acts in accordance with the Teacher's teaching. He follows his advice. He does not eat the country's alms in vain.¹⁵

How much more so if he were to often cultivate it!

4 Bhikshus, if even for just the moment of a finger-snap a monk cultivates (*bhāveti*) a thought of lovingkindness, he is called a monk. His meditation is not in vain. He acts in accordance with the Teacher's teaching. He follows his advice. He does not eat the country's alms in vain.

How much more so if he were to often cultivate it! **[11]**

5 Bhikshus, if even for just the moment of a finger-snap a monk mentally attends to (*manasikaroti*) a thought of lovingkindness, he is called a monk. His meditation is not in vain. He acts in accordance with the Teacher's teaching. He follows his advice. He does not eat the country's alms in vain.

How much more so if he were to often cultivate it!

¹³ For the intro story to **Cūḷ'accharā Saṅghāta Sutta** (A 1.6.3-5), see SD 52.12 (1.2.1).

¹⁴ "Even for just the moment of a finger-snap," *accharā,saṅghāta,mattam*. Also in SD 8.3.

¹⁵ Comy speaks of **4 ways** (*cattāro paribhogā*) in which monastics use the "country's almsfood" (*raṭṭha,piṇḍa*): (1) an immoral monastic uses it (undeservedly) like **a thief** (*theyya,paribhoga*); (2) a virtuous ordinary monastic who does not reflect on it is like **a debt** (*iṇa,paribhoga*); (3) a trainee (*sekhā*, ie one of the 7 saints, short of the arhat-become) uses it as **an inheritance** (*dāyajja,paribhoga*); (4) an arhat uses it as a proper **owner** (*sāmi,paribhoga*). (AA 1:71,23-72,9)

(3) Mano,pubb'āṅgama Sutta (A 1.6.6-7/1:11), SD 2.13(3)

or (Ekaka) Mano,pubb'āṅgama Sutta, the (ones) discourse on the mind as forerunner

6 Bhikshus, whatever states that are unwholesome, partakes of the unwholesome, partial to the unwholesome, all have the mind as forerunner.¹⁶ The mind arises first, followed by the unwholesome state.

7 Bhikshus, whatever states that are wholesome, partakes of the wholesome, partial to the wholesome, all have the mind as forerunner. The mind arises first, followed by the wholesome state.

(4) Pamādāppamāda Sutta (A 1.6.8-9/1:11), SD 2.13(4)

The Discourse on Heedlessness and Heedfulness

8 Bhikshus, I do not see any other single state that brings about unarisen unwholesome states and that brings to decline arisen wholesome states.¹⁷ For the heedless, bhikshus, unarisen unwholesome states arise and arisen wholesome states decline.

9 Bhikshus, I do not see any other single state that brings about unarisen wholesome states and that brings to decline arisen wholesome states. For the heedful, bhikshus, unarisen wholesome states arise and arisen unwholesome states decline.

(5) Kosajja Sutta (A 1.6.10/1:11), SD 2.13(5)

The Discourse on Laziness

10 Bhikshus, I do not see any other single state that brings about unarisen unwholesome states and that brings to decline arisen wholesome states as **laziness**. For the lazy, bhikshus, unarisen unwholesome states arise and arisen wholesome states decline.

(6) Viriy'ārambha Sutta (A 1.7.1/1:12), SD 2.13(6)¹⁸

The Discourse on Exerting Effort

1 Bhikshus, I do not see any other single state that brings about unarisen unwholesome states and that brings to decline arisen wholesome states as **exertion of energy**. For one who exerts energy [the exertive], bhikshus, unarisen wholesome states arise and arisen unwholesome states decline.

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¹⁶ See (2.2).

¹⁷ See (2.3).

¹⁸ **Viriy'ārambha S** (A 1.7.1) is from the foll **Viriy'ārambh'ādi Vagga** (A 1.7/1:12,2-8).