

9

Bhadd’eka,ratta Sutta

The Discourse on the One Who Delights in the Auspicious Oneness | **M 131**
or, The Discourse on a Good Night of Mental Oneness

Theme: Living here and now

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Meaning(s) of *bhadd’eka,ratta*

1.1 THE SUTTA TITLE. The title, given to four consecutive suttas in the Majjhima [2.1], is puzzling. **Bodhi**, in his Majjhima translation note, concludes with the interesting notion that *bhadd’eka,ratta* is “a term coined by the Buddha himself to describe a certain aspect of development.”¹ This Sutta is essentially about the practice of mindfulness through the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*) by watching mental states as each arises through a night of meditation.²

The term *bhadd’eka,ratta* is easily resolved as *bhadda* (“auspicious, fortunate, good”) + *eka* (“one, oneness”) + *ratta* (“delighted, rejoicing (in)”; “night; (figurative) “time”). The word *bhadda* is straightforward. The second element, *eka*, usually means “one,” but here probably has an abstract sense of “oneness.” The most difficult component is the last one, *ratta*, which is polysemous. Clearly, there is a word-play here, characteristic of the meditation language in the early suttas.³ We will now briefly look at each of these components.

1.2 BHADDA. The word *bhadda* is common and has many meanings: “good, excellent, noble, worthy, pious; fortunate, auspicious, happy, blest” (Childers’ DPL). Although the word is polysemic, here it refers to the wholesome practice of a meditator, and as such is best rendered as “wholesome,” or more simply “good” or “auspicious.”

An important clue on the meaning of *bhadda* is found in **the (Cattāro) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14), where the “exertion of guarding” (*anurakkhaṇa-p, padhāna*) is defined by the Buddha, thus: “Here, bhikkhus, a monk guards the auspicious (*bhaddaka*) sign of concentration when it has arisen ...”⁴ The Aṅguttara Commentary defines *bhaddaka*, simply as “obtained” (*laddhakam*) (AA 3:20). The Ṭīkā, however, gives more details, saying:

*Bhaddakan ti abhaddakānaṃ nīvaraṇ’ādi,pāpa,dhammānaṃ vikkhambhanena rāga,vigama-
nena ekanta,hitattā dullabhattā ca bhaddakam sundaram. Na hi aññaṃ samādhi,nimittam evam
dullabham rāgassa uju,vipaccanīka,bhūtam atthi.*

Bhaddaka means beautiful, by way of the suppression of such inauspicious evil states such as the hindrances, and auspicious by way of the singular benefit, difficult to obtain, by way of the ridding of lust. For a direct knowledge of the samadhi-sign is not difficult to obtain as such, when there is a direct opposition to lust. (AAṬ:Be 2239)

Here we see a close connection between *bhaddaka* = *bhaddeka* and samadhi, which also fits the context of the Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas.

1.3 EKA

1.3.1 The word *eka* means “one,” but we can also include related senses or connotations, such as “being unified.” In other words, *eka* has both a literal sense as a number, as well as a figurative sense, meaning “unified.” This helps us in understanding that the phrase “one-pointedness” should not, at least, need not, be taken literally, but in the sense that the dhyanic mind is “unified, integrated.”

In fact, in the suttas, we often find *eka* in meditation contexts always meaning either the noun, “oneness, unification (of mind)” (*ekaggatā*) or the past participle, “integrated (of mind), withdrawn (from

¹ M:ÑB 1343 f n1210 (2005).

² For another possible interpretation, see **Samiddhi S** (S 1.20), SD 21.4 (1).

³ For other examples and a study, see **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11.

⁴ A 4.14.5/2:17 @ SD 10.2.

mental hindrances)” (*ekodi, bhūta*). Take for example, “When he was seated, secluded, meditating in (mental) oneness” (*ekaggassa nisinnassa pavivittassa jhāyino*, Tha 920). And again, “(mentally) integrated, he should strike down the darkness (of ignorance)” (*ekodi, bhūto vihane tamam so*, Sn 975), where *ekodi, bhūta* is glossed as “a one-pointed mind” (*ekagga, citto*, SnA 574).

Contextually, here *eka* (instead of the more philosophical *ekatta*, “oneness”) has the sense of “mental oneness,” “mental stillness,” or “mental concentration.” *Eka*, as used here, as such, is a synecdoche⁵ for samadhi (oneness of mind) (*samādhi*), or even dhyana (*jhāna*). It has a broad sense ranging from samadhi to dhyana. Such a non-technical usage of *eka* also reflects the earliness of the term; hence, the apparent difficulty of explaining this poetic meditational term in a technical way.⁶

1.3.2 The Ariya, vāsa Sutta 2 (A 10.20) defines the clear comprehension of an arhat that of being “guarded by [in] the one” (*ek’rakkha*), that is, “Here, bhikshus, a monk is mentally accomplished by being guarded with mindfulness.”⁷ The Commentary explains here that “whether he is walking, standing, sleeping, or awake, he is always mindful, with knowledge and vision present”⁸ (AA 5:8).

In terms of meditation, then, the “one” (*eka*) here can also refer to samadhi (*samādhi*), even dhyana (*jhāna*) itself, and the kind of mindfulness that comes from it. This is most probably the meaning of *eka* in the enigmatic term *bhadd’eka, ratta*, so that it reads, “the one who has delighted [who delights] in the auspicious one [oneness].” This then refers to one who delights in dhyana meditation, and who lives fully mindfully as a result. We might even say here that it refers to an arhat who often dwells in dhyana.⁹

1.3.3 The Miga, jāla S 1 (S 56.63) has another important application of the word *eka*, that is, in the sense of a “lone dweller” (*eka, vihāri*), where “dweller” (*vihāri*) is a synonym for “practitioner.” Here, “one” (*eka*) is polysemous, referring both to meditating so that we attain “oneness” (*ekatta*) of mind, that is, samadhi or dhyana for the purpose of attaining non-returning or arhathood. In short, it refers to a solitary practitioner, one who looks directly into his mind of calm and clarity.

Such a practice also entails our living a celibate life; hence, the monastic life is also called the “holy life” (*brahma, cariya*), or the “perfect” (*brahma*) life for mental cultivation, awakening and liberation. In short, the monastic life of a celibate life of meditation.¹⁰ However, a lay practitioner, too, is said to be one who “delights in the auspicious oneness” (*bhadd’eka, ratta*) when he practises meditation for the sake of attaining dhyana, or even for some level of mindfulness, for the sake of attaining at least streamwinning.¹¹

1.3.4 Hence, in the Sutta title, *bhadd’eka, ratta*, we can (and should) take *eka* as alluding to “oneness, single-mindedness” (*ekatta*), here meaning samadhi or mental concentration, that is, mindfulness by way of wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) or, where the mental hindrances are overcome, the attainment of dhyana. It is clear here, however, mindfulness is meant as the meditator is exhorted to be mindful of the “present moment,” that is, whatever is arising and passing in the mind. The awareness here is that of the process (impermanence), not the contents of the mind (whether it is past, present or future). [1.3]

In fact, the Majjhima Commentary on the Sutta explains *bhadd’eka, ratta* as “delighting in the ‘one’ (or oneness) that is auspicious, that is, the mind’s accomplishment in devotion to insight” (MA 5:1).¹² It should be noted here that “insight” (*vipassanā*) here does *not* refer to any system of meditation (certainly

⁵ A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is used to refer to the whole, eg “the robe” for monkhood, or where a whole refers to a part (common in political language), eg “Kosala conquered Magadha.”

⁶ On *eka* as referring to the celibate life of meditation, as in *eka, vihāri*, “the solitary dweller,” see **Miga, jāla S 1** (S 56.63) + SD 44.6 (3.1).

⁷ A 10.20,6 + SD 43.15 (2.3).

⁸ *Ten’ev’assa carato ca tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satatam samitam nāṇa, dassanam paccupaṭṭhitam hotīti vuccati* (AA 5:8).

⁹ A beautiful synonym for *bhadd’eka, ratta* given in **Venāga, pura S** (A 3.63) is the “heavenly great high couch” (*dibba uccā, sayana mahā, sayana*) of the Buddha, ie, his dwelling in dhyana, so that he is truly happy whether he sits, walks, stands or reclines (A 3.63,5), SD 21.1.

¹⁰ See **Miga, jāla S 1** (S 56.63) + SD 44.6 (3.1).

¹¹ On streamwinning, see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

¹² *Bhadd’eka, rattassā ti vipassanānuyoga, samannāgatattā bhaddakassa eka, rattassa.*

not the Insight Meditation of our times),¹³ but simply to the wisdom that leads one to see true reality and liberation.

1.4 RATTĀ

1.4.1 Literal meaning. *Ratta* has a wide range of meanings.¹⁴ Let us first look at its literal meaning as “night.” In his Majjhima comparative study,¹⁵ **Analayo**, the Sanskrit title of this sutra reads *bhadraga*, *rātrīya*,¹⁶ or *bhadra*, *rātrīyah*,¹⁷ or *bhadra*, *rātrīyasya sūtrasya*,¹⁸ all of which translate as “a good night” or “an auspicious night.” The Chinese Āgama version transcribes the same title as 跋地羅帝,¹⁹ corresponding to *bat di^h la te^j* in early middle Chinese (according to E G Pulleyblank).²⁰ Another Chinese Āgama text similarly speaks of “an auspicious night,” 善夜,²¹ and three Tibetan versions speak of *phags pa mtshan mo bzang po* (*ārya*, *bhadra*, *rātrī*), “noble good night” or “noble auspicious night.”²²

Bodhi, in his Majjhima translation note, says that

ratta and *ratti* could be taken to represent respectively either Skt *rātra* and *rātrī* (= night) or Skt *rakta* and *rakti* (= attachment) ... The Central Asian Skt version, the Skt title at the head of the Tibetan version and the Tibetan translation itself all use *bhadrakarātri*. This confirms the identification of *ratta* with “night”: the change from *-e-* to *-a-* can be understood as an attempt to convert a difficult reading into a more familiar one. (M:ÑB 1343 f n1210, 2005)

1.4.2 Figurative meaning. The word *ratta*, meaning “night,” is often used in a figurative sense to mean “time,” such as “for a long time” (*dīgha*, *ratta*).²³ The best example is surely that of *rattaññū*, literally, “one who knows the nights,” or more idiomatically, “most recognized, of long standing, senior” especially as an epithet of the first saint after the Buddha, Aññā Koṇḍañña, “the seniormost of the monks.”²⁴

If we accept this figurative sense as being applicable to *ratta* in *bhadd’eka*, *ratta*, then we can render it as “the one of long-standing in the auspicious oneness.” This translation evokes the devotion and experience of a meditator in his practice, especially of dhyana and its use in the attaining of liberation.

1.4.3 Sanskrit usages

1.4.3.1 *Ratta* (Skt *rakta*) is also the past participle of *rañjati* = *rajjati* (“to delight in,” used in a wholesome sense).²⁵ The Sanskrit-English Dictionary (SED), under *rakta* (page 861), amongst its meanings, gives “attached to or devoted to, fond of; beloved, dear, lovely, pleasant, sweet.” Hence, we can render *ratta* in *bhadd’eka*, *ratta* as “delighting in, fond of seeing it as dear or lovely (in the mental sense).”

¹³ What we call Insight Meditation today comprises systems based on the teachings of Jetavana Sayadaw of Burma (modern Myanmar), and promoted by his pupil, Mahasi Sayadaw, and by the famous lay teacher U Ba Khin, which is promoted by the Indian lay teacher Goenka. I am not evaluating the system here, as I find those Vipassana methods work harmoniously with the forest meditation of Ajahn Chah, both of which are taught at the Minding Centre, Singapore, benefitting both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

¹⁴ See PED: *ratta*¹ & *ratta*²; also SED: *rakta*.

¹⁵ *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, draft, 2005.

¹⁶ Cat no 816 V3 in SHT (*Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*) 3:32 (1971); cf also R2.

¹⁷ Fragments no 3 b3 in Minayeff & Oldenburg (*Buddhist Texts from Kashgar and Nepal*) 1983:243.

¹⁸ Fragment no 4 b1 in Minayeff & Oldenburg 1983.

¹⁹ MĀ 165 = T1.696c7.

²⁰ *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991:27, 76, 203.

²¹ T1362 = T21.881c10.

²² Tibetan versions no 313 = *mdo sde sa* 161b2, no 617 = *rgyud ‘bum ba* 56a7, and no 974 = *gzungs ‘dus vaṃ* 90a3.

²³ V 3:105,29; D 1:206,1, 2:283,23; M 3:115,19; S 1:59,24; A 1:142,15*; Sn 335; Tha 768; Pv 25.11.

²⁴ *Rattaññūnam yad idam aññā,koṇḍañño* (A 1:23,17). Its abstract form, *rattaññūtā*, “of long-standing renown” is found in **Bhaddali S** (M 65/1:445,21+22).

²⁵ The negative sense is more common, eg “Those dyed in lust fall back into the current” (*ye rāga,rattānupatanti sotam*, Dh 347a).

1.4.3.2 As already noted here, *ratta* in the sense of “delighting (in)” is usually found in the Pali suttas in the negative sense. However, it is possible, poetically at least, to use *ratta* in a positive sense. After all, if a “desire” is directed toward something positive, especially here, we can take it in a positive sense, that is, as “delighting in (the auspicious oneness).”

1.4.3.3 The Pali *ratta* is cognate with the Sanskrit *rakta*, which in turn comes from the verb *rañjati* (from the √RAÑJ, “to colour”). The SED, under *rañj*, includes meanings such as “to glow, illuminate, shine bright,” usages which often go back to pre-Buddhist times (such as in the Vedas). As such, we can also take *ratta* in a figurative sense, to mean “to shine, etc.”

1.5 CONCLUSIONS. Putting all these textual and traditional clues together, we can say that *bhadd’eka,ratta* can mean “one good night” of true blissful stillness, the joy of dhyana. Or, we could, more technically, read it as “delighting in the fortune (or blessing) of oneness,” that is, enjoying mental focus or samadhi, deep in blissful meditation.

Using the calm clarity of mind, we are truly able to see the rise and fall of our minds. Either way—dhyana or mindfulness—it evokes a sense of the joy of a meditator sitting deep into the night, “a silent night, holy night” in the truest sense of the word! From the Sutta context and also in keeping with the contemplative tone of early Buddhism, we can, as such, safely say that the translation of this key word that best reflects all this would be

“one who delights [has found delight] in the auspicious oneness” [1.4.3.1], or more poetically, as “the one who shines in the blessed oneness” [1.4.3.3], or more broadly, as “the one of long-standing in the auspicious oneness” [1.4.2].

It is unlikely that we can ever directly render this pregnant term, *bhadd’eka’ratta*, with an exact English translation. This is a problem of the word (*anuvyañjana*), which reminds us of the vital need of a discourse of the spirit (*attha*) from an experienced teacher to share his insights on such terms with other. The Dharma, in other words, can never be fully and effectively transmitted through academic or book learning, but needs the direct transmission of living Dharma teachers and, above all, a personal taste of the “auspicious oneness.”

2 Origins of the Bhadd’eka,ratta texts

2.1 THE BHADDEKARATTA SUTTAS

2.1.1 The heart of this sutta is a short verse, **the Bhaddeka,ratta Gāthā** [3, 10], which is well known. There are altogether four suttas entitled *Bhaddeka,ratta*, namely:

		<u>The verse is explained by</u>
Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta	M 131/3:187-189 (SD 8.9)	the Buddha
Ānanda Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta	M 132/3:190-190 f	Ānanda
Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta	M 133/3:192-199	Mahā Kaccāna
Lomasak’āṅgiya Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta	M 134/3:199-202	the Buddha

The Bhaddekaratta verse is also found in **the Nettī-p,pakaraṇa** (Nett 149) and **the Apadāna** (Lomasak’āṅgiya Therāpadāna, Ap 545.20-23/506).

2.1.2 In the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta (M 131) (our sutta) and the Lomasak’āṅgiya Bhaddekaratta Sutta (M 134), **the Buddha** himself elaborates on three and a half lines [abeg]. **Ānanda** repeats verbatim the Buddha’s explanations in the Ānanda Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta. From this selective explanation, we can immediately surmise that the other stanza lines expand on these selected lines by way of internal commentary.

Mahā Kaccāna, too, elaborates on the same three and a half lines, but gives a more detailed explanation in the Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta. While **the Buddha** explains the verse using the framework of the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*), **Mahā Kaccāna** frames his explanations around the 12 sense-fields (*dvādas’āyatana*), that is, the 6 internal sense-bases (sense organs) and the 6 external sense-objects. The common underlying element in the sense-experiences is consciousness (*viññāna*), that is, those in the grasp of sensual desire, and those free from it. As such, his framework is actually the 18 ele-

ments (*aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo*), namely, the 6 sense-bases, the 6 sense-objects, and the 6 sense-consciousnesses, forming “the 18 physical and mental elements that constitute the conditions or foundations of the process of perception.”²⁶

2.1.3 Sanskrit fragments of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta found in Central Asia²⁷ parallel M 131 (our sutta) in stating that the Buddha at Jeta, vana near Sāvattthī addresses the monks unprompted.²⁸ The Sanskrit version however shows a remarkable departure in the direction of popular Buddhism. It preserves parts of the verses, but the rest of the fragment continues with dharanis (mantras for meditation or protection),²⁹ so that the rest of it must have been quite different from the Pali version.

2.2 LATENESS OF THE BHADDEKA,RATTA SUTTA (M 131)

2.2.1 Scholars have noted an interesting discrepancy in the Vibhaṅga Vagga, where the Bhaddekaratta Suttas are located. All the other vaggas (chapters) of the Majjhima each has exactly ten discourses, except for the Vibhaṅga Vagga.³⁰ Apparently, scholars propose that **the Bhaddekaratta Sutta** (M 131) and the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 142) are later additions, which does not, however, mean that they are late works. **Analayo**, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*,³¹ gives a helpful summary of the problem here:

Looking back on the altogether four Pāli discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* verses, a noteworthy circumstance is that the chapter in which they are found, the *Vibhaṅga Vagga*, counts altogether twelve discourses. All other chapters in the *Majjhima Nikāya* consist of ten discourses only. Due to the present chapter’s departure from the standard count of ten discourses, the overall count of *Majjhima Nikāya* discourses runs into one-hundred-fifty-two, even though its main division is into three “fifties,” *pañṇāsa*, headings which suggests that there should be only one-hundred-fifty discourses.³²

This suggests the possibility that the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* originally may have had only ten discourses, to which subsequently two discourses were added. As the four discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* verses treat the same topic, perhaps one or the other among them could be related to such an addition to an earlier set of ten discourses.

The first discourse among the four, the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*, records exactly the same exposition as found in the Pāli and Chinese versions of the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta Sutta*, namely a treatment of the implications of the *bhaddekaratta* verses from the perspective of the five aggregates, given by the Buddha. It could easily be imagined how during the course of oral transmission the introductory part of the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta Sutta* was lost and only the exposition itself was remembered, which then became the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*.

As the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* is the only one of the four Pāli versions that does not have a Chinese counterpart, this discourse could indeed be the outcome of a transmission mistake, which perhaps was added to the *Vibhaṅga Vagga*, thereby causing an increase of the number of discourses in this chapter.³³ The Sanskrit fragments paralleling the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* do not

²⁶ See important def in BDict: Dhātu (II).

²⁷ Cat no 816 in SHT (*Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*) III:32 f.

²⁸ Cat no 816 SHT V:1 f.

²⁹ Cat no 816 SHT V:4 f.

³⁰ L Renou, “Les divisions dans les textes sanscrits,” in *Indo Iranian Journal*, 1957:2 & 29 notes that groups of ten is a principal grouping in Vedic texts, which was also frequently used by the Buddhists and the Jains.

³¹ 2005, draft (personal communications).

³² Norman 1983:48.

³³ Horner (1959) at M:H 3:233 n1 arrives at the opposite hypothesis, as in relation to the Bhaddekaratta Sutta, she comments: “This is the Vagga that has 12 Discourses. If it were thought desirable to reduce them to the normal 10, this Discourse [ie the Bhaddekaratta Sutta], spoken by the Lord, would rank as one, and the next three, spoken by disciples, would have to be counted together as another single Discourse.” Yet, argues Analayo, the other three discourses are not all spoken by disciples, as only M 132 and M 133 are spoken by disciples, whereas the exposition

necessarily contradict this hypothesis, as after the verses on an auspicious night the Sanskrit version continues with *dhāraṇīs* etc., so that the Sanskrit discourse seems to stem from a different line of development.³⁴

On this assumption, the count of discourses in this chapter could be reduced to eleven. A further reduction to ten through selecting another of the discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* verses, however, does not seem possible. Though the introductory section of the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta* about the meeting between Samiddhi and a *deva* recurs in the same terms as the introduction to another discourse of different content in the *Samyutta Nikāya*,³⁵ and the description of how the monks approached Mahākaccāna recurs in the same terms in the *Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta*,³⁶ the *Madhyama Āgama* parallel agrees in both respects with the presentation in the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta*. Hence, at least from a comparative perspective, it would seem that the presentation in the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta* is well established, as is the case for the other two discourses treating the *bhaddekaratta* verses.

Another discourse that could have made its way into the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* at a later stage is the *Dakḥiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*, a discourse which records how the Buddha refused a gift made to him by his foster mother and then gave an exposition on the merits of offerings to different recipients.³⁷ (Analayo at M 3:201, 2005)

2.2.2 Although the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta (M 131) is a late addition to the Vibaṅga Vagga and the Majjhima as a whole, it is a useful one, in that it preserves or purports to preserve the Buddha's own version of the Bhaddeka,ratta teaching generally addressed to the whole community, not to a particular individual, as is the case in the other Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas.

3 The 15 wrong views and the 16 doubts

3.1 The Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta here presents 15 wrong views that are to be avoided [§§4, 6, 8] and their antidotes [§§7, 9, 11]. This simple framework showing the wrong views is based on the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*), wrongly viewed over the three periods of time (past, present, future), thus totalling 15 wrong views. Conversely, the avoidance of them is regarded as the 15 right views, that is, no views.

3.2 Elsewhere, such as in **the Sabb'āsava Sutta** (M 2.7 f), **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38.23) and **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.20), we find a slightly different way of dealing with wrong views, that is, classifying them as "the sixteen doubts," in sets according to past, future and present:

- (1) 'Was I in the past?'
- (2) 'Was I not in the past?'
- (3) 'What was I in the past?'
- (4) 'How was I in the past?'
- (5) 'Having been what, did I become what in the past? [What was I before I became such and such in the past?]'
- (6) 'Will I be in the future?'
- (7) 'Am I not in the future?'
- (8) 'What will I be in the future?'

in M 134 is spoken by the Buddha, so that authorship alone would not suffice for considering them as three versions of a single original. (Analayo's n)

³⁴ Cf cat no 816 R in SHT III:32 f.

³⁵ **Samiddhi S** (S 1.20/1:8,16) records a visit by a *deva* to Samiddhi who had just taken a bath at the same hot springs (cf also J167/2:57). This meeting leads to a different discussion, as the visiting *deva* tries to tempt Samiddhi into enjoying sensual pleasures. The *Āgama* parallels to Samiddhi S (S 1.20)—SĀ 1078 (T2.281c4) & SĀ² 17 (T2.-379a24)—do not identify the monk.

³⁶ M 18/1:110,6; MĀ 115 (T1.603c17) and EĀ 40.10 (T2.743a23).

³⁷ M 142/3:253-257.

- (9) ‘How will I be in the future?’
 (10) ‘Having been what, what will I become in the future? [What now would lead me to that future state?]³⁸’
 (11) ‘Am I?’
 (12) ‘Am I not?’
 (13) ‘What am I?’
 (14) ‘How am I?’
 (15) ‘Where has this being come from?’
 (16) ‘Where will it [this being] go?’” (M 2,7+8/1:8, 38,23/1:265; S 12.20/2:26 f)

3.3 The Visuddhi,magga³⁹ discusses the abandonment of these 16 doubts in some detail. **The Sāmyutta Commentary** explains that the basic division expressed in the doubts—between existing and not existing in the past, etc—reflects the antinomy of eternalism and annihilationism. The other doubts pertaining to past lives arise within an eternalist framework. Similar discussions apply to the doubts pertaining to the future and the present (SA 2:241 f).

4 The 4 self-identity views

4.1 The explanation in **verse 8** of the Sutta relates how an uninstructed ordinary person tends to regard any of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness) in these ways:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----|
| (1) <an aggregate> as <u>the self</u> , | eg, “form as the self,” | or |
| (2) the self as <u>possessing</u> <an aggregate>, | eg, “the self as possessing form,” | or |
| (3) <an aggregate> as <u>in the self</u> , | eg, “form as in the self,” | or |
| (4) the self as <u>in</u> <an aggregate>, | eg, “the self as in form.” | |

The present state, as it arises,⁴⁰

one sees each of them with insight;
immovable, unshakable,⁴¹
 having known that, let one be sure of it.

*paccuppannañ ca yo dhammaṃ,
 tattha tattha vipassati;
 asaṅhīraṃ asaṅkappaṃ,
 taṃ vidvā manubrūhaye.*

4.2 The **Paṭisambhidā,magga** illustrates the 4 basic modes of self-identity view in connection with form in these manners:

- (1) One wrongly regards form as self, just as that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame.
- (2) One wrongly regards self as possessing form, just as a tree possesses a shadow.
- (3) One wrongly regards form as in self, just as the scent is in the flower.
- (4) One wrongly regards self as in form, just as a jewel is in a casket.⁴²

4.3 The **Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109,10/ 3:17 f) and the **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,7 f/1:300) list the 20 kinds of self-identity view in connection with the 5 aggregates.

³⁸ See **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2.7/1:8), SD 30.3..

³⁹ Vism 19.5 f/599 & 19.21-27/603-605.

⁴⁰ Comy: One should contemplate each state as it arises by way of the 7 contemplations of insight (ie by way of insight into impermanence, suffering, not-self, revulsion, dispassion, cessation, relinquishment) (MA 5:1 f).

⁴¹ Comy explains that this is said for the purpose of showing insight (vipassanā) and counter-insight (paṭivipassanā) [ie, the application of the principles of insight to the act of consciousness that exercises the function of insight, on the basis of which it is possible to attain arhathood: see M 52,4/1:350, 121,11/3:108; also M:ÑB 1333 n1143.] For insight is “**immovable, unshakable**” [following Sn:N 1149] because it is not defeated or shaken [moved] by lust and other defilements (MA 5:2). Elsewhere, “immovable, unshakable” are epithets of Nirvana (**Sn 1149**) or of the liberated mind (**Tha 469**). Here, however, it seems to refer to a stage in the development of insight. The recurrence of the verb *samhīrati* [8, 9] “suggests that the intended meaning is contemplation of the present state without being misled into the adoption of a view of self” (M:ÑB 1343 n1213).

⁴² Pm 2.50, 74, 77, 90 = 1:144 f.

Verse 9 of the Sutta shows the opposite cycle, how an instructed noble disciple does not identify any of the 5 aggregates in terms of self.

4.4 A more elaborate application of this formula, differently worded but conveying the same idea, is found in **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), where it is said, for example, that

The uninstructed ordinary worldling perceives earth as earth, but having perceived earth as earth,⁴³
 he conceives⁴⁴ (himself as) earth;
 he conceives (himself) in earth;
 he conceives (himself apart) from earth;
 he conceives earth to be ‘mine’
 —he delights in earth.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding,⁴⁵ I say. (M 1,3/1:1)

In this connection, the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta and **the Pāṛileyya Sutta** (S 22.81),⁴⁶ should be studied first, and then the more difficult **Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1).⁴⁷

5 Related texts

5.1 The theme of watching the present is central to Buddhist meditation. A number of texts attest to this admonition. In **the Atta,daṇḍa Sutta** of the Sutta Nipāta, the Buddha admonishes

Let the past wither away.	<i>yaṃ pubbe taṃ virosehi</i>	
Let what comes later be nothing—	<i>pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṃ</i>	
If you grasp not at anything in between,	<i>majjhe ce no gahessasi</i>	
You will wander about calmed.	<i>upasanto carissasi</i>	(Sn 949/15.15)

This verse is interesting in that the key words *pubbe*, *pacchā* and *majjhe* do not have their usual dictionary sense of “front,” “back” and “middle,” respectively. Instead here, according to the Mahā Niddeśa, they mean “the past,” “the future” and “the present” respectively (Nm 434).

5.2 The exact sentiments of **Sn 949** (in the Atta,daṇḍa Sutta) is found in the Dhammapada Commentary story of the acrobat **Ugga,sena**, who, after doing 14 somersaults, lands on his feet on the top of a bamboo pole. Then he hears the Buddha’s koan-like teaching and becomes an arhat:

Let go of the front [future]!	Let go of the back [past]!
Let go of the middle [the present]!	Cross over to the farther shore [nirvana]!
With the mind released from everything,	suffer no more birth nor decay.
	(Dh 348; DhA 24.6/4:62 f)

5.3 Another Dhammapada verse—in **the Brāhmaṇa Vagga**—says:

For whom there is nothing	in front, behind or in the middle,
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⁴³ Comy says that there are 4 wrong ways of regarding the body due to mental conceivings and false views: (1) he sees physical form as self; (2) he sees self in physical form; (3) he thinks self is other than physical form; (4) he sees self as having physical form or physical form as in self (MA 1:31). The first is an annihilationist view; the rest are eternalist views.

⁴⁴ “He conceives,” *maññati*, “he thinks.” This is the predominant verb here. The verb *maññati* is often used in the Pali suttas to refer to distorted thinking, ie, ascribing to an object or experience characteristics and significance that are not derived from that object or experience, but from one’s own subjective imaginings (*maññanā*). “The cognitive distortion introduced by conceiving consists, in brief, in the intrusion of the egocentric perspective into the experience already slightly distorted by spontaneous perception.” (M:NB 1162 n6). Comy says that the activity of conceiving is governed by the 3 defilements—craving, conceit, views—that account for the different ways it manifests itself (MA 1:26). For a shorter version of this teaching, see eg **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/ 3:1-5), SD 5.4.

⁴⁵ “Lack of full understanding,” *apariññāta*. See **Mūla,pariyāya S** (M 1), SD 11.8 (2).

⁴⁶ S 22.81/3:94-99 @ SD 6.1.

⁴⁷ M 1/1:1-6 @ SD 11.8.

who has nothing, ungrasping,

him I call a brahmin.

(Dh 421)

By “who has nothing” (*akiñcanam*) is meant that there is no “grasping through craving” in the 3 aspects (past, future, present) (DhA 26.38/4:230). A similar teaching is given in **the Brahma,deva Sutta** (S 6.3).⁴⁸

5.4 The benefits of the practice exhorted by the Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas are mentioned in **the Araññe Sutta** (S 1.10), where a forest deva asks the Buddha why the monks meditating in the forests, living only on a single meal a day, look very serene. The Buddha’s reply, echoing of the sentiment of the Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas, thus:

They do not sorrow after the past,

Nor do they long for the future.

They keep themselves to what is before them—

Hence their demeanour is so serene.

Through longing for the future,

Through sorrowing after the past,

Fools dry up and wither away

Like green reed that is cut down. (S 1.10/1:5)

5.5 The same sentiment is succinctly expressed in a stanza of **the Eka,vihāriya Thera,gāthā**:

If no one at all is found in front or behind,
It is very pleasant for one dwelling in the forest.

purato pacchato vāpi ce na vijjati
atīva phāsu bhavati ekassa vasato vane.

(Tha 537)

5.6 As already mentioned [2], this sutta should be studied with such suttas as **the Mahā Taṇhā,sañkhaya Sutta** (M 38),⁴⁹ **the Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2.7/1:8) and **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.20), all of which give a slightly different way of dealing with wrong views, that is, classifying them as “the 16 doubts,” instead of the 15 wrong views mentioned below in the Sutta [§§4, 6, 8]. Another important related text is **the Miga,jāla Sutta 1** (S 35.63).⁵⁰

5.7 **Ñāṇananda** has written an enlightening introduction with notes to his translation of the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta, called *The Ideal Solitude*.⁵¹

6 Ānanda’s story

6.1 Scholars of comparative Buddhism have noted how the simple teachings of self-reliance of the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta later, in the Mahāyāna, developed apotropaic (magical and protective) departures. The Sutta’s Āgama parallel, found at MĀ 167 = T1.699c-700b, has the title “spoken by Ānanda,” 阿難說, and agrees with M 132 on locating the discourse in Jeta,vana, near Sāvattihī. Sanskrit fragments⁵² have also preserved a discourse on the verses on an auspicious night with Ānanda as its main protagonist.

6.2 **Analayo**, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, notes that, “[j]udging from what has been preserved of the introductory narration,”⁵³ this discourse begins with a tale also found in **the Divyāvadāna**⁵⁴ and in **the Śūrangama Śūtra**.⁵⁵ According to this tale, Ānanda has been overpowered by a magic spell by an outcaste or untouchable (*caṇḍāla*) woman, whose daughter has fallen in love with him and is rescued by a magical counterspell by the Buddha just in time to prevent him from having sexual intercourse with the girl. Winternitz (1912:249) comments that

the whole literature of mantras and *dhāraṇīs*, of spells and incantations, found in later Mahāyāna, finds its explanation in this episode. The common people felt a need for mantras and

⁴⁸ S 6.3/1:140-142 (SD 12.4).

⁴⁹ M 38,23/1:265 (SD 7.9).

⁵⁰ S 35.63/4:35-37 (SD 44.6).

⁵¹ Wheel 188. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1973.

⁵² Minayeff & Oldenburg, *Buddhist Texts from Kashgar and Nepal*, 1983:242-243.

⁵³ At M 132 Intro.

⁵⁴ E B Cowell et al, *The Divyāvadāna, a collection of early Buddhist legends*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886:611,2.

⁵⁵ T945 = T19.106c9.

spells, and Buddhism had to take this need into account. In order to be able to counter the mantras of other sorcerers, the Buddhist monks needed to have their own mantras. At first these “mantras” were moral sayings like the Maṅgala Sutta and the Ratana Sutta...but eventually that did not suffice. (Analayo’s tr fr the German original)

6.3 Analayo further notes that, similar to this Sanskrit fragment,⁵⁶ in the individual Chinese parallel⁵⁷ and the three Tibetan parallels⁵⁸ to **the Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddekaratta Sutta** (M 133), the verses on the auspicious night are followed by *dhāraṇīs*, etc, “thereby furnishing additional examples for the tendency discerned by Winternitz.” (id) [1]

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The Discourse on the One Who Delights in the Auspicious Oneness

or, The Discourse on a Good Night of Mental Oneness⁵⁹

M 131

Preamble

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s Park in Jeta’s Forest near Sāvattihī.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Bhikshus!”

“Bhante!” the bhikshus replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

2 “Bhikshus, I will teach you the summary and analysis of ‘the one of the wholesome night’ (*bhad-d’eka,ratta*).⁶⁰ Listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the monks replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

Bhadd’eka,ratta Gāthā

3 **Let one not pursue⁶¹ [not dwell on] the past,⁶²
nor hold fond hope for the future.**

for, the past is gone,⁶³

and the future has not yet come.⁶⁴

*Aṭṭam nānvāgameyya
n’appaṭikāṅkhe anāgataṃ;
yad aṭṭam pahīnam taṃ
appattañ ca anāgataṃ.*

⁵⁶ Cat no 816 in SHT III:32 f.

⁵⁷ T1362 = T21.881c10.

⁵⁸ Tib versions no 313 = *mdo sde sa* 161b2, no 617 = *rgyud ‘bum ba* 56a7, and no 974 = *gzungs ‘dus vam* 90a3.

⁵⁹ On the title, see Intro (1).

⁶⁰ On the title, see Intro (1).

⁶¹ “Let one...not pursue [not dwell on]” (*anvāgameyya*), pot 3 sg of *anvāgameti* (caus of *anvāgacchati* = *anu* + *ā-gacchati*), lit “to let come back,” ie to wish something back (CPD), to run after, dwell on. [This tr was suggested by Kumara Bhikkhu of Malaysia, email 17 Aug 2013.]

⁶² Cf *patisarati* at SD 41.6 (2.3.6.1).

⁶³ Alt tr: “For the past has passed away.”

⁶⁴ Alt tr: “And the future is yet unreached”; poetically, “the future never comes.”

- 3.2 **The present state, as it arises,**⁶⁵
one sees each of them with insight;⁶⁶
immovable, unshakable,⁶⁷
having known that, let one be sure of it.
- 3.3 Work at the task this very day!⁶⁸
Who knows, death will come tomorrow?
For, there is no bargaining whatsoever
with death's great army.
- 3.4 One who dwells thus ardently,
relentlessly, day and night—
he is *bhaddeka, ratta* [one who delights in the
wholesome oneness (of mind)],
says the peaceful sage.⁶⁹
- paccuppannañ ca yo dhammañ,
tatha tatha vipassati;
asañhīrañ asaṅkappañ,
tañ vidvā manubrūhaye.*
- Ajj'eva kiccam ātappañ
ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve;
na hi no saṅgamañ tena,
mahā, senena maccunā.*
- Evañ vihāriṃ ātāpiṃ,
aho, rattam atanditañ;
tañ ve bhaddeka, ratta 'ti,
santo ācikkhate muni. [188]*

Let go of the past

4 “How, bhikshus, does one pursue the past?”

- (1) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such form in the past.’⁷⁰
 (2) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such feeling in the past.’
 (3) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such perception in the past.’
 (4) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such formations in the past.’
 (5) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such consciousness in the past.’

This is how, bhikshus, one pursue the past.

5 And how, bhikshus, does one *not* pursue the past?

- (1) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking, ‘I had such form in the past.’⁷¹

⁶⁵ Comy: One should contemplate each state as it arises by way of the 7 contemplations of insight (ie by way of insight into impermanence, suffering, not-self, revulsion, dispassion, cessation, relinquishment) (MA 5:1 f).

⁶⁶ The Sutta here teaches seeing *only* the arising of the 5 aggregates (or any of them) in the present moment. More simply, this means to see each moment of “rising and falling,” as being impermanent: this is a perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*): see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 36.1), SD 16.7.

⁶⁷ Comy explains that this is said for the purpose of showing insight (*vipassanā*) and counter-insight (*paṭivipassanā*) [ie, the application of the principles of insight to the act of consciousness that exercises the function of insight, on the basis of which it is possible to attain arhathood: see M 52,4/1:350, 121,11/3:108; also M:ÑB 1333 n1143.] For insight is “**immovable, unshakable**” [following Sn:N 1149] because it is not defeated or shaken [moved] by lust and other defilements (MA 5:2). Elsewhere, “immovable, unshakable” are epithets of Nirvana (**Sn 1149**) or of the liberated mind (**Tha 469**). Here, however, it seems to refer to a stage in the development of insight. The recurrence of the verb *samhīrati* [8, 9] “suggests that the intended meaning is contemplation of the present state without being misled into the adoption of a view of self” (M:ÑB 1343 n1213).

⁶⁸ This line and the next are qu at UA 89, DhA 3:430. Cf “You must make the effort. | The tathagatas only show the way. | Liberated are those who have practised, | who meditate, freed from Māra’s bonds” (*tumhehi kiccam ātappañ | akkhātāro tathāgatā | paṭipannā pamokkhanti | jhāyino māra, bandhanā*, Dh 276).

⁶⁹ The peaceful sage here is of course the Buddha (MA 5:3).

⁷⁰ Comy says that one thus “**seeks delight**” by associating the past in terms of craving or a view associated with craving (MA 5:3). “It should be noted that it is not the mere recollection of the past through memory that causes bondage, but the reliving of past experiences with thoughts of craving. In this respect the Buddha’s teaching differs significantly from that of Krishnamurti, who seems to regard memory itself as the villain behind the scene” (M:ÑB 1143 n1215).

⁷¹ *Eva, rūpo ahoṣiṃ atītaṃ addhānañ 'ti tatha nandati na samanvāneti*. Comy glosses *samanvāneti* as *anupavatte*, “he keeps moving on after; keeps pursuing” (MA 5:3). Bodhi says that the Pali syntax allows the sentence here means that either (1) one thinks, “I had such form in the past,” yet does not find delight in that thought; or (2) that one does not find delight in the past by thinking such a thought. Horner (M:H), Ñāṇananda (*Ideal Solitude*) and Ñāṇamoli (MS) construe the sentence following (1), which Bodhi followed in the 1st ed of M:ÑB, but “on reconsi-

- (2) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such feeling in the past.’
 (3) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such perception in the past.’
 (4) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such formations in the past.’
 (5) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such consciousness in the past.’

This is how, bhikshus, one does not pursue the past.

Let go of the future

6 And how, bhikshus, does one hold fond hope for the future?

- (6) One seeks delight there thinking, ‘May I have such form in the future.’⁷²
 (7) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such feelings in the future.’
 (8) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such perception in the future.’
 (9) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such formations in the future.’
 (10) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such consciousness in the future.’

This is how, bhikshus, one holds fond hope of the future.

7 And how, bhikshus, does one *not* hold fond hope for the future?

- (6) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking, ‘May I have such form in the future.’
 (7) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such feelings in the future.’
 (8) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such perception in the future.’
 (9) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such formations in the future.’
 (10) One does *not* seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such consciousness in the future.’

This is how, bhikshus, one does not hold fond hope of the future.

Let go of the present

8 And how, bhikshus, is one dragged along [distracted]⁷³ by each present state as it arises?

(11) Here, bhikshus, an untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma, who has no regard for true persons and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma,

regards **form** as self, or self as possessed of form, or form as in self, or self as in form.⁷⁴

(12) He regards **feeling** as self, or self as possessed of feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling.

(13) He regards **perception** as self, or self as possessed of perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception.

(14) He regards **formations** as self, or self as possessed of formations, or formations as in self, or self as in formations.

(15) He regards **consciousness** as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

This is how, bhikshus, one is dragged along [distracted] by each present state as it arises.

9 And how, bhikshus, is one *not* dragged along [undistracted] by each present state as it arises?

deration, I now believe that the second interpretation is more true to the intention of the text. This also ties in better with the stanzas themselves, which enjoin the disciple not to dwell in the past and future but to contemplate ‘each presently arisen state’ just as it presents itself” (M:ÑB 1344 n1216). In the tr here I try to reflect the lack of delight in *both* the contemplation itself and in the arisen thought.

⁷² *Eva, rūpo siyam anāgataṃ addhānan ti tattha nandim samanvāneti.*

⁷³ “Is dragged along by” (*samhīrati*), or “is moved, distracted by,” passive of *samharati*, “he gathers together.” This verb, *samhīrati*, here and in the next para, refers back to the line in the verse, *asamhīram asaṅkuppaṃ* (“immovable, unshakable”). Comy says: “One is dragged along by craving and views because of the lack of insight.” (MA 5:4).

⁷⁴ On these four self-identity views, see Intro (4).

(11) Here, bhikshus, a well-taught noble disciple, who has regard for the noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dharma, who has regard for true persons and is skilled and disciplined in their Dharma,

does *not* regard form as self,
 nor self as possessed of form,
 nor form as in self,
 nor self as in form.

(12) He does *not* regard feeling as self,
 nor self as possessed of feeling,
 nor feeling as in self,
 nor self as in feeling.

(13) He does *not* regard perception as self as self,
 nor self as possessed of perception,
 nor perception as in self,
 nor self as in perception.

(14) He does *not* regard formations as self,
 nor self as possessed of formations,
 nor formations as in self,
 nor self as in formations.

(15) He does *not* regard consciousness as self,
 nor self as possessed of consciousness,
 nor consciousness as in self,
 nor self as in consciousness.

This is how, bhikshus, one is not dragged along [undistracted] by each present state as it arises.”

Conclusion

10 Let one not pursue [not dwell on] the past,
 nor hold fond hope for the future.
 for what is past has passed away,
 and the future has not yet come.

11 The present state as it arises,
 with insight see each of them;
 immovable, unshakable,
 having known that, let one be sure of it,

12 Work at the task this very day!
 Who knows, death would come tomorrow?
 For, there is no bargaining whatsoever
 with death’s great horde.

13 One who dwells thus ardently,
 relentlessly, day and night—
 he is *bhaddeka,ratta* [one who delights in
 the auspicious oneness (of mind)],
 says the peaceful sage.

14 So it was in reference to this that it is said,
 ‘Bhikshus, I will teach you the summary and analysis of “the [one who delights in the wholesome oneness (of mind)].”’”

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved⁷⁵ of the Blessed One’s word.

— evam —

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⁷⁵ “Joyfully approved,” *attamanā...abhinandunī*.