11 (Gāmaṇī) Kulā Sutta

The (Gāmaṇī) Discourse on Families | **S 42.9**
or, **(Asi,bandhaka,putta) Kulā Sutta** The Discourse on Families (to Asi,bandhaka,putta)
Theme: The 8 causes of destruction of families
Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Asi,bandhaka,putta the nirgrantha

1.1 Asi,bandhaka,putta is a headman (*gāmaṇi*) in Kosala[1] and a follower of the nirgranthas (S 4:37) but who later takes refuge (as related here). In **the (Pacchā,bhūmaka) Asi,bandhaka,putta Sutta** (S 42.6), he is said to be one of the western (*pacchā,bhūmaka*) brahmins who believe that lifting up a person who has just died, carrying him out and calling him by name would speed him heavenward. Surely, he argues, since the Buddha is an arhat, he could bring the whole world to heaven. The Buddha declares that only a person's karma can determine the state of his rebirth.[2] This statement is quoted in the Netti-p,pakaraṇa (Nett 45-47).[3]

1.2 This discourse, **the (Gāmaṇī) Kulā Sutta** (S 42.9), relates how the nirgranthas (early Jains) use Asi,-bandhaka,putta to ask the Buddha a double-horned question in an attempt to trip the Buddha.[4] Unlike in **the Abhaya,rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58) where the Buddha points out to Abhaya that he is asking a double-horned question (and so foiling the deceit),[5] here (in S 42.9) the Buddha gives a complete discourse in reply—one that impresses Asi,bandhaka,putta who then goes for refuge.[6]

2 The double-pointed question

2.1 TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

2.1.1 Formal logic. Asi.bandhaka,putta's question [§6] is an example of a "double-pointed question" (*ubhato,koṭika pañha*), a trick dilemma, but which, according to **Jayatilleke,**

> contains a conception of consistency which formal logic does not take account of. This is the sense in which one's actions may be said to be consistent or inconsistent with the views that one claims to hold (v infra §598 for the definition of this concept of consistency). (1963: 227)

Moreover, the second horn of Asi.bandhaka,putta's dilemma is not stated, only implied. Jayatilleke reconstructs the argument in technical form as follows:

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[1] Kosala, also called "the kingdom of the Kosalas." It was divided into Northern Kosala (*uttara kosala*) on the banks of the Sarayu river (the modern Gaghara) and extending northward to the foothills of the Himalaya, and Southern Kosala (*dakkhiṇa kosala*) extending southward to the Vindhya mountains. During the Buddha's time, Kosala (under king Pasenadi) was the most powerful kingdom in north India, but eventually it was overshadowed by Magadha.

[2] S 42.6 (SD 39.9).

[3] For details on Asi.bandhaka,putta, see SD 51.12 (1.2.2).

[4] S 42.9 (SD 7.11).

[5] M 58/1:392-396 (SD 7.12).

[6] See SD 51.12 (1.2.2).

p (= B asserts t):	"The Blessed One in many ways praises care for families," (*Bhagavā aneka,pariyāyena kulānaṁ anuddayaṁ vaṇṇeti*).
q (= B acts as if he does not believe t)	"The Blessed One, wanders on tour with a large community of monks at a time of famine for the annihilation of families." (*Bhagavā dubbhikkhe…mahatā bhikkhu,saṅghena saddhiṁ cārikaṁ carati, ucchedāya bhagavā kulānaṁ paṭipaṇṇo*). [§6]

Here, says Jayatilleke, we have to assume that the second half of the dilemma is made up of the following implicative premises:

> If not-p, then r, where not-p = "B does not assert t," and r = "B is not different from an ordinary person."

We may now state the dilemma as follows:

> If p (B asserts) then not-q (B acts as if he does believe t), and if not-p (B does not assert t) then r (B is not different from an ordinary person).
> But either p or not-p (the law of excluded middle).[7]
> Therefore, either not-q or r. (Jayatilleke, 1963: 228)

Asi.bandhaka,putta's dilemma is useful as a lesson in clear and useful thinking. In simpler terms, this double-horned trick question is a *false dilemma*, that is, it is not a true dilemma; there *are* other possibilities. Firstly, the double-horned question at best serves to identify the beliefs of the speaker(s), and is thus merely a basic assumption, not a logical conclusion. In other words, it is an *informal fallacy,* that is, an argument whose stated premises fail to support their proposed conclusion.[8]

2.1.2 Informal fallacy. Here, it is useful to know the difference between an argument and a proposition. Briefly, an *argument* is a collection of propositions in which at least one of the claims is said to follow from the others. A proposition is an assertion that something is or is not so, and is always either true or false. Propositions used to support a given argument are commonly called *premises*, and those arguments that the premises support are commonly called *conclusions*.

The question of which propositions are the premises and which are the conclusions depends largely on the given argument and may not always be clear. While propositions are *either true or false*, arguments are *either valid or invalid*. The *validity* of a given argument is based solely on whether or not their premises support the conclusion, and not on whether the conclusion (or any of the premises) are true or false. This means that we could have an argument based entirely on false propositions but is still valid! Here is a notoriously common example:[9]

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[7] "The law of excluded middle" (in Latin, *principium tertii exclusi*; or *tertium non datur*, "there is no third (possibility)"). For example, *The Buddha is mortal*, then the law of excluded middle holds the logical disjunction that either *the Buddha is mortal* or *the Buddha is not mortal* is true by virtue of its form alone. That is, the "middle" position—that the Buddha is neither mortal nor immortal—is excluded by logic, and therefore either the first possibility (*The Buddha is mortal*) or its negation (*The Buddha is not mortal*) must be true. In simple terms, everything must either be or not be.

[8] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Informal_fallacy#cite_ref-0, & also D Kelley, *The Art of Reasoning*. 3rd ed. NY: W W Norton, 1998.

[9] Based on http://www.napoletano.net/front/node/350#footnoteref9_xjgq3hq.

Evangelist: The Bible[10] is infallible and totally accurate.
Skeptic: How do you know that?
Evangelist: Because the Bible says so. In Matthew 24:35 Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away," and Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God proves true."
Skeptic: So what you're telling me is that the Bible is accurate because it says it's accurate? And you people wonder why no one takes you seriously.

This is an unfortunate example of *petitio principii* or "begging the question," that is, the circular logic of assuming the truth of a conclusion with slightly different wording to validate the truth of the same conclusion.

2.2 SUTTA ANALYSES

2.2.1 Volitional formations. We will now examine Asi.bandhaka,putta's dilemma as a speech act (*vacī,-saṅkhāra*), that is, verbal karma.[11] There are two aspects of a speech act, namely, the ethical and the psychological. The ethical aspect of a speech act forms a part of the dependent arising cycle, that is, dependent on *ignorance,* there arise *volitional formations* (*saṅkhāra*),[12] namely, bodily acts, speech acts and mind acts (thoughts). If this continues, it naturally leads to suffering, thus:

> Ignorance → volitional formations → consciousness → name-and-form → the six sense-bases → contact → feeling → craving → clinging → existence → birth → decay-and-death, sorrow, etc.[13]

Here *saṅkhāra* describes the "formative" nature of karma, which does not progress in linear way, but proliferates an exponential network of latent tendencies.[14] The speech act is an aspect of our past karma in the form of volitional formations. This definition is found in such discourses as **the (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 12.2) and **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.27).[15]

In the Asi.bandhaka,putta Sutta, the Jain leader, Nāta,putta, instructs Asi,bandhaka,putta to knock the Buddha down with a double-horned trick question, on account of his own ignorance of logical and the Buddha's wisdom (at least, that is how the reciters depict Nāta,putta in the Suttas). If we disregard who the actors are, the lesson becomes even more significant: we all should examine our thoughts and measure our words so that they reflect the true reality of things, and are also pleasant, bringing concord, and connected with the path to liberation.[16]

2.2.1 Verbal function. The three kinds of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) are as follows:

bodily formations	*kāya,saṅkhāra*	motivation underlying physical actions,
speech formations	*vacī,saṅkhāra*	motivation underlying spoken words,
mental formations	*mano,saṅkhāra*[17]	motivation underlying mentation (thoughts, ideas, etc).

[10] The Bible references quoted here are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicized ed, © 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

[11] For a linguistic and philosophical view of "speech act," see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speech_act.

[12] On *saṅkhāra,* see BDict: saṅkhāra, & S:B 44-47.

[13] See **(Paṭicca,samuppāda) Desanā S** (S 12.1/2:1 f), **Kaccā(ya)na,gotta S** (S 12.15/2:16 f), SD 6.13 & **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16 (4).

[14] On "mental proliferation" (*papañca*), see **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 6.14 + SD (2).

[15] See S 12.2/2:2-4 @ SD 5.15 & S 12.27/2:42 f respectively. See also BDict: saṅkhāra (1).

[16] On right speech, see **Abhaya Rāja,kumāra S** (M 58/1:392-396) = 7.12.

[17] Less often, we also see *citta,saṅkhāro:* see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.13-15/1:301) & SD 40a.9 (2.4).

They are, as such. *psychological* aspects of our being, that are mostly beyond our conscious control, that is to say:

(1) *bodily function*, namely, in-and-out-breathing (**M 10**,4/1:56, **43**,25/1:296, **44**,13-15/1:301, **62**,26/1:425, **118**,17**/3:82**);
(2) *verbal function*, namely, initial application and sustained application (*vitakka,civāra*), or more simply, thinking and pondering[18] (**M 117**,14/3:73); and
(3) *mental function,* namely, feeling, perception, (**M 44**,14/1:301, **118**,19/3:82 f).

These three terms are defined in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44,13-15/1:301). They occur in everyone, but can be mindfully tamed through sense-restraint (*indriya,saṁvara*)[19] and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).[20] All these functions temporarily cease during the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*).[21]

In terms of the logical dilemma, the Asi.bandhaka,putta Sutta should be studied with **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58).[22]

3 The success of the family

The (Gāmaṇī) Kulā Sutta mentions 8 "causes and conditions for the destruction of families" [§10]:

(1) on account of the king [the government];
(2) or on account of thieves;
(3) or on account of fire;
(4) or on account of water;
(5) or they do not find what they have deposited away;[23]
(6) or mismanaged undertakings fail;
(7) or there arises in a family a wastrel[24] who squanders, dissipates, fritters away[25] its wealth;
(8) and impermanence.

A shorter version of this list is given in **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54), as highlighted in bold here:

> Here, Vyagghapajja, whatever wealth the son of family receives through work and zeal, gathers by the strength of his arms, earn by the sweat of his brow and justly obtains by right

[18] The terms "initial application" and "sustained application" here are not a tt but broadly refers to any kind of mental activity, es in an unawakened mind.

[19] On sense-restraint, see ***Nimitta* and *Anuvyañjana***, SD 19.14.

[20] On wise attention, see **Meghiya S** (A 9.3), SD 34.2 & **Virtue ethics**, SD 18.11 (6.4).

[21] See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 9,3.33(8)/2:112), SD 9. This anomalous state, fully described in **Visuddhi,magga** (Vism 23.16-52702-709), is a combination of deep meditative calm and insight where all mental states temporarily shut down (Vism 23.43/707 f): see **Sappurisa S** (M 113), SD 23.7 + SD (2); also **Animitta Ceto,samādhi Pañha S** (S 40.9), SD 24.9 (3).

[22] M 58/1:392-396 = 7.12.

[23] "What they have deposited away," following Bodhi's suggestion: *nihitaṁ vā nâdhigacchati* (Ce, Ee), as against Be Se:BUDSIR(T) *nihitaṁ vā ṭhāṇā vigacchati.* That is to say, for example, the treasure or savings that one has buried or hid away or deposited for safekeeping are lost.

[24] "Wastrel," *kul;aṅgara,* lit "coal of the clan", ie a wealth-destroyer.

[25] "Squanders, dissipates, fritters away," *vikirati vidhamati viddhaṁeti,* lit "scatters, destroys, breaks up". Here I follow S:B.

means—such he guards and watches over so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not wash it away, nor unloving heirs take it away.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of watchfulness. (A 8.54.5/4:281 f)

Clearly this is a graduated training (*anupubba,sikkhā,* A 4:201) and provisional teaching for the laity (*gihī,dhamma*, A 3:41). On a more advanced level, recorded in **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 14), the Buddha declares to the monks that things are not that smooth in real life:

Mahānāma, if wealth accrues to him from his striving, exertion and effort, he feels pain and displeasure on account of having to protect his wealth, thinking:

'What (shall I do) now so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not wash it away, nor unloving heirs take it away?'[26]

Even as he guards and protects his wealth, kings seize it, thieves steal it, fire burns it, water washes it away, unloving heirs take it away. He sorrows, suffers, weeps, beats his breasts, and becomes distressed, crying: 'What was mine is no more!'

Now, Mahānāma, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, … the cause being simply sense-desires. (M 14,9/1:92 = M 13,10/1:86), SD 4.7 & SD 6.9

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(Gāmaṇī) Kulā Sutta

The (Gāmaṇī) Discourse on Families

S 42.9

1 At one time the Blessed One was touring the Kosala country by stages[27] [on a teaching tour] with a large community of monks, and eventually arrived at Nālandā. **[323]**

He stayed in the Pāvarika Mango Grove outside Nāḷandā.

Nirgrantha Nātaputta's trick question

2 Now at that time, Nālandā was hit by famine, a time of scarcity, with crops blighted and turned to straw.[28]

3 At that time, the nirgrantha Nātaputta was residing in Nālandā together with a large community of nirgranthas [Jains].

4 Then, Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman, a disciple (*sāvaka*) of the nirgranthas, approached the nirgrantha Nātaputta, saluted him and sat down at one side.

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[26] This quotation occurs in **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,5/4:281 f), where a lay follower is instructed how to guard his wealth. Here, however, where the teaching, being addressed to a saint, has a more realistic tone.

[27] "Touring by stages," *cārikaṁ caramāno,* lit "walking the walk," that is wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering the people.

[28] *Nālandā dubbhikkhā hoti duhitikā setaṭṭikā salākāvuttā* (following Bhikkhu's Bodhi's suggestion) (S:B 1450 n347). See Hinuber 1981. On other descriptions of famines, see V 2:256 = A 4:278 f. While SA explains both ***dvīhitikā*** and ***duhitikā*** as derived from *du-īhiti*(or *duhiti*, "difficult faring"), the correct derivation, says Bodhi, is from *duhita* (opp *su,hita*) (S:B 1429 n212); see Monier Williams: dur-hita, su-hita. ***Setaṭṭikā,*** fr *seta-aṭṭi-kā,* is "the white disease" because the afflicted crops turn white and do not yield grain (VA 6:1291 = AA 4:136; SA 1:175).

5 As he was thus sitting at one side, Nirgrantha Nātaputta said this to Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman:

"Come, headman, refute the doctrine of the recluse Gotama. Then a good report concerning you will be spread about thus: 'Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman has refuted the doctrine of the recluse Gotama, so mighty, so powerful!'"

"But how, bhante, shall I refute the doctrine of the recluse Gotama, so mighty, so powerful?"

6 "Go, headman, approach the recluse Gotama, so mighty, so powerful, and ask him:

'Bhante, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise care for families, security of families, compassion towards families?'

If, when questioned by you thus, he were to answer,

'Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praise care for families, security of families, compassion towards families,'

then you should say to him,

'Then, why, bhante, is the Blessed One wandering on tour with a large community of monks at a time of famine, a time of scarcity, when crops are blighted and have turned to straw? The Blessed One is one whose practice is for the annihilation of families, the destruction of families, the harming of families!'

When the recluse Gotama is asked **this double-horned question**[29] by you, he will neither be able to throw it up nor swallow it down." **[324]**

7 "Yes, bhante," Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman replied. Then, he rose from his seat and after saluting Nirgrantha Nātaputta, keeping him to his right side, departed and went to the Blessed One.

Asi,bandhaka,putta sees the Buddha

After saluting the Blessed One, he sat down at one side.

8 Sitting thus at one side, Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman said this to the Blessed One:

"Bhante, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise care for families, security of families, compassion towards families?"

"Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praise care for families, security of families, compassion towards families."

"Then, why, bhante, is the Blessed One wandering on tour with a large community of monks at a time of famine, a time of scarcity, when crops are blighted and have turned to straw? The Blessed One is one whose practice is for the annihilation of families, the destruction of families, the harming of families!"

9 "I recollect 91 aeons back,[30] headman, but I do not recall any family that has ever been destroyed merely by offering cooked alms-food.

Rather, **those families that are rich**, with much wealth and property, with abundant gold and silver, with abundant possessions and means of subsistence, with abundant wealth and grain, have all become so from giving, from truthfulness and from self-control.[31]

[29] "Double-pointed question" (*ubhato,koṭika pañha*): see Intro (2).

[30] "Ninety-one aeons back," *ito…eka,navuti,kappo,* ie back to the time of Vipassī Buddha. See D:RD 2:6; also **Tirokuḍḍa S,** SD 2.7 (2) n8.

[31] "Self-restraint," *saññama,sambhūtāni,* foll Ee Ce Se:BUDSIR(T) as against Be *sāmaññā,sambhūtāni.*

How families are destroyed

10 There are, headman, **8 causes and conditions for the destruction of families**.

Families come to destruction

(1) on account of the king [the government];
(2) or on account of thieves;
(3) or on account of fire;
(4) or on account of water;
(5) or they do not find what they have deposited away;[32]
(6) or mismanaged undertakings fail;
(7) or there arises in a family a wastrel[33] who squanders, dissipates, fritters away[34] its wealth;
(8) *and* impermanence is the 8th.

11 These are the 8 causes and conditions for the destruction of families.[35]

But while these 8 causes and conditions for the destruction of families exist, if anyone speaks thus of me:

'The Blessed One is one whose practice is for the annihilation of families, the destruction of families, the harming of families'—

unless he gives up this talk, gives up this state of mind, renounces this view, it would be for him just as if he had been taken and thrown into hell."[36]

12 When this was said, Asi,bandhaka,putta the headman said this to be Blessed One:

"Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way the Blessed One has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life."

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[32] "What they have deposited away," foll Ce Ee *nihitaṁ vā nâdhigacchati*, as against Be Se:BUDSIR(T) *nihitaṁ vā ṭhāṇā vigacchati.* That is to say, eg, the treasure or savings that one has buried or hid away or deposited for safe-keeping are lost or one forgets their location.

[33] "Wastrel," *kul'aṅgara,* lit "coal of the clan," ie a wealth-destroyer.

[34] "Squanders, dissipates, fritters away," *vikirati vidhamati viddhaṁseti,* lit "scatters, destroys, breaks up." Here I follow S:B.

[35] See Intro (2) above.

[36] *Yathâbhataṁ nikkhitto evaṁ niraye:* a well known stock (M 1:71; S 4:325; A 1:8, 105, 292, 297, 2:71, 83; It 12, 14, 26, etc); its converse *yathâbhataṁ nikkhitt+ evaṁ sagge* is also very common. The two phrases often appear in the same sutta, mostly commonly found in the Aṅguttara, eg **Kodha Peyyāla** (A 2.31-35/1:96); **Sāvajja S** (A 3.142-/1:292); **Bhatt'uddesaka S** (A 4.20/2:19), SD 51.17(3.3); **Maccharinī S** (A 5.115/3:139 ×2); **Paṭhama Niraya S** (A 6.81/3:432); **Upasikā S** (A 10.203/5:287). See SD 47.3b (2.1) for 4 related suttas. The Aṅguttara suttas are addressed primarily to the laity. This is a difficult sentence, and here is rendered following the Comy gloss: "He will be cast into hell as if carried off and put there by the wardens of hell" (MA 2:32). Alt tr "according to his deserts he will be, as it were, dropped off in hell" (S:B 1346 ad S 42.9/4:325). "Although such a fate may sound excessively severe merely for verbal denigration, it should be remembered that he is maligning a Fully Enlightened Buddha with a mind of hatred, with the intention of discouraging others from entering upon the path that could lead them to complete liberation from suffering." It should be noted that it is *not* the Buddha who wills such an action (falling into hell, or going to heaven), but the results of our own malicious karma brings upon us a hell-like suffering. On *yathā + ābhata*, see PED: 549 (yathā'bhata). (Ñāṇamoli, *The Lion's Roar: Two Discourses of the Buddha* (WH 390/391), rev Bhikkhu Bodhi, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993 n17).

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