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Dīgha,nakha Sutta

The Discourse to Dīgha,nakha | M 74

Theme: Understanding feelings overcomes wrong view; Sāriputta's awakening

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1 Compararative study

The Dīgha,nakha Sutta relates how the wanderer Dīgha,nakha, nephew of Sāriputta,¹ becomes a streamwinner, and how Sāriputta himself becomes an arhat. The events recorded here occur two weeks after Sāriputta has joined the Order (MA 3:203). This discourse has two parallels in the two Saṃyukta Āgamas in Chinese translations.² While the Pali version gives the venue as on Mt Vulture's Peak near Rājagaha, the two Saṃyukta versions give it as the Squirrels' Feeding Ground, also near Rājagaha.

Parts of this sutta are preserved in Sanskrit fragments.³ The same account is found in the **Mahā Prajñā,pāramitā Śāstra**, a work on the perfection of wisdom by Nāgārjuna, and in **the Mahāvibhāṣā**.⁴ **The Avadāna** (edifying tales of past lives of the Buddha and his disciples) in the Sanskrit and Chinese has an account of Dīgha,nakha.⁵ The northern texts generally present Dīgha,nakha as being annoyed on hearing that his close relative, Sāriputra, whom he respects for his intelligence, has become a disciple of a “heretic.”⁶

In the northern version of the sutta, Dīgha,nakha is recorded as in the end declaring himself to be a lay follower.⁷ However, it relates different events, reporting how a brahmin visitor called Dīgha,nakha asks the Buddha about the karmic causes of various physical qualities of the Buddha.⁸ On hearing the Buddha's teaching that beings are heirs of their karma, he takes refuge.

The Sanskrit and Chinese versions of **the Saṃyukta Āgama**,⁹ **the Mahā Prajñā,pāramitā Śāstra**¹⁰ and **the Avadāna Śataka**,¹¹ however, all say that Dīgha,nakha requests for ordination, and in due course becomes an arhat. Analayo concludes

This is more in line with what one would expect, since it is difficult to imagine that Dīgha,nakha continued to live as a non-Buddhist wanderer after becoming a stream-enterer, and it would be even more odd to assume that he reverted to lay life, so that for him to ordain as a Buddhist monk would be self evident.¹² (Analayo 2005, M 1:501 fn)

¹ According to the northern texts, he was Sāriputta's uncle: Mahā Prajñā,pāramitā Śāstra, T1509 = T25.61c11; Mahāvibhāṣā, T1545 = T27.509c3; Avadāna Śataka, T 200 = T4.256a9; JS Speyer, 1909:187; N Dutt,1984d:23.

² SĀ 969 = T2.249a-250a & SĀ2 203 = T2.449a-b.

³ R Pischel 1904a:814-816, & Noriaki Hosoda 1989b: 144-151. The close correspondence of these fragments to SĀ 969 was noticed by Sylvain Lévi, 1904:299. (From Analayo.)

⁴ T1509 = T25.61b062a, tr in E Lamotte 1966:47-51 & T1545 = T27.509b-510b. Also found in the Tibetan *dul ba* (Vinaya), briefly paraphrased in WW Rockhill 1883:45.

⁵ Avadāna,śataka no 99, Chinese T200 = T 4.255a-256b; Skt version in JS Speyer, 1909:186-196 (much of the Skt account is missing from the Chinese).

⁶ Comy records how Dīgha,nakha reflects that his uncle has gone over to “another heretic” (*aññam pāsaṇḍam*) (MA 2:203).

⁷ T 584 = T14.968c8 & Sogdian version in E Benveniste 1940:78.

⁸ An exposition reminding one of **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30/3:145-179) (Analayo).

⁹ SĀ 969 = T2.250a11 & SĀ2 203 = T2.449b27; the Skt fragment166b Pischel 1904a:816.

¹⁰ T1509 = T25.62a4; T200 = T4.256a19.

¹¹ Speyer 1909:194,14, 195,2.

¹² Freiburger 1997:128, in his survey of the compass of the term *paribbājaka* in the Pāli discourses, concludes that there is no evidence for the existence of any Buddhist *paribbājakas*. This supports that a Buddhist who “goes forth,” or one “gone forth” who becomes a Buddhist, would both ordain as members of the Buddhist monastic order. (Analayo's fn)

2 Dīgha,nakha

Dīgha,nakha means “one with long nails,” perhaps because he keeps his nails uncut. This is clearly his sobriquet, and the Buddha calls him **Aggi,vessana**.¹³ This is probably the name of a brahmin clan, **the Agni,veśyāyana**,¹⁴ and the kshatriyas (members of the warrior class) who take their name from the brahmin purohitas.¹⁵ The Buddha also addresses Saccaka Nigaṇṭha,putta in **the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta** (M 35)¹⁶ and **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36) in the same way.¹⁷ In **the Danta,bhūmi Sutta** (M 125), both the Buddha and prince Jaya,sena (who visits him) address the novice Acira,vata as Aggi,vessana.¹⁸ In **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), rajah Ajāta,sattu addresses Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta as Aggivessana.¹⁹

Dīgha,nakha is a wanderer (*paribbājaka*), a nephew of Sāriputta (a son of his sister).²⁰ In the Dīgha,-nakha Sutta, he visits the Buddha at the Boar’s Cave (*sūkara,khata*) and tells him that he rejects all views. The Buddha points out the inconsistency of his statement, and teaches him the way of liberation through “an analysis of feelings” (*vedanā,pariggaha*). At the end of the discourse, he becomes a streamwinner. Apparently, on this account, the sutta is called **Vedanā,pariggaha Sutta** in the Commentaries.²¹ On the word *pariggaha* [*pari*, “all around” + √GRAH, to seize],²² Analayo makes this note:

This commentarial title involves a meaning of the word *pariggaha* that evolved at a later historical stage, typical for its commentarial usage. In the early discourses, *pariggaha* refers to “acquisition,” a meaning that would not seem meaningful as part of the title of the present discourse. The rationale for devising an alternative or additional way of referring to the Dīghanakha Sutta could possibly be to distinguish it from another discourse of similar title but different content extant in the northern tradition, the “discourse on the query of the brahmin Dīghanakha,” as the Indian commentators might well have been aware of the existence of this other discourse.

(Analayo 2005 M 74 fn 1)

The “discourse on the query of the brahmin Dīghanakha” of the northern tradition, mentioned by Analayo above, is extant in Chinese, Tibetan and Sogdian (an ancient Iranian language).²³

The Majjhima Commentary says that he is an annihilationist (*uccheda,vādī*), but the suttas show no clear evidence of this: it is more likely that he is “a radical sceptic of the class satirically characterized in

¹³ On the name **Aggivessana**, see also DA 3:882; MA 1:278, 2:273-275, 285, 291, 3:204, 207 f; SA 1:35; AA 4:23; SnA 1:163; ItA 1:145 f, 2:68; ThaA 2:95.

¹⁴ **The Agni,veśyāyanas** were the descendents of king Agni,veśya (meaning fire-clad or surrounded by fire). The 9th canto 2nd ch of the Śrīmad Bhagavatam, on “The dynasties of the sons of Manu,” says: “O king, from the kshatriya Agni,veśya came the excellent brahmin dynasty known as Agni,veśyāyana” (*tato brahma,kulam jatam agni,veśyāyanam nṛpa*) (9.2.22). The Śrīmad Bhagavatam was one of the 18 Purāṇas [“Ancient Lore”] composed by Vyāsa (5th cent BCE?), the author of the Mahā,bhārata (the epic on the Bharata dynasty).

¹⁵ See Chalmers, *Further Dialogues* (M:C 1:162n). The *purohita* (“one placed in front”) was the most important of priestly functionaries, and whose duty was to supervise the whole sacrifice. Apparently, every *rāja* or tribal chief (a kshatriya) had at least one purohita who was responsible not only for conducting sacrifices but also for carrying out other rites for the welfare of the tribe. When the rajah went into battle, the purohita performed magical rituals to ensure victory. See AL Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 1989:17.

¹⁶ M 35.9/1:229 f.

¹⁷ M 36/1:237-251, passim.

¹⁸ M 125/3:128-137.

¹⁹ D 2.28/1:57.

²⁰ MA 4:87.

²¹ DA 2:418, 3:882; MA 2:862, 4:87; SA 1:122, 2:234; AA 1:92, 161, 321, 2:63; DhA 1:79, 96; ThaA 3:95, 102; ApA 212.

²² PED gives the root of *pariggaha* as √GRH, but here I follow WD Whitney, *Roots, Verb-forms an Primary Derivatives*, Leipzig & London, 1885: 40. For online resource, see <http://www.language.brown.edu/Sanskrit/whitney/>; for download: <http://ia311321.us.archive.org/1/items/rootsverbformspr00whitrich/rootsverbformspr00whitrich.pdf>.

²³ 長爪梵志問經 chángzhuǎ fànzhì qǐng wèn jīng, T584 = T14.968a-c. A Sogdian version can be found in E Benveniste 1940:74-79 and a tr of the Sogdian version and comparison with its Chinese counterpart in R Gauthiot 1912. A Tibetan version occurs in vol 74, no 342 in the *sde dge* ed of the **bKah hGyur** (Kanjur).

the **Sandaka Sutta** as ‘eel-wrigglers’ (M 76.30). His assertion would then be tantamount to a wholesale repudiation of all philosophical views.”²⁴ According to DPPN, it is possible that Dīgha,nakha is the heretic brahmin who was admonished by Moggallāna not to disparage Mahā Kassapa.²⁵

3 The Boar’s Cave

The Boar’s Cave—*sūkara,khata*, or more fully, *sūkara,khata,lena*—was a cave on the side of Mt Vulture’s Peak (*gijjha,kūṭa*). While residing there, the Buddha delivered the following teachings:

Dīgha,naka Sutta or **Vedanā,pariggaha Sutta**, to Dīgha,nakha, on feelings (M 74/1:497-501);
Sūkara,khata Sutta, to Sāriputta, on true supreme honour (S 48.58/5:233-235).

According to the Commentaries, during Kassapa Buddha’s time, the cave was found as a hollow in the ground where the earth was yet growing, during the interval between the two Buddhas. One day, a boar dug up the soil near the cave and thereby concealed it. The rains came down and washed the soil away, revealing the cave. A forest dweller (*vana,caraka*) saw it and looked after it, thinking that it was the dwelling of virtuous holy men. He cleared the earth around it, fenced it in, cleaned the area, and making it as beautiful as a golden bowl, furnished it with couch and stool, and presented to the Buddha. The cave was deep, and could only be reached by climbing up to it. (MA 2:203; SA 3:249)

4 Sāriputta’s awakening

Sāriputta’s conversion to the Buddha’s teaching, as a streamwinner, occurs when he meets Assaji, the youngest of the first five monks (V 1:40). Two weeks later, the Dīgha,nakha Sutta records Sāriputta standing behind the Buddha fanning him,²⁶ listening to the Buddha’s exhortation to Dīgha,nakha. As he stands there listening, he awakens to arhathood, reflecting thus:

Tesaṃ tesaṃ kira no Bhagavā dhammānaṃ abhiññā pahānam āha, tesaṃ tesaṃ kira no Sugato dhammānaṃ abhiññā paṇinissaggaṃ āhā ti

“The Blessed One, indeed, speaks to us of the abandoning of these things through direct knowledge.²⁷ The Sugata [the well-farer], indeed, speaks to us of the relinquishing of these things through direct knowledge.” [14]

According to Analayo’s findings,²⁸ the Saṃyukta Āgama versions, the Sanskrit fragment and the Avadāna Śataka recounts Sāriputta’s awakening by way of actual meditation, that is, by the contemplation of impermanence and thereby developing dispassion. The Chinese **Saṃyukta Āgama** version says:

²⁴ M:ÑB 1279 n731.

²⁵ Tha 1169-1173; ThaA 3:169 f = ThaA:SHB 2:180.

²⁶ The Pali Canon records are at least 6 instances of a monk fanning the Buddha: (1) Nāga,samāla (**Mahā Sīhanāda S**, M 12.64/1:83); (2) Sāriputta (**Dīgha,nakha S**, M 74.14/ 1:501 f); (3) Ānanda (2 instances): **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.1.4/2:73) & **Vassakāra S** (A 7.20.2/4:18); (4) Upavāṇa (2 instances): **Pāsādika S** (D 29) mentions Upavāṇa fanning the Buddha, ie, just after the Buddha has given Cunda Samaṇ’uddesa an instruction on the 4 satipatthanas (D 29.41/3:141), which is probably on a different occasion from the instance reported in **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.5.4/2:138), when again he fans the dying Buddha. Comy says that although the Buddha is fanned, he feels neither warm nor cold (AA 4:14). Analayo notes that while the Majjhima rarely mention a monk fanning the Buddha, the Madhyama Āgama (in Chinese tr) regularly depicts the Buddha being fanned, eg MĀ 33 = T1.474a19 || M 106; MĀ 204 = T1.775c17 || M 26; MĀ 205 = T1.779a10 || M 64; MĀ 212 = T1.793a1 || M 90; MĀ 213 = T.1.-797b19 || M 89 (2005:54 n83). Cf Thich Minh Chau, *The Chinese Madhyama Āgama and the Pāli Majjhima Nikāya*, 1991:30.

²⁷ “Direct knowledge,” *abhiññā*, also “superknowledge.” Comy says that the Buddha talks of the ridding of the notions regarding the eternal, regarding the partially eternal, and regarding form, through the direct knowledge of these things. (MA 3:208)

²⁸ Analayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, draft MS on M 74, 2005.

於彼彼法觀察無常，觀生滅，觀離欲，觀滅盡，觀捨。
yú bǐ bǐ fǎ guān chǎ wú cháng, guān shēng miè, guān lí yù, guān miè jǐn, guān shě.

He contemplated those *dhammas* as impermanent, contemplated their arising and ceasing, contemplated dispassion, contemplated total cessation, contemplated relinquishment.

(SĀ 969 = T2.249c29)

The other Saṃyukta Āgama in Chinese (incomplete translation at T100) says:

觀察諸法無常，即便離欲證成，棄捨諸見。
guān chá zhū fǎ wú cháng, jí biàn lí yù zhèng chéng, qì shě zhū jiàn.

He contemplated all dharmas as impermanent, promptly realized dispassion, letting go of all views.

(SĀ2 203 = T2.449b22)

The **Sanskrit fragment** 166a²⁹ similarly reads *virāgânupaśyino* (one who recollects dispassion). The **Avadāna Śataka**³⁰ reports that Sāriputta “dwells contemplating those things as impermanent, as passing away, as fading away, as ending, as relinquishment” (*anityânudarśino viharato vyayânudarśino virāgânudarśino nirodhânudarśino nirodhânudarśinaḥ pratiniḥsargânudarśino*).³¹

The nature of the insight practice that constitutes Sāriputta’s awakening is actually described in the **Anupada Sutta** (M 111),³² but it has no Chinese version. According to the Anupada Sutta, Sāriputta analyses the mental constituents of the dhyanas and formless attainments, and cultivated detachment towards them through insight into their impermanent nature. The Majjhima Commentary, however, says that Sāriputta’s insight practice as described in the Anupada Sutta only leads him up to non-return (MA 4:91). The **Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2** (A 4.168) describes Sāriputta’s cultivation of insight by way of dhyanas as being one of “easy progress with quick intuition” (*sukha,paṭipadā khippābhiññā*),³³ which is explained by the **(Paṭipadā) Asubha Sutta** (A 4.163) as that the five spiritual faculties (*pañc’indriya*)—faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom—arise easily in him.³⁴

5 The Buddha’s use of language

Towards the end of the sutta, the Buddha declares to Dīghanakha:

Aggi,vessana, a monk whose mind is liberated thus, sides with no one and disputes with no one. He uses speech that is spoken and current in the world without being attached to it.

Evam vimutta,citto kho Aggi,vessana bhikkhu na kenaci samvadati na kenaci vivadati, yañ ca loke vuttam tena voharati aparāmasan ti. [§13]

In the **Pupphā Sutta** (S 22.89) the Buddha declares: “Monks, I do not dispute with the world; rather, it is the world that disputes with me.”³⁵ The meaning of this statement is that the Buddha does not force his teachings upon others, and only teaches those who are ready, or teaches them in a progressive way so that they realize the truth in due course.

Words lie: they are what one makes of them. They are merely vehicles for meaning. Words easily distort or hide the truth, and fail to convey one’s true intentions. For this reason, patience and compassion are vital in giving space for miscommunications and shortcomings amongst beings. Words and letters should clearly convey the meaning and spirit of good intentions. The **Araṇa,vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139) records the Buddha’s advice on how to prevent conflict in communication, such as speaking slowly and

²⁹ Pischel 1904a:815.

³⁰ Speyer 1909:194.

³¹ Tr revised by Piya Tan.

³² M 111/3:25-29 = SD 56.4.

³³ A 4.168/2:155 = SD 56.15.

³⁴ A 4.163/2:151 f.

³⁵ S 22.89/3:138 = SD 14.13.

using language that the audience can understand and appreciate.³⁶ The truth lies not in the words themselves, but in our *understanding* of what they are meant to convey. In this connection, the Dīgha, nakha Sutta Commentary (MA 3:208) quotes **the Araham Sutta** (S vv 61, 67):

<p>Whichever monk is an arhat, consummate, one with influxes destroyed, who bears his final body, might say, “I speak,” or he might say “They speak to me,”— skilful, knowing worldly conventions, he uses them only as mere expressions.</p>	<p><i>Yo hoti bhikkhu araham katāvī khīṇāsavo antima, deha, dhārā aham vadāmī ti pi so vadeyya mamaṃ vadantī ti pi so vadeyya loke samaññaṃ kusalo viditvā vohāra, mattena so vohareyyā ti</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">(S 1.5/1:14)</p>
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The arhat uses language without giving rise to conceit or misconceiving them to refer to an abiding self. The Majjhima Commentary (MA 3:208) also refers to **the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta** (D 9):

For, Citta, these are merely common names, common expressions, common usages, common designations in the world that the Tathāgata [Thus Come] uses without attachment to them [without misapprehending them].

(D 9.53/1:202, SD 7.14)

The Udumbarikā Sihanāda Sutta (D 25) is a classic of the Buddha’s teaching Dharma even when he knows that the listener would not immediately convert. In fact, the sutta records how the Buddha is challenged to a doctrinal duel by the zealous wanderer, Nigrodha. The Buddha defuses the tension by speaking in the challenger’s term, thus effectively putting aside the challenge, but turns it into a religious dialogue:

“Nigrodha, it is hard for one, holding a different view, keeping different priorities, having different likes, following a different practice, following a different teaching, to understand the doctrine that I teach my disciples (regarding their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life). Come on, then, Nigrodha, ask me about your own teachings, about what you regard as loathsome....

When this was said, a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:

“It is wonderful, it is marvellous how great the powers and virtues of the recluse Gotama in holding back his own doctrine and in inviting others to discuss theirs!”

(D 25.7/3:40)

Towards the end of the discourse, the Buddha makes this declaration of the spirit of religious dialogue:

“But, Nigrodha, I tell you this: Let an intelligent man come to me, who is honest, trustworthy, upright,³⁷ and I will instruct him, I will teach him the Dharma. If he practises what he is taught, then, within seven years, ... let alone seven years... **even in seven days he can attain the goal.**³⁸

Nigrodha, you may think, ‘The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to win disciples.’ But you should not think so. Let whoever is your teacher remain as your teacher.

Nigrodha, you may think, ‘The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to make us fall from our rules.’ ... Let your rules remain as your rules.

Nigrodha, you may think, ‘The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to make us fall from our livelihood.’ ... Let your livelihood remain as your livelihood.

Nigrodha, you may think, ‘The recluse Gotama says this with the desire to establish us in the unwholesome things along with teachings considered unwholesome.’ ... Let what you consider unwholesome continue to be so considered.

³⁶ M 139/3:230-236 = SD 7.8.

³⁷ “Honest, trustworthy, upright,” *asaṭho amāyāvī uju, jātiko* (= M 2:44/80.16), lit “not treacherous, not deceitful, straightforward.” M:ÑB has “honest and sincere, a man of rectitude” (M:ÑB 664)

³⁸ Similar statement found in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.22 = SD 13.2) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.46), SD 13.3.

Nigrodha, you may think, ‘The recluse Gotama says this with the desire to separate us from the wholesome things along with teachings considered wholesome.’...Let what you consider wholesome continue to be so considered.

—I do not speak for any of these reasons.

There are, Nigrodha, unwholesome things that have not been abandoned, defiled, conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in future, associated with birth, decay and death. It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dharma. If you practise accordingly, these defiled things will be abandoned...and by your own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom.”
(D 25.22/3:56 f)

6 Māgha Pūja and the 1250 monks

6.1 THE FOUR-FACTORED ASSEMBLY. The Majjhima Commentary (MA 3:209) ends by noting that the conclusion of this sutta is the occasion for **Māgha Pūja** or “Sangha Day,” that is, the first assembly of the early saints marked by four auspicious signs. After this discourse to Dīghanakha and his attainment of streamwinning, the Buddha descends from Mt Vulture Peak and goes to the Bamboo Grove (near Rājagaha) where there is the gathering of the disciples known as “the four-factored assembly” (*catur-aṅgika*, *-sannipāta*), so called because:

- (1) It is the full moon observance day of the month of Māgha;³⁹
- (2) 1250 monks⁴⁰ have assembled spontaneously (*dharmatāya*), unprompted (*anāmantitāni*);
- (3) They are all arhats of the sixfold superknowledges (*cha-l-abhiññā*); and
- (4) They are all been personally admitted by the Buddha with the formula “Come, O monk!” (*ehi, bhikkhu*).
(MA 3:209)

On this occasion, as the traditional monastic code has not yet been instituted, the Buddha gives them the well-known “admonitory code” (*ovāda pāṭimokkha*), which is the essence of monastic training and life, thus:

<i>sabba,pāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā sacitta,pariyodapanam etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ</i>	Not doing anything bad, cultivating the good [the wholesome], purifying one’s own mind— this is the teaching of the Buddhas. (Dh 183)
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<i>khantī paramaṃ tapo titikkhā nibbānaṃ paramaṃ vadanti buddhā na hi pabbajito parūpaghātī samaṇo hoti paraṃ viheṭṭhayanto anūpavādo anūpaghāto pāṭimokkhe ca saṃvaro mattaññutā ca bhattasmim panthañ ca sayan’āsanam adhicitte ca āyogo etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ</i>	Patience and forbearance are the supreme austerity, nirvana is supreme, say the Buddhas; truly, one is not a renunciant who harms another, nor is one a recluse, who hurts another. (Dh 184) Neither abusing nor injuring, and restraint in the Pāṭimokkha [monastic code], and moderation in food, and a remote bed and seat, and devotion to the higher mind— this is the teaching of the Buddhas. (Dh 185)
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³⁹ This full-moon often coincides with the last day of Chinese New Year, locally known as Chap Goh Meh (or more universally as **Yuan Xiao Jie**), or Lantern Day (not to be confused with the lantern festival of the 8th Chinese moon or Mooncake Festival). It is the day when traditional Chinese hold a special ancestral puja, have a second reunion dinner (the first one being on the new year’s eve). On the following day, after a fortnight’s break, working family members return to their work. The month of Māgha has 30 days, usu falling across Jan-Feb. **Visākha Pūjā** or “Buddha Day” (traditionally said to be on the full-moon day of May) commemorates the Buddha’s nativity, awakening and parinirvana. **Āsāḷha Pūjā** or “Dharma Day” commemorates the teaching of the first discourse: see SD 1.1 (3). For the ancient Indian year, see SD 1.1(1)n.

⁴⁰ The **Mahāpadāna S** (D 14), too, mentions these 1250 monks and that they are all arhats (D 14,1.10/2:6).

6.2 WHO WERE THE 1250 MONKS?

6.2.1 It is not clear who exactly these 1250 monks are. According to Kōgen MIZUNO⁴¹ and Hajime NAKAMURA,⁴² it is possible that they are the 1000 followers of the three Kassapa brothers and the 250 former disciples of Sañjaya who left him to follow Sāriputta and Moggallāna.⁴³ It should be noted that the “1250 monks”⁴⁴ is very likely a symbolic figure, just like “500 monks.”⁴⁵ It is very likely such numbers simply mean “a large number” approximating the total mentioned.

6.2.2 Moreover, from the various early Pali accounts, we can safely agree with MIZUNO that “in fact, about one year after his enlightenment, [the Buddha] had more than 1,300 disciples” (1980:87). The core of the first ehi-bhikkhus, however, can be listed as follows:

The group of 5 monks ⁴⁶	5	
Yasa and his 54 friends ⁴⁷	55	The first 60 monk missionaries ⁴⁸
The 30 young men ⁴⁹	30	
The Kassapa brothers ⁵⁰	3	
Uruvela Kassapa’s disciples	500	
Nadī Kassapa’s disciples	300	
Gayā Kassapa’s disciples	200	Total: 1093 monks.
Unaccounted for	<u>(157)</u>	
Total:	<u>1250</u>	monks

Those converts brought back by the first 60 missionaries are ordained by having their head shaven, donning the saffron robe and reciting the Three Refuges thrice (*ti,saraṇa,gaman’upasampadā*, V 1:20). As such, they are not ehi-bhikkhus, and do not form the assembly of 1250 arhats mentioned here.

6.2.3 Now, we know from the Dīgha,nakha Sutta that Sāriputta is already a monk then and in fact, becomes an arhat—and we know that he has 250 followers.⁵¹ It is possible, even very likely, following what Mizuno and Nakamura has suggested above, that the “1250 monks” comprise of the following:

The Kassapa brothers’ followers	1000	+ 3 (Uruvelā, Nadī, Gayā Kassapa)
Sāriputta & Moggallāna’s followers	<u>250</u>	+ 2 (Sāriputta & Moggallāna)
Total:	<u>1250</u>	ehi-bhikkhus

From the texts, as a rule, we find that the size of the congregation is mentioned with the leaders at its head, and as such not reckoned in its number. So we have a total of 1250 ehi-bhikkhus.

7 Related suttas

In the **Puppā Sutta** (S 22.94) the Buddha declares:

⁴¹ Kōgen MIZUNO, *The Beginnings of Buddhism*, 1980:87.

⁴² Hajime NAKAMURA *Gotama Buddha*, 2000:306.

⁴³ LS Cousins, in an email dated 23 June 2005 posted on the Buddha-L website, holds the same view.

⁴⁴ *Aḍḍha,teḷasehi bhikkhu,satehi*: V 1:220, 243; D 1:47, 2:6, S 1:192, Sn p102 f; *aḍḍha,teḷasāni bhikkhu,satāni*: SnA p104; MA 2:209.

⁴⁵ *Pañca,mattehi bhikkhu,satehi* (V 2:199; D 1:1; J 1:116, 227; DhA 2:109). On the symbolism of “500,” see PED: *pañca* (p388c).

⁴⁶ V 1:10 ff; S 5:420 ff; Mvst 3:330 f; Lalv 540(416) f; J 1:81 f, cf 56 f; DA 1:2; AA 1:69.

⁴⁷ V 1:16-19; DhA 1:88; cf D 2:135, A 1:26, J 1:68 f, SnA 154; AA 1:401 ff.

⁴⁸ V 1:20 f; S 1:105 f; Mvst 3:415 f.

⁴⁹ V 1:23 f; DhA 2:33 f; J 1:82; AA 1:100, 147; ThīA 3.

⁵⁰ V 1:33 f.

⁵¹ V 1:39-44; Ap 1:24 f; J 1:85; DhA 1:90-95; SnA 1:326 ff; Mvst 3:63. See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004: ch 5.12-13.

Monks, I do not quarrel with the world. It is the world that quarrels with me. One who speaks the truth [Dharma] does not quarrel with anyone in the world. Of that which the wise in the world agree upon as not existing, I too say that it does not exist. And of that which the wise in the world agree upon as existing, I too say that it exists. (S 22.94/3:138)

The Buddha goes on to say in the Puppā Sutta that the wise in the world all agree that the five aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—are impermanent, unstable and subject to change. Bodhi, in his note on the Puppā Sutta, says:

This portion of the sutta offers an important counterpoint to the message of **the Kaccāna,-gotta Sutta** [S 12.15].⁵² Here the Buddha emphasizes that he does not reject all ontological propositions, but only those that transcend the bounds of possible experience. While the Kaccāna,-gotta Sutta shows that the “middle teaching” excludes static, substantialist conceptions of existence and non-existence, the present text [the Puppā Sutta] shows that the same “middle teaching” can accommodate definite pronouncements about these ontological issues. The affirmation of the five aggregates, as impermanent processes, serve as a rejoinder to illusionist theories, which hold that the world lacks real being. (S:B 1085 n185)

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The Discourse to Dīghanakha

M 74

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Boar’s Cave⁵³ in Mount Vulture’s Peak near Rājagaha.

Dīghanakha declares he rejects all views

2.1 Then the wanderer Dīghanakha went up to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, *he stood at one side*.⁵⁴ Standing thus as one side, he said this to the Blessed One:

“Master Gotama, my doctrine and view is this: ‘I do not accept everything.’”⁵⁵

2.2 “But, Aggī, vessana, this view of yours, ‘I do not accept everything’—isn’t this view (at least) acceptable to you?”⁵⁶

“If, master Gotama, that view of mine were acceptable to me, it too would be the same, it too [498] would be the same.”⁵⁷

⁵² S 12.15/2:16-18 = also in **Channa S** (S 22.90/3:132-135), SD 6.13.

⁵³ On the Boar’s Cave, see Intro (3).

⁵⁴ Comy says that he stands respectfully at one side (at a respectful distance) out of moral shame and moral fear (*hir’ottappena*) for his uncle, Sāriputta, who is standing fanning the Blessed One [14] (MA 3:203 f).

⁵⁵ *Ahañ hi kho gotama evaṃ, vādī evaṃ, diṭṭhi: sabbam me na khamatī ti*. On Dīghanakha as a radical sceptic, like those satirically characterized in **Sandaka S** (M 76.30) as ‘eel-wrigglers,’ see Intro (2) above.

⁵⁶ *Yā pi kho te esā Aggī, vessana diṭṭhi: sabbam me na khamatī ti, esā pi te diṭṭhi na khamatī ti*. Fuller explains: “The Buddha is attempting to find out how this view is being held. Is Dīghanakha’s view a non-position, its aim to overcome all cognitive standpoints, or is Dīghanakha holding to his view?” (2005:154)

⁵⁷ *Esā ce me bho gotama diṭṭhi khameyya, tam p’assa tādisam eva, tam p’assa tādisam evā ti*. According to Bodhi, this exchange, as interpreted by MA & MAT, should be understood as follows: The Buddha suggests, by his question, that Dīghanakha’s assertion involves an inherent contradiction. For he cannot reject everything without also rejecting his own view, and this would entail the opposite position, namely, that something is acceptable to him.

The 3 views

3 “Well, Aggi,vessana, there are many in the world who say, ‘It too would be the same, it too would be the same,’ and yet do not abandon that view, and they take up still some other view.⁵⁸

Aggi,vessana, few are those in the world who say, ‘It too would be the same, it too would be the same,’ and who abandon that view and do not take up any other view.⁵⁹

4.1 (1) Aggi,vessana, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: ‘Everything is acceptable to me.’

(2) Aggi,vessana, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: ‘Nothing is acceptable to me.’

(3) Aggi,vessana, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: ‘Some (views) are acceptable to me; some are not acceptable to me.’⁶⁰

Nature of the 3 views

4.2 (1) Amongst these, the view of those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view, ‘Everything is acceptable to me,’ is close to lust, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to holding, close to clinging.⁶¹

4.3 (2) Amongst these, the view of those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view, ‘No-thing is acceptable to me,’ is close to non-lust, close to non-bondage, close to non-delighting, close to non-holding, close to non-clinging.

5.1 When this was said, the wanderer Dīgha,nakha said this:

“Master Gotama commends my point of view! Master Gotama recommends my point of view!”

5.2 (3) “Aggi,vessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view, ‘Some (views) are acceptable to me; some are not acceptable to me’—that view of theirs as to what is acceptable is close to lust, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to holding, close to clinging, while that view of theirs as to what is not acceptable is close non-lust, close to non-bondage, close to non-delighting, close to non-holding, close to non-clinging.

Disadvantages of views

However, though Dīgha,nakha recognizes the implication of the Buddha’s question, he continues to insist on his view that nothing is acceptable to him. (M:ÑB 1279 n732). See Jayatilleke 1963:213-217 (§§327-335).

⁵⁸ Comy distinguishes these views as annihilationism (*uccheda,vāda*) and eternalism (*sassata,vāda*) (MA 3:204). See foll n.

⁵⁹ Comy says that the first sentence refers to those who first take up a basic eternalist or annihilationist view, and then subsequently adopt secondary variations on that view. The second sentence refers to those who abandon their basic view without adopting an alternative (MA 3:205). Bodhi: “But if, as seems plausible, Dīgha,nakha was a radical sceptic, then the Buddha’s statement might be understood to point to an unsatisfactoriness inherent in the sceptic’s position: it is psychologically uncomfortable to insist on remaining in the dark. Thus most sceptics, while professing a rejection of all views, surreptitiously adopt some definite view, while a few abandon their scepticism to seek a path to personal knowledge.” (M:ÑB 1279 n733). In other words, as **Paul Fuller** puts it, “Is Dīghanakha’s view a non-position, its aim to overcome all cognitive standpoints, or is Dīghanakha holding to his view?”: see 2005: 154.

⁶⁰ *Ekaccaṃ me khamati, ekaccaṃ me na khamatī ti*, lit “Something I accept; something I do not accept.” Comy identifies the 3 views here as eternalism (*sassata,vāda*), annihilationism (*uccheda,vāda*) and partial eternalism (*ekacca sassata,vāda*) [MA 3:206-208]. “The eternalist view is close to lust (*sārāgāya santike*), etc, because it affirms and delights in existence however sublimated a form. Annihilationism is close to non-lust, etc, because, though involving a wrong conception of self, it leads to disenchantment with existence. If the second view is understood as radical scepticism, it could also be seen as close to non-lust in that it expresses disillusionment with the attempt to buttress the attachment to existence with a theoretical foundation and thus represents a tentative, though mistaken, step in the direction of dispassion. (M:ÑB 1280 n734)

⁶¹ *Tesaṃ ayaṃ dīṭṭhi sārāgāya santike saṃyogāya santike abhinandanāya santike ajjhosānāya santike anupādānāya santike ti*, as at **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.34/1:411).

6.1 Now, Aggi,vessana, a wise man among those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view, ‘**Everything is acceptable to me,**’ considers thus,⁶²

‘If I stubbornly stick to my view,⁶³ “Everything is acceptable to me,” and declare, “Only this is true, everything else is false,” then I may clash with the other two,

that is, with a recluse or brahmin who holds the doctrine [499] and view, “Nothing is acceptable to me,”

and with a recluse or brahmin who holds the doctrine and view, “Some (views) are acceptable, some are not acceptable to me.”

6.2 I may clash with these two, and when there is a clash, there are disputes. When there are disputes, there are quarrels. When there are quarrels, there is trouble.’

Thus, foreseeing for himself clashes, disputes, quarrels and trouble, he abandons that view and does not take up any other view.

This is how there comes to be the abandoning of these views. This is how there comes to be relinquishing of these views.

7 A wise man amongst those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view, ‘**Nothing is acceptable me,**’ considers thus, ‘If I stubbornly stick to my view, “Nothing is acceptable to me,” and declare, “Only this is true, everything else is false,” then I may clash with the other two,

that is, with a recluse or brahmin who holds the doctrine and view, “Everything is acceptable to me,”

and with a recluse and brahmin who holds the doctrine and view, “Some (views) are acceptable, some are not acceptable to me.”

I may clash with these two, and when there is a clash, there are disputes. When there are disputes, there are quarrels. When there are quarrels, there is trouble.’

Thus, foreseeing for himself clashes, disputes, quarrels and trouble, he abandons that view and does not take up any other view.

This is how there comes to be the abandoning of these views. This is how there comes to be relinquishing of these views.

8 A wise man amongst those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view, ‘**Some (views) are acceptable me,**’ considers thus, ‘If I stubbornly stick to my view, “Some (views) are acceptable to me,” and declare, “Only this is true, everything else is false,” then I may clash with the other two,

that is, with a recluse or brahmin who holds the doctrine and view, “Everything is acceptable to me,”

and with a recluse and brahmin who holds the doctrine and view, “Nothing is acceptable to me.”

I may clash with these two, and when there is a clash, there are disputes. When there are disputes, there are quarrels. When there are quarrels, there is trouble.’

Thus, foreseeing for himself clashes, disputes, quarrels and trouble, he abandons that view and does not take up any other view.

This is how there comes to be the abandoning of these views. This is how there comes to be relinquishing of these views. [500]

The body

9 ⁶⁴Now, Aggi,vessana,⁶⁵ this body is form made up of the four primary elements,⁶⁶ born from mother and father, built up on rice and porridge, subject to impermanence, rubbing, pressing, breaking up, and crumbling. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.⁶⁷

⁶² Comy: This teaching here is given so that Dīgha,nakha sees the danger of his view and so discards it. (MA 3:207)

⁶³ *Imañ ce ahañ diṭṭhiṃ thāmasā parāmassa abhinivissa vohareyyaṃ. Cf tad eva pāpakāṃ diṭṭhi,gataṃ thāmasā parāmassa abhinivissa voharati,* (spoken to Ariṭṭha) in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.3/1:130) = (spoken to Sāti) in **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38.3/1:257).

⁶⁴ This whole section: *Ayaṃ kho paṇ’ aggivessana kāyo rūpī cātum,mahā,bhūṭiko mātā,pettika,sambhavo odana,-kummāsūpacayo anicc’ucchādana,parimaddana,bhedana,viddhaṃsana,dhammo | aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍa-to sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassato | yo kāyasmim kāya,chando kāya,sne-*

It⁶⁸ should be regarded as impermanent, as suffering [unsatisfactory], as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self.⁶⁹

One who regards the body thus would abandon desire for the body, love for the body, and dependence on the body.

3 kinds of feeling

10 Aggī, vessaṇa, there are these **three kinds of feeling**: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neutral feeling [neither painful nor pleasant feeling].

When one feels *a pleasant feeling*, one neither feels a painful feeling nor a neutral feeling: one only feels a pleasant feeling.

When one feels *a painful feeling*, one neither feels a pleasant feeling nor a neutral feeling: one only feels a painful feeling.

When one feels *a neutral feeling*, one neither feels a pleasant feeling nor a painful feeling: one feels only a neutral feeling.

11 Aggī, vessaṇa, pleasant feeling is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, subject to vanishing, subject to fading away, subject to ending.⁷⁰

Aggī, vessaṇa, painful feeling, too, is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, subject to vanishing, subject to fading away, subject to ending.

Aggī, vessaṇa, neutral feeling, too, is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, subject to vanishing, subject to fading away, subject to ending.

ho kāy' anvyatā sā pahīyati. For *attā rūpī...mātā, pettika, sambhavo, kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati*, see D 1.85/1:34 = SD 25.2. For *ayaṃ (kho me) kāyo...viddhaṃsana, dhammo, idaṃ ca pana me viññānaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭi-baddhaṃ ti*, see **Sāmañña, phala S**, D 2.83/1:76 = 2.84/1:77 = **Subha S**, D 10.20/1:208 = **Mahā Sakul'udāyi S**, M 7.29/2:17 (x2); *ayaṃ kāyo...viddhaṃsana, dhammo, taṃ idh'eva kāka vā khadanti...pānaka, jāta khadanti*, **Mahā-nāma S 1**, S 55.21/5:369 f (x2). Cf Divy 180: *śatana, patana, vikiraṇa, vidhvaṃsanā, dharmatā*. For *so yad eva tatha hoti rūpa, gataṃ vedanā, gataṃ saññā, gataṃ saṅkhāra, gataṃ viññāna, gataṃ te dhammā aniccato anattato... samanupassati*, see **Mahā Māluṅkya, putta S** (*aniccato* etc, M 64.9/1:435 = SD 23.10) = (**Nānā, karaṇa**) **Puggala S 2** (A 4.124/2:128 x2 = SD 23.8b) = (**Nānā, karaṇa**) **Mettā S 2** (A 4.126/2:130 x2 = SD 33.10) = (**Āsava-k, khaya**) **Jhāna S** (A 9.36/4:422, 423, 424, 426 x2 = SD 33.8). For *pañcūpādāna-k, khandhā aniccato... anattato yoniso manasi katabbā*, see **Silavanta S** (S 22.122/3:167 x2), SD 47.4, **Sutavanta S** (S 22.123/3:168 x2), SD 47.5. Cf **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1), where, in a wrong view, “self” (*attā*) is used in place of *kāya* (D 1.85/1:34), SD 25.2.

⁶⁵ Comy: At this point, Dīgha, nakha has given up his “annihilationist view.” The Buddha now goes on to teach him insight meditation (*vipassanā*), first by way of the impermanence of the body (ie *rūpa kammaṭṭhāna*), followed by the impermanence of the mental factors (*arūpa kammaṭṭhāna*) under the heading of feeling (*vedanā*). In this connection, Comy refers to **Vammika S** (M 21/1:142-145). (MA 3:207 f)

⁶⁶ **The 4 great (or primary) elements**: earth (*mahā, bhūtā*), water, fire, wind: see **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62.8-11/1:421-423), SD 3.11; also D 1:214 Vism 11.27 Abhs 154.

⁶⁷ This para—*ayaṃ...kāyo rūpī cātum, mahā, bhūtiko mātā, pettika, sambhavo odana, kummāsūpacayo anicc' ucchādana, parimaddana, bhedana, viddhaṃsana, dhammo*: **D 2.83 f/1:76** (x2) = **M 109.9/2:17**; **M 23.4/1:144**, **74.9/500**; **S 35.105/4:83** = **A 9.15.2/4:386**; **S 55.21/5:369 f**; **Nigrodha, miga J 12/1:146**. Cf Divy 180: *śatana, patana, vikiraṇa, vidhvaṃsanā, dharmatā*. See also n at head of this section. This statement means that consciousness here (in a physical being) is dependent on the physical body.

⁶⁸ That is, the body with its consciousness.

⁶⁹ This para—*aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassato*—as in **Mahā Māluṅkya, putta S** (M 64.9/1:435). See also n at head of this section.

⁷⁰ *Sukhā pi Aggī, vessaṇa vedanā aniccā saṅkhatā paṭicca, samuppannā khaya, dhammā vaya, dhammā vaya, dhammā virāga, dhammā nirodha, dhammā*. Cf **Das'uttara S** (D 34): “whatever has become is conditioned, dependently arisen: its ending is escape” (*yaṃ kho pana kiñci bhūtaṃ saṅkhatam paṭicca, samuppannam nirodho tassa nissaraṇam*, D 34.1.4(7)/3:275). On “dependently arisen” (*paṭicca, samuppanna*), see **Paccaya S** (S 12.20) where links of dependent arising are reflected as being impermanent, etc (S 12.20/2:25-27). Cf (**Anātha, piṇḍika**) **Diṭṭhi S** (A 10.93.5/5:187).

“All that is subject to arising is subject to ending.”

The wanderer Dīgha,nakha saw the truth,⁸¹ won the truth, knew the truth, plunged into the truth, crossed over doubt, abandoned uncertainty, who, independent of others, has gained self-confidence in the Teacher’s Teaching.⁸²

16 He said this to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, master Gotama! Excellent, Master Gotama! 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, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been made clear by the master Gotama.

I go to the master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the master Gotama remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth for life.”⁸³

— evaṃ —

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⁸⁰ *Dīgha,nakhassa pana paribbājakassa virajam vīta,malam dhamma,cakkhum udapādi*. Comy says that the “**Dharma-eye**” (*dhamma,cakkhu*) is the path of stream-winning: in **Brahm’āyu S** (M 91.36/2:145), it refers to the (first) 3 holy paths (*tiṇṇaṃ maggānaṃ*), ie as culminating in non-return; in **Cūḷa Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 147.9/3:280), the destruction of influxes (*āsava-k,khaya*). The following sentence: “All that is subject to arising is subject to ending,” shows the mode in which the path arises. The path takes ending (nirvana) as its object, but its function is to penetrate all conditioned states as being subject to arising and ending. (MA 3:92)

⁸¹ “The truth” (*dhamma*) here refers to the 4 noble truths. Having seen the truth for himself, he cuts off the fetter of doubt and now has “the noble and liberating view that accordingly leads the practitioner to the complete destruction of suffering” (*yā ’yaṃ diṭṭhi ariyā niyyānikā niyyāti tak,karassa sammā,dukkha-k,khayāya*, **Kosambiya S**, M 48.7/1:322)

⁸² *Atha kho dīgha,nakho paribbājako diṭṭha,dhammo patta,dhammo vidita,dhammo pariyoḡāḷha,dhammo tiṇṇa,-vicikiccho vigata,katham,katho vesāraḷja-p,patto apara-p,paccayo satthu,sāsane*. The basic statement as at V 1:12; **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.2.21-22/1:110); **Kūṭadanta S** (D 5.29/1:149); **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35.24/1:234, 26/1:235); **Upāli S** (M 18/1:380); **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73.10/1:491); **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.15/1:501); **Brahmāyu S** (M 91.-36/2:145); **Sīha S** (A 8.12.9/4:186); **Ugga S 1** (A 8.21/4:209); **Ugga S 2** (A 8.22/4:214); **Kuṭṭhi S** (U 5.3/49).

⁸³ On the holy feast in connection with this event, see Intro (5) “Māgha Pūja” above.

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