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Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta

The Discourse on the Foolish and the Wise | M 129/3:163-178

Theme: The hells and the universal monarch

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

Introduction

1 This sutta presents the teachings of karma and rebirth in graphic down-to-earth images that reflect the painful realities of Indian society of the Buddha’s time. Its influence on the mythology of Asia as a whole is profound where we find notions of heaven and hell. This sutta should be studied with the following **Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130) which repeats §10-16 (M 130.10-16, also at A 1:141 f and J 1:174) but elaborates §17 here on the classic description of the hells (M 130.17-30).

2 In the **Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta** (D 26), a prophecy is made of ancient India that it would grow into a highly urbanized country: “This Jambu,dīpa [India], will be crowded with people—it is Avīci,¹ I say—just like a forest of reeds or a forest of rushes.” (D 26.23b/3:75). The word *avīci* is also mentioned in a parallel passage in the **Brāhmaṇa Mahāsāla Sutta** or **Paloka Sutta** (A 3.56): “One would think this world is Avīci.” (A 3.56/1:159). These are the only two places in the four Nikāyas where it is mentioned, “and ‘hell’ does not seem to be its meaning.”² F L Woodward, in his translation of the Brāhmaṇa Mahāsāla Sutta, renders the word *avīci* as “the Waveless Deep” (A:W 1:142).³

3 In the Commentaries and later literature, *avīci* denotes the lowest of the hells, which T W Rhys Davids (D:RD 3:73 n1), F L Woodward (*niraya*, It:W 157), AK Warder (1970:168) and some other translators render it as “purgatory” to show that they are not eternal. Rhys Davids notes that

It [*avīci*] does not occur in the list of the purgatories given in the Sutta Nipāta (pp 121-7) and Saṃyutta 1:154. It is found in a poem in the Itivuttaka (No 89 [It 3.4.10]), which recurs in the Vinaya (2:203), and in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, §1.281 [untraced]. (D:RD 3:73 n1)

4 Maurice Walshe notes that “Warder, in his paraphrase of [the Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta] (*Indian Buddhism*, 168) says parenthically: ‘like purgatory,’ the Buddha remarks ambiguously, thinking probably of his preference for seclusion. The Buddhist hells grow steadily worse in popular imagination, but most of their horrors find little support in the Suttas (though see M 129, 130).” (D:W 602 n801).

5 The (**Sāla,vatikā**) **Lohicca Sutta** (D 12) declares that those with wrong views have two destinations: hell or the animal-womb (D 12.10/1:228). In his notes *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Walshe thinks that this statement or translation is

off-putting to modern readers. It is doubtful whether either term originally meant what it was later taken to mean. See Introduction, p 40 f. “A painful or beast-like rebirth” might express the meaning better. (D:W 558 n244)

6 The **Pātāla Sutta** (S 36.4) makes an interesting statement in this connection:

¹ *Avīci* (“uninterrupted”) is the most crowded of the hell states (*niraya*); sometimes called the “great hell” (*mahā,-niraya*) (DA 3:855; AA 2:256), and said to the “lowest” point of the universe (NmA 2:425). The word *avīci*, however, is mentioned *only twice* in the Nikāyas, ie, here (D 26.23b/3:75) = SD 36.10 & A 3.56/1:159 = SD,72.3, but it is often mentioned in the Comys (M 1:216, 4:109, 236×3; SA 2:12; SnA 1:41; DhA 1:127, 142, 148, 2:55, 61, 66, 67, 72, 200, 3:47, 64, 120, 151, 181, 209, 334, 416, 4:39, 42; UA 131; ItA 1:120; BA 46; J 5:271; PmA 1:297). It does not appear in the list of hells given in Sn pp 121-127 and S 1:154; but found in It 89 = V 2:203, & Dhs §1,-281. It is possible that the term is first used here in a lit sense meaning “without a gap” (*a-vīci*), and later applied to the hell. Cf Vism 449 where it means “disintegration.”

² See TW Rhys Davids (D:RW 3:73 n1) and M Walshe (D:W 602 n801).

³ On the hells as allegories, see **Deva,dūta S** (M 130) = SD 2.23 Intro (3).

Bhikshus, when the uninstructed person makes the statement: “In the great ocean there is a **bottomless abyss** (*pātāla*),” he makes such a statement about something that is non-existent and false. This “bottomless abyss,” bhikshus, is rather a designation (*adhivacana*) for painful bodily feelings. (S 36.4/4:206; also at S 1 v147d, v517b, v759c) = SD 2.25 (§3)

Jayatilke, in his book, *The Message of the Buddha*, renders *pātāla* as “Hell” (1975:251).

7 Furthermore, the stock *apāyaṃ duggatīṃ vinipātāṃ nirayaṃ*, which is often found in a number of places in the Pali Canon,⁴ are not synonyms for “hell,” which is itself, a collective term for “suffering states.” All these four words are synonymous of the subhuman realms, sometimes including the asuras or “fallen gods” (titans, demons, etc). The commentary on Sn 231 (*catuhi apāyehi*, “the 4 states of deprivation”), in fact, glosses it as *cattāro apāyā nāma niraya, tiracchāna, pettivisaya, asurakāyā*, “the four states of misery [deprivation] are the hells, the animal-birth, the ghost realm, the demon world” (KhA 189).⁵ It is tempting to collate the four states of misery with the four subhuman realms as follows: *apāya* = ghosts; *duggati* = animal-birth; *vinipāta* = asuras (“fallen” gods); *niraya* = hell; but closer textual study is needed for this.

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The Discourse on the Foolish and the Wise

M 129/3:163-178

[163]

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anāthapiṇḍika’s park in Jeta’s grove near Sāvattihī. There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Bhikshus!”

“Bhante!” they replied in assent to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

THE FOOL

The three characteristics of a fool

2 “Bhikshus, there are these three characteristics of a fool, signs of a fool, attributes of a fool. What are the three?”

Here, bhikshus, the fool is one who thinks evil, speaks evil and does evil.⁶ If the fool were not so, how would the wise know him thus: ‘This good person is a fool, a false person.’

Bhikshus, since the fool thinks evil, speaks evil and does evil, the wise know him thus: ‘This good person is a fool, a false person.’

3 The fool feels bodily pain and mental pain⁷ here and now in three ways.⁸

(1) PAST FEARS (PSYCHOLOGICAL). Bhikshus, if the fool sits in an assembly or along a street or in a town square, and if the people there are discussing certain pertinent and relevant matter,

then, bhikshus, if the fool is one who

⁴ V 3:5; D 1:82; S 5:442; A 1:55; Sn 231.

⁵ Cf Sn 377::SnA 368. See also D 3:234, 264; M 1:73; A 4:459; Nc 550; cf S 5:474-77; Vism 552. Also Pañca, -gati, dīpana (ed L Feer, JPTS, 1884:152 ff; tr Feer, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 5:514-28).

⁶ Also at A 1:102.

⁷ “Bodily pain and mental pain,” *dukkham domanassam*.

⁸ For analyses of the following 3 fears, see **Virtue ethics** = SD 18.11(5.2).

destroys living beings,
takes the not given,
commits sexual misconduct,
speaks falsehood and
takes intoxicants that are the basis of heedlessness,

he thinks, ‘These people are discussing some pertinent and relevant matter, and these states exist in me, and I am engaging in them.’

This, bhikshus, is the first kind of bodily and mental pain that the fool feels here and now.

4a (2) PRESENT FEARS (SOCIAL). Furthermore, bhikshus, the fool sees⁹ kings, having caught a **thief, a criminal**, inflicting various kinds of torture on him: **[164]**

having him whipped, caned, clubbed,
his hands cut off, his feet cut off, his limbs cut off, his ears cut off, his nose cut off, his ears *and* nose cut off;

having him subjected to ‘the porridge pot,’ to ‘the polished-shell shave,’ to ‘Rāhu’s mouth,’ to ‘the fiery garland,’ to ‘the flaming hand,’ to ‘the blades of grass, to ‘the bark dress,’

to (being strapped to the ground by an iron ring around each limb, fastened by iron spikes and then surrounded by fire, called)¹⁰ ‘the black antelope,’

to [having pieces of his flesh cut and hung on] ‘the meat hooks,’ to ‘the coins’ [disc-slice], to ‘the lye pickling’ [immersion in strong alkaline solution],

to ‘the pivoting pin [where a spike is driven in his skull from ear to ear],

to ‘the rolled-up straw mat’ (and beaten up); and

having him splashed with boiling oil, and

having him thrown to the dogs to be devoured,

having him impaled alive on stakes, and

having his head cut off with a sword.

4b Bhikshus, it then occurs to the fool, thus: ‘Because of such evil actions, when the thief, the criminal is caught, kings inflict various kinds of torture on him:

having him whipped, caned, clubbed,...and having his head cut off with a sword.

Those things are found in me, and I am engaging in them.

Now if the rajah were to know this, then, the rajah would have me arrested, and would inflict various kinds of torture on me, too:

having me whipped, caned, clubbed,... and having my head cut off with a sword.’

This, bhikshus, is the second kind of bodily and mental pain that the fool feels here and now.

5 (3) FUTURE FEARS (SPIRITUAL). Again, bhikshus, when the fool is resting on a chair, on a bed or on the floor, then his past evil deeds—misdeeds of the body, of speech, of the mind—cover him, overwhelm him, envelop him.

Bhikshus, just as the shadow of a great mountain peak in the evening covers, overwhelms and envelops the earth,

so too, bhikshus, when the fool is resting **[165]** on a chair, on a bed, or on the floor, his past evil deeds—his misdeeds through the body, through speech, through the mind—overwhelm him, envelop him.

Then, bhikshus, the fool thinks,

‘I have not done what is good, what is wholesome; I have not made myself a shelter from anguish. I have done what is evil, what is cruel, what is wicked.

On the other hand, I have committed what is evil, what is cruel, what is wicked,

⁹ *Puna ca param bhikkhave bālo passati rājāno coram āgu, cāriṃ gahetvā vividhā kamma, kāraṇā kārente kasāhi pi tālente...* Hereafter up to “having his head cut off with a sword,” as at **Mahā Dukkha-k, khandha S** (M 13.14/-1:87), **Deva, dūta S** (M 130.7/3:181) & **Kamma Kāraṇa (or Vajja) S** (A 2.1/1:47-49). For other details (Comy) of the tortures, see nn in A:WH 1:42 f.

¹⁰ NmA 278 ad Nm 154 = M 13.14 (1:87,15).

and whatever destiny there is for those who have not done what is good, what is skillful, have not made a refuge against what is fearful,¹¹

for those who have done what is evil, what is cruel, what is wicked,
that destiny shall befall me at death.’

He sorrows, grieves and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught.

This, bhikshus, is the third kind of bodily and mental pain that the fool feels here and now.

6 PAINFUL DESTINY. Bhikshus, a fool who has given himself up to misconduct of body, speech and mind, with the body’s breaking up, after death,¹² reappears in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.¹³

7 Bhikshus, if one were to speak correctly of that which is utterly undesirable, utterly disagreeable, utterly unpleasant, it is in respect of Niraya [hell]. He would say that it is utterly undesirable, utterly disagreeable, utterly unpleasant is Niraya that it is difficult to find a simile for suffering in it.”

Then a certain monk said, “Bhante, is it possible to give a comparison?”

Beating with spears

8 The Blessed One said,¹⁴ “It is possible, O monk. Suppose, bhikshus, men caught a thief, a criminal, and presented him to the rajah, saying,

‘Maharajah, this is a thief, a criminal. Order what punishment you will for him.’

Then the rajah said, ‘Go and strike this man with a hundred spears in the morning!’

And they struck him with a hundred spears in the morning.

Then at noon, the rajah asked, ‘How is that man?’

‘Sire, he is still alive.’

Then the rajah said, ‘Go and strike that man with a hundred spears this noon (itself)!’

And they struck him with a hundred spears at noon.

Then in the evening the rajah asked, ‘How is that man?’

‘Sire, he is still alive.’

Then the rajah said, ‘Go and strike that man with a hundred spears this evening (itself)!’

And they struck him with a hundred spears in the evening. **[166]**

What do you think, bhikshus, would that man feel bodily and mental pain after having been struck by three hundred spears?”

“Bhante, that man would feel bodily and mental pain through being struck with even one spear, let alone three hundred.”

The stone and the mountain (hell) [cf §47]

9 Then the Blessed One, having taken a small stone the size of his fist, addressed the bhikshus,

“Bhikshus, which is bigger: the stone the size of my fist or the Himalayas, the king of mountains?”

“Bhante, the stone the size of the Blessed One’s fist that he has taken cannot be compared to the Himalayas. It is not even a fraction of it; there is no comparison.”

¹¹ That is, terrible karmic consequences.

¹² “With the body’s breaking up, after death,” *kāya, bhedassa param, marañā*. Buddhaghosa explains this phrase as foll: “With the body’s breaking up” (*kāyassa bhedā*) means on abandoning the aggregates that are clung to; “after death” (*param, marañā*) means that in-between state (*tad-antaram*), in the grasping of the aggregates that have been generated (*abhinibbatta-k, khandha, gahaṇe*). Or, “with the body’s breaking up” means the interruption of the life-faculty, and “after death” means after the death-consciousness (*cuti, cittato uddham*). (Vism 13.91/427; cf NcA 69). See **Deva, dūta S** (M 130.2/3:178 = SD 2.23).

¹³ *Apāyam duggatim vinīpātam nirayam*. The stock is often found in the Pali Canon (V 3:5; D 1:82; S 5:442; A 1:55; Sn 231): see Intro (7). See **(Tamo, joti) Puggala S** (D 33.1.11(49)/3:233; S 3.21/1:93; A 4.85/2:85; Pug 4.29/-51) = SD 18.6.

¹⁴ The foll passage with its similes are also found in **Putta, maṁsa S** (S 12.63) in connection with the nutriment of consciousness (*viññāṇ’āhāra*) (S 12.63.19-23/2:100) = SD 20.6.

“Even so, bhikshus, the bodily and mental pain that the man would experience being struck by the three hundred spears cannot be compared to the suffering of Niraya (hell). It is not even a fraction of it; there is no comparison.

Hellish torture

10 Now, bhikshus, the hell wardens torture him with the fivefold pinion.¹⁵ They drive a red-hot iron rod through one hand, and then another red-hot iron rod through the other hand. They drive [another] red-hot iron rod through one foot, and then another red-hot iron rod through the other foot. They drive (another) red-hot iron rod through his belly.

There he feels suffers sharp, piercing, racking pains. Yet he does not die so long as the result of that evil action is not exhausted.

11 Next, bhikshus, the hell wardens throw him down and pare him with axes. There he suffers sharp, piercing, racking pains. Yet he does not die so long as the result of that evil action is not exhausted.

12 Next, bhikshus, the hell wardens set him upside down and pare him with adzes. There he suffers sharp, piercing, racking pains. Yet he does not die so long as the result of that evil action is not exhausted.

13 Next, bhikshus, the hell wardens harness him to a chariot and drive him back and forth across fiery, blazing, glowing ground. [167] There he suffers sharp, piercing, racking pains. Yet he does not die so long as the result of that evil action is not exhausted.

14 Next, bhikshus, the hell wardens make him climb up and down a great mound of fiery, blazing, glowing coals. There he suffers sharp, piercing, racking pains. Yet he does not die so long as the result of that evil action is not exhausted.

15 Next, bhikshus, the hell wardens seize him upside down and plunge him into a fiery, blazing, glowing metal cauldron. He is cooked there in a swirl of froth. And as he is being cooked there in a swirl of froth, he is swept now up, now down, now across. There he suffers sharp, piercing, racking pains. Yet he does not die so long as the result of that evil action is not exhausted.

16 Next the hell wardens throw him down into the Great Hell.¹⁶ Now as regards that Great Hell, monks:

It has four corners and four doors,
One on each side, equally proportioned,
Walled up all around in iron
And shut in with an iron roof.

Its floor is made of iron
Glowing with burning heat,
Spreading a hundred leagues
around it stands at all times.

17 Bhikshus, I could tell you about Niraya in many ways, but, bhikshus, it is hard to fully describe the suffering in it.¹⁷

The animal kingdom

18 Bhikshus, there are animals that feed on grass. They eat by cropping fresh or dried grass with their teeth.

And, bhikshus, what animals feed on grass? Elephants, horses, cattle, donkeys, goats, deer and any other such animals that feed on grass.

¹⁵ The full description of hell is found in **Devadūta S** (M 130.10-27/3:183-186) = SD 2.23 & A 1:141 f.; also mentioned at J 1:174.

¹⁶ Mahā Niraya (MA 4:234); called Avīci at AA 2:232.

¹⁷ An elaborate description is found in the following **Devadūta S** (M 130.17-27), which clearly is a sequel to this section.

Bhikshus, a fool who formerly delighted in tastes here and did evil here, with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in the company of animals that feed on grass.

19 Bhikshus, there are animals that feed on dung. They smell dung from a distance and run to it, thinking, 'We can eat, we can eat!' Just as Brahmins run to the smell of a sacrifice, thinking, 'We can eat here, we can eat here!' [168]

So, too, bhikshus, there are animals that feed on dung. They smell dung from a distance and run to it, thinking, 'We can eat, we can eat!' Just as Brahmins run to the smell of a sacrifice, thinking, 'We can eat here, we can eat here!'

And what animals feed on dung? Cocks, pigs, dogs, foxes and any other such animals. The fool who formerly delighted in tastes here and did evil here, with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in the company of animals that feed on dung.

20 Bhikshus, there are animals that are born, live and die in the dark. And, bhikshus, what animals *are they*? Beetles, maggots, earthworms and other such animals.

Bhikshus, the fool who formerly delighted in tastes here and did evil here, with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in the company of animals that are born, live and die in the dark.

21 Bhikshus, there are animals that are born, live and die in the water. And, bhikshus, what are born, live and die in the water? Fishes, turtles, crocodiles and other such animals.

Bhikshus, the fool who formerly delighted in tastes here and did evil here, with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in the company of animals that are born, live and die in water.

22 Bhikshus, there are animals that are born, live and die in filth. And, bhikshus, what animals are born, live and die in filth? These animals, bhikshus, that are born, live and die in rotting fish, in rotting flesh, in rotting porridge, in a cesspool, or in a sewer. [169]

Bhikshus, the fool who formerly delighted in tastes here and did evil here, with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in the company of animals that are born, live and die in filth.

23 Bhikshus, I could tell you about animal-birth in many ways, but, bhikshus, it is hard to fully describe the suffering in the animal-birth.

The parable of the blind turtle

24 Bhikshus, suppose a man were to throw into the ocean a yoke with a single hole in it.¹⁸ Then the east winds carry it westwards; the west winds carry it eastwards; the north winds carry it southwards; the south winds carry it northwards. Suppose a blind turtle were to come up from the ocean depths once in a hundred years.

What do you think, bhikshus? Would that blind turtle put his neck through the yoke with a single hole in it?"

"Even if it could, bhante, it would only happen after a very long time."

"Even then, bhikshus, it is more likely that the blind turtle would put his neck through the single-holed yoke than would the fool, once fallen into a lower world (vinipāta),¹⁹ regain the human state, I say!²⁰ Why is that? Because, bhikshus, in the lower worlds there is no righteous living,²¹ no doing of what is wholesome, no performance of merit. Bhikshus, there they eat each other, preying on the weak.

¹⁸ **Chiggaḷa S 2** (S 56.47) mentions not knowing the 4 noble truths as reason for the difficulty of attaining human birth (S 56.47/5:455 f). This simile is referred to at Thī 500, Miln 204, DhsA 60. See **The body in Buddhism** = SD 29.6a (4.1.2).

¹⁹ "Lower world," *vinipāta*, a general term for the 4 lower suffering states: the animal-birth, the realm of the departed, the asura realm and the hells. See Vism 13.92 f.

²⁰ This important passage gives the context of the statement of the difficulty of gaining human birth, ie, for one who has fallen into one of the subhuman suffering states, esp the hells. On the other hand, it is very easy for celestial beings to "fall" (*cavati*) from their divine state and be reborn into the human realm. **Chiggaḷa S 2** (S 56.47/5:455 f) & Thī 500 (the parable is alluded to at Miln 204; DhsA 60) should be understood in this context. Cf **Chiggaḷa S 1** (S 56.45/5:453 f).

²¹ *Dhamma, cariya*, or practice of the Dharma.

The perfect fool

25 Bhikshus, even after a long time, were the fool to regain the human state, he is born into a low family—such as the outcastes, the hunters, the bamboo-weavers, the cartwrights, or the rubbish collectors²²—one that is poor, with little to eat and drink, where food and clothing are found with difficulty. Moreover, he is ugly, unsightly, misshapen, sickly, blind, crippled or paralyzed. He gets no food, no drinks, no clothes, **[170]** no vehicles, no garlands, no scents, no cosmetics, no bed, no dwelling, no light. [Furthermore,] he misconducts himself in body, in speech and in mind.

Because he misconducts himself in body, in speech and in mind, with the body’s breaking up, after death, he reappears in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

The gambler’s bad luck [cf §49]

26 Bhikshus, suppose a gambler who, unlucky at the very first throw [of dice], loses his child, wife and all his wealth, and furthermore goes into bondage himself.

That unlucky throw, bhikshus, whereby he loses his child, wife and all his wealth, and furthermore goes into bondage himself is negligible. It is a far more unlucky throw when the fool, misconducting himself in body, in speech and in mind, with the body’s breaking up, after death, reappears in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

This, bhikshus, is the complete and perfect state of a fool.²³

THE WISE MAN

The three characteristics of a wise man

27 Bhikshus, there are these three characteristics of the wise, signs of the wise, attributes of the wise. What are the three?

Here, bhikshus, the wise man is one who thinks good, speaks good and does good. If the wise man were not so, how would the wise know him thus: ‘This person is a wise man, a true individual.’

Bhikshus, since the wise man thinks good, speaks good and does good, the wise know him thus, ‘This person is a wise man, a true individual.’

28 (1) PAST VIRTUE (MORAL). Bhikshus, the wise man feels bodily and mental joy²⁴ here and now in three ways. Bhikshus, if the wise man sits in an assembly or along a street or in a town square, and if the people there are discussing certain pertinent and relevant matter, then if the wise man is one who

abstains from killing living beings,

abstains from taking the not-given,

abstains from sexual misconduct, **[171]**

abstains from false speech, and

abstains from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks, and that which causes heedlessness,

he thinks, ‘These people are discussing some pertinent and relevant matter, and these states exist in me, and I am engaging in [conforming to] them.’²⁵

This, bhikshus, is the first kind of bodily and mental joy that the wise man feels here and now.

²² The 5 kinds of low births, see V 4:6; M 2:152, 183; S 1:93; A 1:107, 2:85; Pug 51.

²³ MA: That is, the fool engages in the three types of misconduct (through body, speech and mind), through which he is reborn in hell. By the residue of that karma, when he regains the human state, he is reborn in a low family. Having again misconducted himself in the three ways, he is again reborn in hell. Cf §24n.

²⁴ “Bodily and mental joy,” *sukham somanassam*, alt “joy and pleasure.”

²⁵ “*Yam kho jano tajjam tas-sarupam katham manteti; samvijjant’eva te dhamma mayi, ahañ ca tesu dhammesu sandissamī ti.* M:ÑB misreads the text here with a *na*, which is unnecessary, leading to a mistranslation. The original text reading here is correct.

29 (2) PRESENT VIRTUE (SOCIAL). Again, bhikshus, when a thief, a criminal, is caught, the wise man sees rajahs inflict various kinds of torture on him:

having him whipped, caned, clubbed,... and having his head cut off with a sword. [§4]

Bhikshus, the wise man then thinks thus: ‘Because of such evil action as those, when the thief, the criminal is caught, rajahs inflict various kinds of torture on him:

having him whipped, caned, clubbed,... and having his head cut off with a sword.

Those things are not found in me, and I am not engaging in them.’

This is the second kind of bodily and mental joy that the wise man feels here and now.

30 (3) FUTURE ASSURANCE (SPIRITUAL). Again, bhikshus, when the wise man is resting on a chair, on a bed or on the floor, then the good deeds he had done in the past—his good bodily, verbal and mental deeds—cover him, overwhelm him, envelop him.

Just as the shadow of a great mountain peak in the evening covers, overwhelms and envelops the earth,

so too, when the wise man is resting on a chair, on a bed or on the floor, then his past good deeds—good deeds of the body, of speech, of the mind—cover him, overwhelm him, envelop him.

Then, bhikshus, the wise man thinks, ‘I have done what is good, what is wholesome; I have made myself a shelter from anguish. I have done what is good, what is wholesome. When I pass away, I shall go to the destination of those who have done good in body, in speech and in mind.’

He does not sorrow nor grieve nor lament. He does not weep beating his breast nor become distraught.

This, bhikshus, is the third kind of bodily and mental joy that the wise man feels here and now.

31 Bhikshus, a wise man who is devoted to good conduct in body, in speech and in mind, [172] after death, when the body has broken up, reappears in a happy destination, in a heavenly world.²⁶

32 HEAVENLY BLISS. Bhikshus, if one were to speak correctly of that which is utterly desirable, utterly agreeable, utterly pleasant, it is in respect of those of heaven.

So utterly desirable, utterly agreeable, utterly pleasant is heaven that, bhikshus, it is difficult to find a simile for happiness in heaven.”

Then a certain monk said. “Bhante, is it possible to give a comparison?”

THE WHEEL-TURNING KING

33 The Blessed One said, “It is possible, bhikshus. Suppose, bhikshus, that a wheel-turning king²⁷ possesses the seven jewels and the four splendid qualities, and because of that he enjoys bodily and mental happiness.²⁸

34 What are the seven?

THE SEVEN JEWELS

(1) The wheel jewel (*cakka ratana*)

(i) Here, bhikshus, when a head-anointed kshatriya rajah [noble king] has washed his head on the uposatha [precept day], the fifteenth,²⁹ and has ascended the upper palace chamber for the uposatha, there

²⁶ *Sugati saggam lokam.*

²⁷ See **Brahm’āyu S** (M 91.5). For more extensive treatment, see **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17) = SD 36.12 and **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26) = SD 36.10.

²⁸ Since the Buddha is here speaking of an *ideal* ruler, the present tense or narrative present has been used, unlike in **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26/3:58-79) = SD 36.10, where it is a story of the past.

²⁹ “The uposatha [precept day], the fifteenth” (*tad-ah’uposathe pañnarase*). This passage recurs in **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17.1.7.2/2:72 = SD 36.12) & **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26.4c/3:60) = SD 36.10. In the latter (D 26),

appears to him the divine **wheel jewel** with its thousand spokes, its tyre and its hub, complete in every way.

On seeing it, the head-anointed kshatriya rajah thinks thus,

‘I have heard it said that when a head-anointed kshatriya rajah has washed his head on the uposatha, the fifteenth, and has ascended to the upper palace chamber for the uposatha, and there appears to him the divine wheel jewel with its thousand spokes, its tyre and its hub, complete in every way, then that king becomes a wheel-turning king.

Surely I’m a wheel-turner!’

35 Then, bhikshus, the head-anointed kshatriya rajah rises from his seat, and taking a water vessel in his left hand, he sprinkles the wheel jewel with his right hand, saying,

‘Turn, good wheel jewel! Conquer, good wheel jewel!’³⁰

(A) THE EAST. Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel advances, rolling in the eastern quarter and the wheel-turning king follows it with his fourfold army.³¹

Now, bhikshus, in whatever region the wheel jewel stops, the wheel-turning king takes up abode with his fourfold army.

And, [173] bhikshus, opposing kings in the eastern quarter come to the wheel-turning king and speak thus, ‘Come, maharajah; welcome, maharajah. Command, maharajah; advise, maharajah!’

The wheel-turning king speaks thus,

‘You should not kill living beings.

Pāṇo na hantabbo.

You should not take the not-given.

Adinnaṃ nādātabbam.

You should not commit sexual misconduct.

Kāmesu micchā na caritabbā.

You should not speak falsehood.

Musā na bhāsitabbā.

You should not take intoxicants.

Majjaṃ na pātabbam.

And govern as you have done before.’³²

Yathā, bhuttaṃ ca bhuñjatha.

And, bhikshus, the opposing kings in the eastern quarter submit to the wheel-turning king.

there is a strong hint that sovereignty is neither a birthright nor God’s will, but the king’s moral worth. On the observance itself, see **(Tad-ah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70/1:205-215) = SD 4.18.

³⁰ *Pavattatu bhavaṃ cakka, ratanaṃ, abhivijjāntu bhavaṃ cakka, ratanaṃ ti.* This whole section parallels **Cakka, vatti Sīha, nāda S** (D 26.6-7/3:62 f) = SD 36.10.

³¹ There is a hint of a royal “horse sacrifice” (*aśva, medha*) here: see **Cakka, vatti Sīha, nāda S** (D 26.6/3:62) = SD 36.10 (subtitle n). “The fourfold army” (*catur-aṅga sena*), ie, foot-soldiers (infantry), horses (cavalry), elephants (artillery) and chariots (D 2:190 J 2:102 104 Vism 146 SnA 225 353 DhA 4:144; cf J 6:275). *Catur* is an etymological root of the modern word *chess*, and is the Malay word for “chess,” orig a favourite game of royalty in ancient India and Persia. In chess, the infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots, are represented respectively by pawn, knight, bishop, and rook. See H J R Murray, *A History of Chess*, Oxford, 1913.

³² This para is an abr form of the 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*), which, together with a sixth: *yathā, bhuttaṃ ca bhuñjatha*, are also found verbatim at: **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17.1.9/2:173) = SD 36.12, **Cakka, vatti Sīha, nāda S** (D 26.6/3:62, 63) = SD 36.10, **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129.35/3:173) = SD 2.22. See PED: *bhutta*. It is also related to *bhojaka*, as in the commentarial term, *gāma, bhojaka*, “village chief, squire” (J 1:199, 2:134; MA 2:252; DhA 1:69): see Auboyer 1965:42-46. Apparently, the wheel-turner expects some moral standard from his subject-kings, while continuing to rule their kingdoms (cf Collins 1998:605 n12). The sentence *yathā, bhuttaṃ ca bhuñjatha* (D 2:173 = 3:62 63 3:64) is problematic: there is a wordplay (*śleṣa*) on the two forms of *bhuñjati* (“he enjoys”), ie (1) takes food, or (2) rule, govern (DPL; SED: 3 bhuj). A similar play (a pun) on *bhuñjati* in found in **(Devatā) Samiddhi S** (S 42/1.20/-1:8) = SD 21.4. Scholars have tr it in one of 2 ways: (1) “Take food in moderation” (D:W 281 = 398), or (2) “Rule (or govern) as you have done before” (Holder 2006:178); cf D:RD 3:64 n1. Comy notes that the wheel-turner neither demands tributes nor seizes wealth from the subject-kings (DA 2:622; MA 4:222). The point is that the wheel-turner does not dethrone the conquered kings, but *shares power with them* as his feudatory regents or vassals (*rāja anuyutta*). Collins remarks: “He does not depose the kings he defeats and instal someone else in their stead, which was the standard practice among Indian kings; nor does he intend to unseat them and collect taxes directly himself...all major kings or ‘emperors’ ruled through other intermediary members of the tribute-taking class” (1998:605). On *bhuñjati* = “he governs,” see **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98.10(26)/2:196 = Sn 619b) = SD 37.1. See PED: *bhutta*.

(B) THE SOUTH. Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel plunges into the eastern ocean and emerges again. And then it advances, rolling in the southern quarter.

Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel advances, rolling in the southern quarter and the wheel-turning king follows it with his fourfold army.

Now, bhikshus, in whatever region the wheel jewel pauses, the wheel-turning king takes up abode with his fourfold army.

And, bhikshus, opposing kings in the southern quarter come to the wheel-turning king and speak thus, ‘Come, maharajah; welcome, maharajah. Command, maharajah; advise, maharajah!’

The wheel-turning king speaks thus,

‘You should not kill living beings.

You should not take the not-given.

You should not commit sexual misconduct.

You should not speak falsehood.

You should not take intoxicants.

You should eat in moderation.’

And the opposing kings in the southern quarter submit to the wheel-turning king.

(C) THE WEST. Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel plunges into the southern ocean and emerges again.

And then it advances, rolling in the western quarter.

Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel advances, rolling in the western quarter and the wheel-turning king follows it with his fourfold army.

Now, bhikshus, in whatever region the wheel jewel pauses, the wheel-turning king takes up abode with his fourfold army.

And, bhikshus, opposing kings in the western quarter come to the wheel-turning king and speak thus, ‘Come, maharajah; welcome, maharajah. Command, maharajah; advise, maharajah!’

The wheel-turning king speaks thus,

‘You should not kill living beings.

You should not take the not-given.

You should not commit sexual misconduct.

You should not speak falsehood.

You should not take intoxicants.

You should eat in moderation.’

And the opposing kings in the western quarter submit to the wheel-turning king.

(D) THE NORTH. Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel plunges into the western ocean and emerges again.

And then it advances, rolling in the northern quarter.

Then, bhikshus, the wheel jewel advances, rolling in the northern quarter and the wheel-turning king follows it with his fourfold army.

Now, bhikshus, in whatever region the wheel jewel pauses, the wheel-turning king takes up abode with his fourfold army.

And, bhikshus, opposing kings in the northern quarter come to the wheel-turning king and speak thus, ‘Come, maharajah; welcome, maharajah. Command, maharajah; advise, maharajah!’

The wheel-turning king speaks thus,

‘You should not kill living beings.

You should not take the not-given.

You should not commit sexual misconduct.

You should not speak falsehood.

You should not take intoxicants.

You should eat in moderation.’

And the opposing kings in the northern quarter submit to the wheel-turning king.

Now, bhikshus, when the wheel jewel has triumphed over the earth to the ocean’s horizon, it returns to the royal capital and remains as if fixed on its axle at the gate of the wheel-turning king’s inner palace, as an adornment to the gate of his inner palace.

Such, bhikshus, is the wheel jewel that appears to the wheel-turning king.

(2) The elephant jewel (*hatthi ratana*)

36 (ii) Furthermore, bhikshus, **the elephant jewel** appears to the wheel-turning king, pure white,³³ with the sevenfold support,³⁴ with supernormal power, capable of flying through the air—the king of elephants, named Uposatha [Sabbath].

On seeing him, the wheel-turning king's heart is inspired, thus, 'It would be wonderful to ride this elephant if he would undergo training!' [174]

Then, bhikshus, the elephant jewel undergoes taming just like a fine thoroughbred elephant well tamed for a long time.

And it so happens that the wheel-turning king, when testing the elephant jewel, mounts him in the morning, and after traversing the whole earth to the ocean's horizon, he returns to the royal capital to take his morning meal.

Such, bhikshus, is the elephant jewel that appears to a wheel-turning king.

(3) The horse jewel (*assa ratana*)

37 (iii) Furthermore, bhikshus, **the horse jewel** appears to the wheel-turning king, (trunk) all white, with raven-black head, with mane (soft) like *muñja* grass,³⁵ with supernormal power, capable of flying through the air, the king of horses, named Valāhaka [Thundercloud].

On seeing him, the wheel-turning king's heart is inspired, thus, 'It would be wonderful to ride this horse if he would undergo training!'

Then, bhikshus, the horse jewel undergoes taming just like a fine thoroughbred well tamed for a long time.

And it so happens, bhikshus, that the wheel-turning king, when testing the horse jewel, mounts him in the morning, and after traversing the whole earth to the ocean's horizon, he returns to the royal capital to take his morning meal.

Such is the horse jewel that appears to a wheel-turning king.

(4) The gem jewel (*mani, ratana*)

38 (iv) Furthermore, bhikshus, **the gem jewel** appears to the wheel-turning king. The gem is a beryl of the purest water, eight-faceted, well-cut. Now, bhikshus, the radiance of the gem jewel spread all around for a whole league.

And it so happens, bhikshus, that when the wheel-turning king is testing the gem jewel, he assembles his fourfold army in parade, and mounting the jewel on top of his banner, he sets forth in the gloomy darkness of the night.

Then, bhikshus, all the villagers around set about their daily work by its light, thinking it is day.

Such, bhikshus, is the gem jewel that appears to a wheel-turning king.

(5) The woman jewel (*itthī ratana*)

39 (v) Furthermore, bhikshus, **the woman jewel** appears to the wheel-turning king, beautiful, comely and graceful, of the best complexion, neither too tall nor too short, [175] neither too thin nor too fat, neither too dark nor too fair, surpassing human beauty, though not reaching the beauty of the gods.

The touch of the woman jewel, bhikshus, is soft like a tuft of cotton-wool or of kapok.

Bhikshus, when it is cool, her limbs are warm; when it is warm, her limbs are cool. Her body exudes the fragrance of sandalwood, and her mouth has the scent of lotuses.

³³ *Sabba, seto*, ie an albino.

³⁴ That is, four strong legs, two powerful tusks and its trunk.

³⁵ *Muñja* grass, *Saccharum munja* Roxb, a soft grass, dark in colour. The grass is often worn by ancient Indian warriors (D 2:174; Sn 18, 440).

Bhikshus, she rises before the wheel-turning king and retires after him.

Bhikshus, she is eager to serve, agreeable in conduct, and sweet in speech. Even in thought, she is never unfaithful to the wheel-turning king, how then could she be in body?

Such, bhikshus, is the woman jewel that appears to a wheel-turning king.

(6) The steward jewel (*gaha,pati ratana*)

40 (vi) Furthermore, bhikshus, **the steward jewel** appears to the wheel-turning king. As a result of past karma, he is endowed with the divine eye,³⁶ whereby he sees hidden jewels, both with owner and ownerless. He approaches the wheel-turning king and says, ‘Sire, please be at ease. I shall manage your finances.’

Once, bhikshus, that when the wheel-turning king, testing the steward jewel, boards a boat and sails on the river Ganges. Midstream, he tells the steward jewel,

‘Steward, I have jewel [wealth] by way of silver and gold.’³⁷

‘Then, sire, let the boat be steered towards a bank.’

‘Steward, the jewel by way of silver and gold is right here.’³⁸

Then, bhikshus, the steward jewel feels about³⁹ with both his hands in the water, and draws up a pot full of silver and gold, and he asks the wheel-turning king,

‘Is this enough, sire? Is enough done, sire? Is that enough offered, sire?’

The wheel-turning king replied thus, ‘This is enough, steward, enough done, enough offered.’

Such, bhikshus, is the steward jewel that appears to a wheel-turning king.

(7) The commander jewel (*pariṇāyaka ratana*)

41 (vii) Furthermore, bhikshus, **the commander jewel [176]** appears to the wheel-turning king, wise, skillful, sagacious and shrewd,⁴⁰ capable of (wisely advising the king), on that which should be promoted, that which should be dismissed, that which should be retained. He approaches the wheel-turning king and says, ‘Sire, please be at ease, I shall instruct (you with wise counsel).’

Such, bhikshus, is the commander jewel that appears to a wheel-turning king.

These, bhikshus, are the seven jewels that a wheel-turning king possesses.

THE FOUR KINDS OF SPLENDID QUALITIES

42 What are the four splendid qualities⁴¹ (of the wheel-turning king)?

(1) Here, bhikshus, a wheel-turning king is handsome, comely and graceful, possessing the best complexion, surpassing that of any other human.

³⁶ This is apparently an ordinary clairvoyance, not the knowledge of others’ karma (for which see, for example, D 1:81).

³⁷ *Attho me, gahapati, hirañña, suvañṇenā ti*. I have rendered *attha* here as “treasure [wealth],” rather than “need” (M:H & M:ÑB) or “wish, desire,” which sounds rather quaint and out of context. See foll n.

³⁸ *Idh’eva me, gahapati, attho hirañña, suvañṇenā ti* Since they are midstream, it is more likely that the wheel-turning king is telling the steward jewel that he has found the right spot. It would be strange that the king would have “need” of the treasure mid-stream.

³⁹ “Feels about,” *omasitvā*, “having plunged,” from *omasati*, which has two senses: (1) *o* (= *ava*, meaning “low, despising”) + *masati*, “he pierces, strikes,” meaning “hurts, pierces, strikes, strikes in a downward direction; attacks verbally” (V 4:4; Tha 3); (2) *o* (= *ava*, meaning “down, downward”) + *masati* (Skt *ava* + *√MRŚ*, to touch, feel), ie, touches, strokes (in a downward direction) (V 3:121; J 1:295,10* = V 446,4*; D 2:176,23 = M 3:175,26). Both CPD & DP takes *omasati* as meaning “to touch,” but we sense of “downwards” is missing. The action of the steward is prob that of touching, stirring, and then immersing his hands into the water.

⁴⁰ *paṇḍito byatto medhāvī paṭibalo*.

⁴¹ *Catu iddhi*; cf (**Cakka,vatti**) **Abbhuta Dhamma S** (A 4.130/2:133) = SD 36.10 (2.1.2); DAṬ:VRI 1:381. This section suggests that the wheel-turner has great charisma, on which see Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h.

This, bhikshus, is the first splendid quality that a wheel-turning king possesses.

43 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, a wheel-turning king lives long, endures long, surpassing other humans in that respect.

This, bhikshus, is the second splendid quality that a wheel-turning king possesses.

44 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, a wheel-turning king is free from illness, free from pain. He has a good digestion. His body is neither too cold nor too warm.⁴² His health surpasses that of any other human.

This, bhikshus, is the third splendid quality that a wheel-turning king possesses.

45 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, a wheel-turning king is dear and charming⁴³ to the brahmin house-lords.⁴⁴

Bhikshus, just as a father is dear to his children, even so, bhikshus, a wheel-turning king is dear and charming to the brahmin house-lords.

And, bhikshus, brahmin house-lords are dear and charming to a wheel-turning king.

Bhikshus, just as children are dear and charming to their father, even so, bhikshus, are brahmin house-lords dear and charming to a wheel-turning king.

Once upon a time, bhikshus, the wheel-turning king is driving in a pleasure park with his fourfold army. Then, bhikshus, brahmin house-lords go to him and speak thus,

‘Sire, please drive slowly that we may see you longer.’

And so, bhikshus, he tells his charioteer, [177]

‘Charioteer, drive slowly that I may see the brahmin house-lords longer.’

This, bhikshus, is the fourth splendid quality that a wheel-turning king possesses.

These, bhikshus, are the four splendid qualities that a wheel-turning king possesses.

46 What do you think, bhikshus? Would a wheel-turning king enjoy bodily and mental joy because of possessing these seven jewels and these four splendid qualities?”

“Bhante, a wheel-turning king would surely enjoy bodily and mental joy on account of even one jewel, let alone seven jewels and four splendid qualities!”

The stone and the mountain (heaven) [cf §9]

47 Then the Blessed One, having taken a small stone the size of his fist, addressed the bhikshus, “Bhikshus, which is bigger: the stone the size of my fist or the Himalayas, the king of mountains?”

“Bhante, the stone the size of your fist cannot be compared to the Himalayas. It is not even a fraction of it; there is no comparison.”

“Even so, bhikshus, the bodily and mental joy that a wheel-turning king enjoys because of possessing the seven jewels and the four splendid qualities cannot be compared to the happiness of heaven. It is not even a fraction of it; there is no comparison.

⁴² *Appābādho ahosi appātāṅko samavepākiniyā gahaṇiyā samannāgato nātisūtāya nāccuṅhāya*: **D 17.1.20/2:177** (of a wheel-turner), **30.2.8.2/3:166** (×2) (of a wheel-turner); **M 82.31/2:67** (of Raṭṭha, pāla), **85.57/2:95** (in a parable); the rest, all concerning meditators: **A 5.53.2/3:65**, **54.9/3:66**, **78.3/3:103**, **135.3/3:153 f** (×2), **10.11.2/5:15**. The above line with “surpassing any other human” (*ativiya aññehi manussehi*), ie the whole stock: **M 3:176** (of a wheel-turner).

⁴³ “Dear and charming,” *piyo ahosi manāpo*, which is stock: **D 2:19, 20, 178** (×3), **3:167 f**; **M 3:176** (×3); **J 2:155, 4:132**; *piyo manāpo* **D 2:236** (×2), **355**; **M 2:56, 57, 58** (×2), **59** (×2), **60, 62, 106** (×2), **107, 355, 3:168** (×2); **S 2:98**; **U 14** (×2); *piyo hoti manāpo* **D 3:167 f**; **M 3:176** (×3); **A 3:39-270** (39 hits), **4:1, 2** (×3), **32, 155, 156** (×3), **280, 361**; *piyo ca hoti manāpo* **ca A 4:1, 2** (×3), **32, 65, 155, 156** (×3), **280, 361, 5:131**; **Nc:Be 239**; *piyo ca assaṃ manāpo ca* **M 1:33**; *piyo bhāvissāmi manāpo bhāvissāmi* **Nm 1:232, 2:257, 385**.

⁴⁴ *Brāhmaṇa, gahapatika*, also spelt *brāhmaṇa, gahapati*, which is invariably a collective term, never an individual, ie, the landed community of of the brahmin villages (*brāhmaṇa, gāma*) or fiefs (*brahma, deya*) as a whole. This classification is based on land-ownership (ie their economic function), who nonetheless still identified with the larger priestly class. As such, individually, theu (such as Kūṭa, danta, Caṅkī, etc) are still referred to simply as *brāhmaṇa*. See Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, Oxford Univ Press, 1987:72 f.

48 Bhikshus, even after a long time, the wise man were to regain the human state, he is born into a high family—well-to-do kshatriyas, well-to-do brahmins, well-to-do houselords—one that is rich, wealthy, having much possessions, with abundant gold and silver, with much assets and means, with much money and grain [food]. He is handsome, comely, graceful, possessing the best complexion.

He gets food, drinks, clothes, vehicles, garlands, scents, cosmetics, bed, dwelling and light. He conducts himself well in body, in speech and in mind, [178] with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in a happy destination, in a heavenly world.

The gambler's good luck [cf §26]

49 Bhikshus, suppose a gambler, lucky at the very first throw, wins a great fortune. That lucky throw by which he gains a great fortune is negligible. It is a far more lucky throw when the wise man, conducting himself well in body, in speech and in mind, with the body's breaking up, after death, reappears in a happy destination, in a heavenly world.

This, bhikshus, is the complete and perfect state of a wise man.⁴⁵

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved of the Blessed One's words.

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⁴⁵ This is of course spoken in reference in terms of *puñña* (merit), the good or “meritorious” actions of body, speech and mind, that is, to the mundane fruits that still bind one to the wandering-on (*samsāra*). Cf §26n.