

# Āyācana Sutta

## The Discourse on the Request

[Brahmā invites the Buddha to teach the Dharma]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 6.1/1:136-138)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

### Introduction

#### 1 Buddha's life

Soon after the Great Awakening, while the Buddha is sitting under the Aja,pāla Nigrodha [Goatherd's Banyan], hesitating as to whether or not he should teach the Dharma, Sahampati appears before him and beseeches him to open to the world the doors of immortality. The Buddha agrees to this urgent request [§§12-14]. The canonical account of this important event is found in several places.<sup>1</sup>

The occasion of Brahmā's entreaty is recorded here in the Āyācana Sutta, **the Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26),<sup>2</sup> **the Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14)<sup>3</sup> and the Vinaya.<sup>4</sup> The Commentaries assign the episode to the eighth week after the Great Awakening.<sup>5</sup> A Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit parallel episode is found in **the Mahāvastu**,<sup>6</sup> which however is more ornate, with several variant versions of the meeting between the Buddha and Brahmā Sahampati, more or less corresponding with the Pāli version.

Buddhaghosa explains that the Buddha is reluctant to teach, not on account of indolence, but because he wishes Sahampati to make him this request.<sup>7</sup> For, thinks the Buddha, the world honours Brahmā greatly, and when people realize that Brahmā himself has beseeched the Buddha to spread his teaching, they would pay more attention to it. Sahampati is, at this time, the most senior of the Brahmās in this universe (*imasmim cakkavāle jeṭṭhaka,mahābrahme*) (DA 2:467).

#### 2 Brahmā Sahampati

**Brahmā Sahampati** plays various dramatic roles at key points in the Buddha's life. Here, in the Āyācana Sutta, he takes the initiative to invite the Buddha to declare his awakening to the world. However, Sahampati is not merely a high heavenly figure, but one closely connected with the dispensation of Gotama Buddha. He is present at the Nativity and, at the Great Awakening, he holds a white parasol three yojanas in diameter over the Buddha's head (BA 287).<sup>8</sup>

Sahampati's attaining of non-return and prominence is told autobiographically in **Brahmā Sahampati Sutta** (S 48.57), where the Buddha, while in retreat, reflects on the five spiritual faculties. Reading his mind, the Brahmā Sahampati appears before the Buddha and declares his approval, saying that he [Sahampati] too had cultivated the spiritual faculties during the time of the immediate past **Buddha Kassapa**, when he was a monk named **Sahaka**. Destroying all desire for sense-pleasure, he was reborn in the Brahmā world, and was thereafter called **Sahampati**.<sup>9</sup> Here "destroying all desire for sense-pleasure" clearly refers to being a non-returner. In fact, the Commentaries say that he is a non-returner (*anāgāmī*) **Brahmā** born in the Suddhāvāsā (SnA 2:476), there to pass a whole aeon (*kappa*), because he has developed the first dhyana as a monk (BA 12).

<sup>1</sup> For the immediate events following the Great Awakening, see **The First Seven Weeks** = SD 63.1.

<sup>2</sup> M 26.19-21/1:167-179 = SD 1.11.

<sup>3</sup> D 14.3.1-7/2:36-40. Here Vipassī Buddha and Mahā Brahmā are the speakers.

<sup>4</sup> V 1:4-7.

<sup>5</sup> SA 1:195; J 81; BA 13, 291.

<sup>6</sup> Mvst 3:314-319 = Mvst:J 3:302-309.

<sup>7</sup> MA 2:176 f; SA 1:197 f.

<sup>8</sup> This episode has been sculpted in the Relic Chamber of the Mahā Thūpa in Sri Lanka (Mahv 30.74); cf J 4:266.

<sup>9</sup> (**Sahampati**) **Brahmā S** (S 48.57/5:232 f; SA 1:199).

In the Nikāyas, Brahmā Sahampati is most often mentioned in **the Saṃyutta Nikāya**. He numerous appearances, such as in the following suttas, attest to his importance in Buddhism:

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| <b>Gārava Sutta</b> (S 6.2) <sup>10</sup>                          | — Saham,pati visits the Buddha and applauds the Buddha's decision to take the Dharma as his teacher.   |
| <b>Brahma,deva Sutta</b> (S 6.3) <sup>11</sup>                     | — How he admonishes a brahminee, a Brahmā devotee, to stop making meaningless offerings to Brahmā and instead give alms to her own son, the monk Brahma,deva.  |
| <b>Kokālika Sutta 2</b> (S 6.10) <sup>12</sup>                     | — Recounts how, when Kokālika, a follower of Devadatta, died and was born in Paduma Niraya, Sahampati informed the Buddha about this.  |
| <b>(Sahampati) Devadatta S</b> (S 6.12/1:152 f)                    | — Sahampati informs the Buddha of the fate of the schismatic Devadatta.  |
| <b>Andhakavinda Sutta</b> (S 6.13/1:154)                           | — Saham,pati shows great interest in the welfare of the Sangha by extolling the life of a diligent monk. At Andhakavinda, while the Buddha sits out in the open during the night and rain falls drop by drop, Saham,pati sings verses in praise of the life and practices of the monks and of their results. |
| <b>Buddha Vandanā Sutta</b> (S 11.17) <sup>13</sup>                | — Sakra lauds the Buddha; Saham,pati invites him to teach (repeating S v560).  |
| <b>Cātumā S</b> (M 67.8-12/1:458);                                 | — Saham,pati reconciles the Buddha with some unruly monks.   |
| <b>(Sahampati) Piṇḍolya Sutta</b> (S 22.80) <sup>14</sup>          | — Sahampati approves of satipatthana as the <i>ekāyana</i> path.   |
| <b>(Ekāyana) Brahmā Sutta</b> (S 47.18);                           | — He approves of the five spiritual faculties ( <i>indriya</i> ).  |
| <b>(Sahampati) Magga Sutta</b> (S 47.43) <sup>15</sup>             | — Saham,pati visits our Buddha Gotama on a number of occasions, such as agreeing with the Buddha's decision to take the Dharma as his teacher.   |
| <b>(Sahampati) Brahmā Sutta</b> (S 48.57); <sup>16</sup>           |  |
| <b>Gārava S</b> (S 6.2); <b>Uruvelā S 1</b> (A 4.21) <sup>17</sup> | — They contain a verse eulogy spoken by Saham,pati immediately after the Buddha's final nirvana. Just as he has welcomed the child Siddhattha into the world, Saham,pati is present at the Buddha's parinirvana, where he is first to utter a eulogy.  |
| <b>Parinibbāna Sutta</b> (S 6.15/1:157 f);                         |  |
| <b>Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta</b> (D 16.6.10b/2:157)                   |  |

The Commentaries relate that during the eighth week<sup>18</sup> of the Great Awakening, when the Buddha sits under **the Aja,pāla Nigrodha** [Goatherd Banyan], hesitating as to whether or not he should teach the Dharma. This pivotal event is also recorded in the Āyācanā Sutta, relating how reflects on the profundity of the newly-realized Dharma, his hesitation to teach it and Brahmā's entreaty. What Brahmā says following this, serves as the rationale for the Buddha to declare the newly-found Dharma to the world.

<sup>10</sup> S 6.2/1:139; see also A 4.21/2:20.

<sup>11</sup> S 6.3/1:140 f = SD 12.4.

<sup>12</sup> S 6.10/1:151 f; also A 10.89/5:172; Sn p125.

<sup>13</sup> S 11.17/1:233 f. The same exchange between Sakra and Sahampati is found in Mvst 3:315 f = Mvst:J 3:304 f.

<sup>14</sup> S 22.80/3:91; M 67.8-12/1:458.

<sup>15</sup> S 47.18/5:167, 47.43/5:185.

<sup>16</sup> S 48.57/5:232; also SA 1:199).

<sup>17</sup> S 6.2/1:139; A 4.21/2:20; see also S 5:167 f, 185, 232.

<sup>18</sup> SA 1:199; see also J 81; BA 13, 291.

The non-returner Brahmā Sahampati appears before the Buddha and beseeches him to open to the world the doors of deathlessness.<sup>19</sup> Sahampati reports to the Buddha that there are those “with little dust in their eyes” [3a] who, not listening to the Dharma, would fall away. Seeing this to be true, the Buddha’s decided to teach the Dharma.<sup>20</sup> In so doing, Sahampati links together Kassapa’s dispensation with that of Gotama’s.

### 3 Brahmā Sahampati’s past

Once he offered to the Buddha a chain of jewels (*ratana.dāma*) as large as Sineru.<sup>21</sup> On the day that the elder Āṇindaka, vāsī Mahā, phussa, deva attained arhathood, Sahampati came to wait upon him (VbhA 352). During the time of **Kassapa Buddha**, Sahampati was a monk named **Sahaka**, who, having practised the five spiritual faculties, was reborn in the Brahmā world, and was thereafter called Sahampati.<sup>22</sup> The Commentaries say that he was a non-returner (*anāgāmi*) Brahmā born in the Suddhāvāsā (SnA 2:476), there to pass a whole aeon (*kappa*), because he had developed the first dhyana as a monk (BA 12).

**The Buddha, vaṇisa Commentary** says that, strictly speaking, his name should be “Sahaka, pati.”<sup>23</sup> While the Buddha sits under the Bodhi tree during the Great Awakening, Sahampati holds a white parasol three yojanas<sup>24</sup> in diameter over the Buddha’s head (BA 287). This episode has been sculpted in the Relic Chamber of the Mahā Thūpa.<sup>25</sup> It has also been suggested that Brahmā Sahampati is very probably connected with Brahmi Svayambhū of brahmanical literature.<sup>26</sup>

### 4 The Buddha’s decision to teach

The Āyācana Sutta records the Buddha’s initial hesitance to teach the Dharma, an account that is also found elsewhere in the Pāli Canon:

**The Vinaya** (V 1:4 ff): the account of the first seven weeks after the Great Awakening.

The Dīgha: **Mahāpadāna Sutta** (D 14/2:36 ff), where it is recounted in relation to the past Buddha Vipassī Buddha.

The Majjhima: **Ariya, pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26/1:169); **Bodhi Rāja, kumāra Sutta** (M 85/2:93).

The Sāmyutta: **Āyācanā Sutta** (S 6.1/1:137), with BHS parallel in the Mahāvastu.<sup>27</sup>

These numerous identical passages attest to the age and importance of the episode.

The episode of Brahmā’s request, however, is not found at all in the Madhyama Āgama account. The same episode is, however, found in **the Ekottara Āgama** parallel to the Āyācana Sutta, in Sanskrit fragments of **the Catuspariṣat Sūtra**,<sup>28</sup> in five sūtras preserved as **individual Chinese translations**,<sup>29</sup>

<sup>19</sup> V 1:5 f; S 1:136-138; J 81; B 1; BA 13, 291.

<sup>20</sup> The Brahmā Sahampati also appears in (**Sahampati**) **Vandanā S** (S 11.17/1:233 f), and **Brahmā Sahampati S** (S 48.57/ 5:232 f).

<sup>21</sup> KhA 171; VA 1:115; Vism 201.

<sup>22</sup> S 5:233; SA 1:199.

<sup>23</sup> BA 12, cf 28.

<sup>24</sup> A *yojana* is about 11.25 km (7 mi) (see DhA 2:13). It is sometimes tr as “league,” but it should be noted that a league is any of various units of distance from about 2.4 to 4.6 statute mi, and esp refers to the English league (about 3 mi). As such, it is best to use the Pali term here, since it has no English equivalent.

<sup>25</sup> Mahv 30.74; cf J 4:266.

<sup>26</sup> TW Rhys Davids & H Oldenberg (trs), *Vinaya Texts*, 1:86 n1.

<sup>27</sup> BHS parallel at Mvst 3:314-319 = Mvst:J 3:302-309 (Senart 1897). The Chinese Āgama version at DĀ 1 = T1.8b21.

<sup>28</sup> This discourse belongs to the no longer extant Skt version of the Dīrgha Āgama and recounts the foundation of the fourfold Buddhist community since the time of the Buddha’s awakening. The relevant passage from **Catuspariṣat Sūtra** is found in Waldschmidt 1957:108-120, tr Kloppenberg 1973:15-17.

<sup>29</sup> EĀ 19.1 = T2.593a-b, tr in Bareau 1988:78, cf also Bareau 1980:5. The individual trs are T186 = T3.527c23, T187 = T3.603a10, T189 = T3.642c-643a, T190 = T3.806a3 and T191 = T3.952c-953a, cf Waldschmidt 1967g:173.

and in the **Lalitavistara**.<sup>30</sup> The Buddha's hesitation and Brahmā's request also recur in similar terms in the Vinayas of the Dharmaguptaka, Lokōttaravāda, Mahīśāsaka, Mūla, sarvāstivāda and Theravāda.<sup>31</sup>

The agreement found among such a broad range of sources on the fact that the Buddha was disinclined to teach and only did so when requested by Brahmā suggests that its absence from the Madhyama Āgama discourse is a case of textual corruption, possibly even a case of intentional omission. Such an intentional omission would not be surprising, since this passage presents a problem not easy to solve. The problem posed is how to combine the Buddha's disinclination to teach with the idea common to all Buddhist traditions that the Buddha had prepared himself over incalculable time periods for precisely this task.

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<sup>30</sup> The relevant passage from **Lalita, vistara** in Foucaux 1884:326; Lefmann 1902:392.

<sup>31</sup> Dharmaguptaka Vinaya: T1428 = T22.786b-787b, tr in Bareau 1963:138-139; Lokottaravāda Vinaya (Mahāvastu): Senart 1897:314, tr in Jones 1978, Mvst:J :302; Mahīśāsaka Vinaya: T 421 = T22.103c-104a, tr in Bareau 1963:136-138; Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya: Chinese version T 450 = T24.126b, tr in Waldschmidt 1957:109-121, Skt version in Gnoli 1977:128-130, Tibetan version in Waldschmidt 1957:109-121, tr in Feer 1883:14-16; Theravāda Vinaya: V 1:4-7, tr in Horner 1982 V:H 4:6-10.

## The Discourse on the Request

(S 6.1/1:136-138)

1 Thus have I heard.

### The Buddha hesitates

At one time the Blessed One was staying at the foot of the Goatherd Banyan Tree on the bank of the river Nerañjarā at Uruvelā, just after he had become fully self-awakened.<sup>32</sup>

2 Then when the Blessed One was alone in retreat, this reflection arose in his mind:

3 “This truth [Dharma] that I have discovered is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, unattainable through discursive thought,<sup>33</sup> subtle, to be known by the wise.<sup>34</sup>

But this generation revels in attachment, delights in attachment, rejoices in attachment.<sup>35</sup>

For such a generation, revelling in attachment, delighting in attachment, rejoicing in attachment, this truth [Dharma] is hard to see, that is to say, specific conditionality,<sup>36</sup> dependent arising.<sup>37</sup>

And this truth [Dharma], too, is hard to see, that is, the stilling of all formations,<sup>38</sup> the giving up of all acquisitions,<sup>39</sup> the destruction of craving, fading away (of lust),<sup>40</sup> cessation (of suffering), nirvana.

If I were to teach the truth [Dharma], and if others were not to understand me, that would be tiresome and troubling for me.”

4 Thereupon, these stanzas, unheard before,<sup>41</sup> arose spontaneously<sup>42</sup> in the Blessed One:

<sup>32</sup> “Just after he had become fully awakened,” *paṭhamābhisambuddho*, lit “when he first became fully awakened one.”

<sup>33</sup> *Atakkâvacaro* = *na + takka + avacara*, lit “not in the sphere of discursive thought (or logic)” (V 1:4 = D 2:36 = 37 = M 1:167 = S 1:136 ≠ M 1:487 ≠ 2:172; A 2:289; D 1:12; It 37).

<sup>34</sup> *Paṇḍita, vedanīyo*.

<sup>35</sup> “**Attachment**,” *ālaya*, ie worldly attachment, sensuality, “worldliness” (M:ÑB 1218 n306). The word has a wide range of meanings: 1 (a) house, dwelling, habitat, household, a built structure; (b) nest, lair, perch, shelter; (c) abode, seat, place of rest, resort, haven, repository; (d) domain, field of activity, sphere; 2 (a) liking, inclination, attachment, fondness for, partiality towards; (b) affection, love; (c) (as a metaphysical concept) **desire, yearning, clinging, sensual attachment** (= *taṇhā*); (d) thought preparatory to a decision (regarding the *vassa*), the decision itself; (3) feint, pretence, ruse, dissimulation, impersonation (CPD). **MA**: The term denotes both sense-pleasures and the thoughts of craving concerned with them (MA 2:174 f). **SA** explains *ālaya* objectively as the 5 cords of sensual pleasure (*pañca kāma, guṇa*) [SD 8.7 Intro (2)]. They are called “attachment” because they attach themselves to these 5 cords of sensual pleasure. Subjectively, *ālaya* refers to the 108 mental investigations driven by craving (*taṇhā, vicarita*) [A 2:212 f], and it is these that attach themselves to their objects. (SA 1:195)

<sup>36</sup> “Specific conditionality,” *idapaccayatā*, ie causal relationship, shows how one thing is related to another, thus: “When this, is that is; when this arises, that arises. When this is not, that is not; when this ceases, that ceases” (M 3:63; S 2:28, 95). See also V 1:5; D 1:85, 2:55; M 1:262; S 2:25, 5:71. See foll n.

<sup>37</sup> “Dependent arising,” *paṭicca, samuppāda*, is a formulation of the complex interdependent working of all mental and physical phenomena revealing how they inherently lacks any permanent entity or *attā*. See SD 5.16.

<sup>38</sup> “Formations,” *saṅkhāra*, here meaning the active aspect of “forming” actions (karma) through body, speech and mind, being either wholesome or unwholesome (S 12.1, 7). Nyanatiloka uses the neologism “karma-formations” to specifically refer to this aspect of *saṅkhāra*, otherwise a word that is polysemic and profound. Sometimes the term *abhisāṅkhāra* is used here (D 3:217; M 1:297; S 12.51; A 1:112). See BDict: *saṅkhāra*.

<sup>39</sup> “Acquisitions,” *upadhi*, see n4.

<sup>40</sup> “Fading away,” *virāga*, also tr as “dispassion.”

<sup>41</sup> *pubbe assuta, pubbā*, lit “unheard of before, before.” See Oskar Von Hinüber, “*Anacchariyā pubbe assuta-pubbā*” in *Selected Papers on Pāli Studies*, Oxford: PTS, 1994:17-24, where he contends that *anacchariyā* represents Skt \**an-akṣar-ikā*, but, retorts Bodhi, “his argument rests on the assumption that *pubbe assuta-pubbā* would be redundancy and therefore *pubbe* must be taken in apposition to the preceding *anacchariyā*. This assumption, however, is contradicted by D 1:184, 27-29, where we find *pubbe... sutapubbā* as one block. Interestingly, no corresponding word is to be found in the Mahāvastu and Lalitavistara versions of the same incident.” (S:B 431 n365; citations normalized). See foll n.

- 556 I have discovered the truth with difficulty:  
Enough with declaring it!  
For it will never be easily understood [be easily awakened to]  
By those lost in lust and hate.
- 557 It goes against the current,  
Profound, deep, hard to see, subtle—  
Those dyed in lust will not see it, nor (will it be seen)  
By those wrapped in massive darkness.<sup>43</sup> [137]

5 Thinking thus, the Blessed One's mind inclined to living at ease,<sup>44</sup> rather than teaching the truth [Dharma].<sup>45</sup>

### Brahmā Sahampati's descent

6 Then Brahmā Sahampati, having known with his own mind the reflection in the Blessed One's mind, thought:

"Alas, the world is lost! Alas, the world is destroyed, now that the mind of the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Fully Self-awakened One, inclines to living at ease, not to teaching Dharma!"<sup>46</sup>

7 Then, just as a strong man might stretch his arm out or bend it back, Brahmā Sahampati disappeared from the Brahmā world and reappeared before the Blessed One.

8 Then Brahmā Sahampati, having arranged his upper robe on one shoulder, knelt down on his right knee on the ground, raised his palms lotus-wise towards the Blessed One, and said this to him:

**"Bhante, let the Blessed One teach the Dharma! Let the Well-farer [Sugata] teach the Dharma! There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away through not hearing the Dharma. There are those who will understand the Dharma."**<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> PTS *acchariyā*; prob wr for *anacchariyā* (Be Ce Se), lit "not wonderful," ie appearing quite naturally or spontaneously (CPD) (D 2: 93 = S 5:259; M 3:121; A 4:211; J 3:70, 406, 4:153, 6:220; cf V 2:17; S 4:301). For the tr here I am guided by the context of **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26.19/1:168), where the reading is *anacchariyā*, and where the Buddha himself is the narrator: he is more likely to have said that the stanzas are "spontaneous" rather than "marvellous." Although the Commentators seem to take *anacchariyā* as deriving from *acchariyā*, most translators render it as "spontaneously," apparently invoking *acchara*, "moment." Buddhaghosa glosses *anacchariyā* as *anu-acchariyā*, "repeatedly or following *acchariyā*" (VA 1:133; SA 1:196). For SA Porāṇa Ṭīkā gloss and further comments, see S:B 431 n 365. See prev n.

<sup>43</sup> V 1:4 = M 1:169 = S 1:136; D 2:37 Vipassī Buddha; Mvst 3:315.

<sup>44</sup> "Inclined to living at ease," *appossukkatāya* = *appa* (little) + *ussukka* (striving for), meaning "little zeal"; ie "careless, unconcerned; living at ease, inactive" (V 2:188; D 2:176 = M 3:175 ≠ D 2:177 = M 3:176; M 1:450; Sn 43; Nc 91 = Ap 9; Thī 457, 477; Dh 330). Comys: *Appossukkatā* means the lack of desire to teach (SA 1:197). But why, when the Bodhisattva had long ago made an aspiration to reach Buddhahood in order to liberate others, is now inclined towards living at ease. Because it is only after reaching awakening did he fully realize the weight of defilements in people's minds and of the profundity of the Dharma. Furthermore, he wanted Brahmā to entreat him to teach, so that beings who venerated Brahmā would recognize the Dharma's value and desire to listen to it. (SA 1:197 f; MA 2:176 f on **Ariya,pariyesanā S**, M 26).

<sup>45</sup> MA asks why, when the Bodhisattva had long ago made an aspiration to reach Buddhahood in order to liberate others, is now inclined towards inaction. It then explains that it is only after reaching awakening did he fully realize the power of defilements in people's minds and of the profundity of the Dharma. Furthermore, he wanted Brahmā to entreat him to teach so that beings who venerated Brahmā would recognize the Dharma's value and desire to listen to it. (MA 2:176 f)

<sup>46</sup> In the **Mahāvastu** account, the deity who approaches the Buddha is referred to only as "Mahā Brahmā," and is accompanied by many other gods, incl Sakra. On Brahmā Sahampati's role in the Buddha story, see Intro (2).

<sup>47</sup> *Desetu bhante bhagavā dhammaṃ desetu Sugato dhammaṃ. Santi sattā appa,raj'akkha,jātikā, assavaṇatā dhammassa parihāyanti. Bhavissanti dhammassa aññātāro ti.* A similar request is made mutatis mutandis (*sattā* is



9 Brahmā Sahampati said this. Having said this, he further said this:

558 There has appeared in the past (until now) in Magadha  
An impure Dharma devised by those still tainted.<sup>48</sup>  
Throw open this door to the Deathless!<sup>49</sup>  
Let them hear the Dharma discovered by the Stainless One!<sup>50</sup>

559 Just as one standing on a mountain peak  
Might see below the people all around,  
Even so, O wise one, Universal Eye,<sup>51</sup>  
Ascend the palace of the Dharma!  
  
Let the Sorrow-free One behold the human race,  
Drowned in sorrow, oppressed by birth and decay!

560 Arise, O Hero! Victor in battle!  
O Caravan Leader, debt-free one, wander in the world!  
Teach the Dharma, O Blessed One!<sup>52</sup>  
There will be those who will understand.<sup>53</sup> [138]

10 Then, heeding Brahmā's plea, and out of compassion for beings, the Blessed One surveyed the world with the Buddha-eye.

11 Surveying the world with the Buddha-eye, the Blessed One saw beings with little dust in their eyes and beings with much dust in their eyes, the keen and the dull, the good and the evil, those easy to teach and those hard to teach, and some who live seeing blame (for wrongdoing) and fear (of pain) and in

replaced by *kula, puttā*, “sons of family”) by Anātha, piṇḍika on his deathbed: **Anātha, piṇḍik'ovāda S** (M 143.15/-3:261) = SD 23.9.

<sup>48</sup> These two lines, in dialectical terms, form the **thesis**, the real but unsatisfactory state of things stated by Brahmā on behalf of sentient beings as it were. In social terms, this statement clearly refers to the brahminical system of philosophy and practices, that is, the *āstika* system. This statement also means that the liberating truth has been forgotten during this time [see v558d n]. As such, the Buddha's claim that his newly proclaimed Dharma is “unheard before” (*pubbe assuta, pubbā*) is clearly justified. Kvu 4.8/286 discusses the question how far the Buddha did not have a teacher (**Ariya, pariyesanā S**, M 26.25/1:170 = SD 1.11) when, as a Bodhisattva (named Jotipāla) he had been Kassapa Buddha's disciple (**Ghaṭikāra S**, M 81.6/2:46, 81.3/2:54), and how far the Buddha's awakening was an insight into “things unheard before” (**Dhamma, cakka-p, pavattana S**, S 56.11.9-12/5:422- f; V 1:10-12 = SD 1.1). See also Comy ad loc (KvuA 78). See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.6.4) = SD 9 & Piya Tan, “The Buddha and His Disciples” 2004b: §§10:20b, 11a.

<sup>49</sup> Comy: The door to the deathless is the noble path, “the door to the deathless nirvana” (SA 1:199). While *dvāra* here is singular, below [13] it is plural (*dvārā*).

<sup>50</sup> These last 2 lines form the **antithesis** to Brahmā's earlier request. The first statement was a definition of the problem, and this second statement is a proposal for its solution. See v558b n.

<sup>51</sup> “The 5 eyes” (*cakkhu*). The Buddha eye (*buddha, cakkhu*) is a name for the knowledge of the degrees of maturity in the faculties of being (*indriya, paropariyatta, ñāṇa*) and the knowledge of the dispositions and latent tendencies of beings (*āsayānusaya, ñāṇa*). The “knowledge of omniscience” is called the universal eye (*samanta, -cakkhu*) (S v559d). The knowledge of the 3 lower paths is called the Dharma eye or “Dharma vision” (*dhamma, -cakkhu*). Together with the divine eye or clairvoyance (*dibba, cakkhu*) (S 6.5/1:145, 12.70/2:121 f) and the physical eye (*maṃsa, cakkhu*), these make up the “five eyes” of the Buddha (Nc 235; SA 1:200).

<sup>52</sup> Reading *desassu bhagavā dhammam* (Be Se, PTS2 1998); PTS1 (1884) *desetu* (found also in D and V parallels) “seems to be a normalization influenced by the preceding prose passage” (S:B 432 n369). The verse is found again uttered by Brahmā Sahampati in **Buddha Vandana S** (S v919 = 11.17/1:234).

<sup>53</sup> V 1:4-7; M 1:167-69; S 1:136-39; D 2:36-40 Vipassī Buddha; Mvst 3:314-19; cf S 1:234.

the hereafter.<sup>54</sup>

### Parable of the lotus ponds

**12** Just as in a lotus pond of the blue or white or red lotuses,<sup>55</sup> some lotuses might be born in the water, grow up in the water, and thrive while submerged in the water, without rising out of the water; some lotuses might be born in the water, grow up in the water, and stand up at an even level with the water; some lotuses might be born in the water and grow up in the water, but would rise up from the water and stand up in the water without being soiled by the water—

So, too, surveying the world with the Buddha Eye, the Blessed One sees beings with little dust in their eyes and with much dust in their eyes, with keen faculties and with dull faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and difficult to teach, and a few who dwelt seeing blame and fear in the next world.

**13** Having seen this, he answers Brahmā Sahampati in verse:

Open are the doors to the Deathless  
For those who would hear! Give up the (troublesome) shraddha [ancestor worship]!<sup>56</sup>  
Perceiving the trouble, O Brahmā, I did not speak<sup>57</sup>  
The refined, sublime Dharma among humans.

**14** Then, Brahmā Sahampati, having known, “There is consent by the Blessed One for the teaching of the truth [Dharma]!”<sup>58</sup> pays homage to the Blessed One, keeping him to the right, disappeared right

<sup>54</sup> “Seeing blame...the hereafter,” *paraloka,vajja,bhaya,dassāvino* (pl), an ambiguous cpd. M:ÑB 261 (**Ariya,-pariyesanā S**, M 26.21/1:169) tr as “seeing fear in blame and in the other world,” which agrees well with Comys, which resolve it as *paralokañ c’eva vajjañ ca bhayato passanti* (MA 2:179; SA 1:200). Bodhi, however, notes that at **Dh 317 f** *bhaya* and *vajja* are treated as parallel terms, which suggests that the cpd should be resolved as *paraloka vajjañ c’eva bhayañ ca passanti*. (S:B 433 n371). In fact, it is obvious that the two terms are allusions to “moral shame” (*hiri*) and “moral fear” (*ottappa*) respectively.

<sup>55</sup> *uppala* (Skt *utpala*), *paduma* (Skt *padma*) and *puṇḍarīka* respectively. Cf **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.80/1:75) = SD 8.10 & **Kāya,gatā,sati S** (M 119.20/3:93 f) = SD 14.21, where the simile of lotuses in a pond is applied in the context of the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyanas.

<sup>56</sup> *Pamuñcantu saddham* (BHS *śraddhām pramuñcantu*), alt tr: “Let them declare their faith” or “Give up your faith.” This is a difficult sentence. Dīgha Subcomy glosses as *saddham pavedentu*, “let them declare their faith”; Woodward: “renounce the creed ye hold” (Woodward 1973:7); Horner: “let them renounce their faith” (V:H 1:9); “abandon other faiths” (Nakamura 2000:462); Walshe: “put forth faith” (D:W 215); Bodhi: “release faith” (S:B 1:233); cf Norman: “declare your faith” (Sn 1146). See esp **Masefield** 1985:76-80; also Sn:N n1146 and Nakamura 2000:461 f, n 53. My tr is conjectural for the foll reasons: (1) it is uncertain whether the Pali here is *saddhā* (faith) or *saddha* (ancestor worship); (2) Ved Skt *śraddhā* = faith, but *śraddha* = ancestor worship is Class Skt; (3) Mvst ad loc has *śraddhām*, likely = Pali *saddhā* (faith). On *saddha* (short final -a) = Class Skt *śraddha*, see D 1:97; A 1:160, 5:269-273, 273; J 2:360; DA 1:267. It is possible that the brahminical *śraddha* was just beginning in the Buddha’s time. Interestingly, PED proposes the interesting interpretation of *saddham pamuñcati* (V 1:7; D 2:39; Sn 1146), as “to give up offerings, to abandon Brahmanism” (PED: *Saddha*<sup>2</sup>). PED takes *saddha* as a synecdoche for Brahmanism.

<sup>57</sup> *Vihimsā,saññī pagunaṃ na bhāsīm*; BHS *viheṭṭha,saṃjñō praguṇo abhūsi* (Mvst 3:319); Skt *praviśanti śrad-dhā na viheṭṭha,saṃjñāḥ*, “they enter the faith that is not troubling” (Lalv 25.34; Vaidya 293).

<sup>58</sup> *Katāvakāso kho’ mhi bhagavatā* [v bhagavato] *dhamma,desanāya*, free tr: “The Blessed One has consented to the teaching of the Dharma!” Here *bhagavato* (dat, gen) (PTS 1884) appears to be wr. In **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26.21/1:169), M:ÑB (similarly at V:H 4:10) has “I have created the opportunity for the Blessed One to teach the Dhamma.” CPD: *katāvakāsa*, however, remarks that this rendition is “both grammatically impossible and contextually unlikely; the reading *bhagavato* at S 1:138,26, however, would seem to represent a reinterpretation of the clause supporting the traditional interpretation of the passage, unless the gen is taken as the gen of the agent to be construed with *katāvakāso*.” CPD cites **Mahāvastu**, *bhagavatā mahābrahmaṇe avakāśe kṛte* (Mvst 3:319), “which would seem to support the interpretation suggested above.”



there.<sup>59</sup>

— evaṃ —

[**Bibliography:** see “Why the Buddha ‘hesitated’ to teach,” SD 12.1]

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<sup>59</sup> V 1:7; M 1:170; S 1:138; D 2:39 Vipassī Buddha; Mvst 3:318; cf. S:B 1:233 n372; also Sn 1146c.